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Creoles as Trauma and Identity Markers in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Childhood* and Benjamin Zephaniah's "Dis Poetry"

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Abstract

The Caribbean is defined by multilingualism and multiculturalism arising from the cultural integration of people from various backgrounds that formed it. Creoleness, as language and culture, is therefore a critical tool for integration and interaction among Caribbeans that evolved out of the need for survival and identification. Since Christopher Columbus's accidental discovery of the Caribbean in 1492 the Caribbean landmark as a space and the literature produced by its people have remained a rich area for continuing research, especially regarding the subject of identity. Creoleness, as marker of Caribbean social consciousness, life-world and identity is a very important aspect of Caribbean studies. It is a concept that largely defines and represents the Caribbean psyche, and cultural repository as a multilingual and multicultural society. The objective of this paper is to examine the concept of Creoles and Creoleness, both as a language and as a culture, as a representation of trauma and as identity marker that embodies the experience of Caribbean people as postcolonial subjects. It also explored Creoles as a link between Caribbean history, culture and the socio-political consciousness of Caribbean people, evidence of and a site for the investigation of the continuity of Caribbean past in the present. Creoles is a cultural artefact and a concept that depicts the depth of individual and collective memory and history of trauma associated with the Caribbean experience of slavery, colonialism and postcolonial struggle for survival and self-apprehension. In this vein, the paper examined the critical receptions of these concepts and their impact on Caribbean literature.

Keywords: Creoles, Trauma, Caribbean literature, identity maker, multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Introduction

The Caribbean is defined by multilingualism and multiculturalism in both language and culture and by the cultural integration of people from various backgrounds. Creoles, as language and culture, is therefore a critical tool for integration and interaction among Caribbean people that evolved out of the

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need for survival and identity construction. Julia Udofia (2013) [1]described Christopher Columbus's accidental discovery of the Caribbean environment in 1492 as critical to the nature and status of the continent with both positive and negative implications. Since this fateful encounter the Caribbean landmark as a space and the literature produced by the Caribbean people have remained a rich area for continuing research, especially regarding the subject of identity. Creoles as a marker of Caribbean social consciousness, life-world and literature is a very important aspect of Caribbean studies. It is a concept that largely defines the Caribbean psyche, and culture repository as a multilingual and multicultural society. This paper examines the concept of Creole and creoleness both as a language and as a culture. It explores its root as a social creation and as an experience with significant identitarian import and as symptomatic of the trauma associated with the Caribbean experience of slavery, colonialism and postcolonial struggle for survival and self-apprehension. It explores the critical receptions of these concepts and their impact on Caribbean literature.

The History of the Creole in the Caribbean

The Caribbean history of language and culture from colonialism to post-colonial neo-imperialism possesses a mix of oral and written texts that represent resistance to the imposition of colonialist's culture. One of such texts and artefact is the Creole. The term "Creole" originated from Portuguese; 'crioulo' in Spanish and French, and it originally refers to a man of European origin who was raised in a tropical and semi-tropical colony. However, the term was first used as a language in Virgin Islands in 1739. As an evolving language, Sindini Grazia (2010) [2] described Creolisation as "the evolution of Pidgin towards more codified forms, developing when a second generation of speakers acquire it as their mother tongue". It evolved as an attempt by the Caribbean to develop a new language to fit their new culture and terrain and to manage their multicultural reality. Despite this, the creole language was stigmatized and seen as a deviation from European language, a norm until recent years. According to David Decamp [3](1971) in his study on the Jamaican Creole, the Pidgins and creoles should not be considered mere deviant dialects of European standard languages but authentic languages deserving of recognition as independent linguistic systems rather than being viewed as mixed or corrupted versions of standard languages.

Todd (1974)[4] corroborates Decamp's view on the status of the pidgins and Creoles as authentic languages rather than dialects of any language by arguing that the intersection of languages through contact causes a mutual influence on both languages. Sindoni (2010)[5] also noted that Creole and Pidgin languages continue to maintain a low status because of poor documentation of the written

[1] Udofia, Julia. "The History and Shaping of Caribbean Literature." *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 1. 2 (2013) 56-62.
[2] Sindoni, Grazia, Maria. "Creolization and the Evolution of Caribbean English." *Journal of Caribbean Linguistics*. vol. 27(2010) pp. 33-44
[3] Decamp, David. "The Study of Pidgin and Creole Languages." *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, Dell Hymes (edited). Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 13-39.
[4] Todd, Loreto. *Pidgins and Creoles*. Routledge, 1974.
[5] Ibid.

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tradition, and its oral nature. However, he stated that describing the Creole languages as a simplified version of the English language is untenable.

According to Sindoni (2010)[6], the history of the evolution of the Creole language as a lingua franca among the Caribbean underscores the fact that it evolved as linguistic tool for achieving intelligibility and seamless communication among slaves. La Page (1985)[7] notes that the evolution of the languages among the slaves increased their chances of survival and that over the years, they underwent a process of nativization. Therefore, it will be more reasonable to argue that the Caribbean Creole is a language worthy of repute and high status as the language which, asides evolving as a creative medium of expression between the originators: slaves and their slave masters, also earned accolades alongside the emergence of other forms of cultural expressions that are peculiar to people of Caribbean descent. Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi (2015)[8] stressed that Creole is a nativized form of the preceding pidgin which was acquired by children as their first language, and that the contact of the mutually unintelligible linguistic groups is what resulted in the existence of pidgins and Creoles.

The evolution of the Caribbean English Creole, according to Dalphinis (1985)[9], is a result of contact among Buntu, West African and European dialects. Sindoni also explained that the Second World War saw the transitioning of Caribbean nations from colonial rule to post-colonial independence, which necessitated that writers in the region navigate a challenging linguistic and political landscape. Many chose a hybrid approach by using the Standard English version for narration and description, while the Creole was used for dialogue. This blend allowed the rich oral traditions of Creole to flourish. Although the Standard English served for formal education and literary enterprises the Creole gained renewed prominence and influenced creative and narrative expressions, particularly in oral storytelling forms (Sindoni, 2006).[10]

On the status of the Creole language, Amitabh (2015)[11] argues that there are consensus among language experts to validate the Creole language as opposed to the position of some sociolinguistics theorists who believe that Creole is a corruption of the standard version of the English language. On the view that Creole is a product of a socio-cultural context and a multicultural society, Edward Braithwaite[12] defines creole society as

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[6]. Ibid
[7] La Page, R. B. "The National Language Question: Linguistic Problems of Newly Independent States." *The English Language in West Africa*. John Spencer (edited), Longman, 1985, pp. 19-36.
[8] Dwivedi, Amitabh Vikram. "Linguistic and Cultural Identities in the Creole Caribbean." *International Journal of English and Literature*. 6. 3 (2015)pp 10-18.
[9] Dalphinis, Morgan. *Caribbean and African Languages: Social History, Language,Literature, and Education*. Karia Press, 1985.
[10] Sindoni, Grazia Maria. *Creolization and Identity in Caribbean Literature*. Routledge, 2006.
[11] Dwivedi, Amitabh Vikram. "Linguistic and Cultural Identities in the Creole Caribbean." *International Journal of English and Literature*. 6. 3 (2015)pp 10-18.
[12] Brathwaite, Edward, Kamau. The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

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> The result therefore of a complex situation where a colonial polity reacts, as a whole, to external metropolitan pressures and at the same time to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and labour, white and non-white, Europe and colony, European and African (mulatto creole), European and Amerindian (mestizo creole), in a culturally heterogeneous relationship" (10–11).

Jean-Marrie Grassin (2012) [13]described Creolization as a process of emergence from the creole languages in the sugar islands in the 18th century which varies according to historical and geographical situations. She identifies four sub-paradigms of creolization: the first occurred in a colonial context; the second involves imported slave or labour, and the third is the acquisition of a medium of communication within the cultural system of the masters, while the fourth sub-paradigm involves the creation of a new language. She further described the evolution of Creoleness in two forms, namely the hybridity of grammatical communication systems in languages, and the cultural and social codes. These two influence the identity of the users who are Creoles. Thus, language and culture cannot be separated from the concept of Creoleness; while one is a linguistic phenomenon, the other is multicultural. However, both are not exclusive of each other, since the linguistic phenomenon is triggered by a traumatic type of cultural contacts (Grassin, 2012: 5). [14]Thus, the linguistic aspect of Creoleness cannot be separated from culture. A significant relationship exists between the creole as a linguistic process and creole as a cultural system such as music, cooking, and religion, amongst other cultural nuances (Chaudenson, 1992). [15]

Creoleness as a Symptom of Trauma

Drawing on the history of the Caribbean, there is a way in which Creoleness becomes a symptom of trauma. The history and origination of the Creole language as a language of necessity and as such a product of the Caribbean struggle for survival and self-apprehension underscores its psycholinguistic property and represents the hybridity of the Caribbean cultural consciousness. In this regards Creoleness is seen as an instrument of identity construction, and serves as an identity marker. Its evolution as a means of copping with linguistic babel during the colonial period to achieve a sense of belonging qualifies it as a form of therapy. Languages can be adjusted to fit into different experiences and cultures. For instance, Uche, Obiajulu and Appollonia (2014)[16] see the decision

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[13] Grassin, Jean-Marie. "Toward a Global Theory of Creolization as an Emergent Process by Opposition to Multiculturalism as a Configuration of Identities." *Creoles, Diasporas and Cosmopolitanisms: The Creolization of Nations, Cultural Migrations, Global Languages and Literatures*. David Gallagher (edited) Academica Press, 2012, pp. 97- 112.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Chaudenson . R. (1992, p. 21/2011) *Creolisation of Laguage and Culture.* London, Routledge. argues that Creoles developed by basilectalizing away from the lexifier, i.e., acquiring a basilect, which is the variety the most different from the acrolect, the educated variety of the lexifier.

[16] Appollonia I. Amadi et al. (2014) Cultural Disclaimer and Literary Sterility: Domestication of the English Language in Gabriel Okara's the Voice, Chinua Achebe's

of Chinua Achebe to write *Things Fall Apart*, (1958) in simple English which has been described as a fanciful and 'domesticate' version of the English language within the context of the Nigerian experience, as a form of therapy. It is an attempt to articulate the Nigerian experience of colonisation and to make sense of the complex nature of the colonial encounter. The linguistic creole is therefore a symbol of the Caribbean shared and painful history; the language carries their experiences and speaks to them.

Creoleness bellies trauma in its forms both as a linguistic form and as a culture. The origin of and the need to create a Creole culture for the Caribbean is slavery which continues to shape the Caribbean identity. Glissant (1997) [17]acknowledged that the Caribbean identity is and has always been a product of the trauma and historical experience of the plantation and as Valdman (2015)[18] states, "Creoles are literally languages of slavery" (144); they are languages that are associated with and seen as equal to poverty, ignorance and lack of moral character. Therefore, the Caribbean Creole language encodes the identity consciousness of the Caribbean and when it is used either in regular conversation or in formal domains as in creative composition, it is a marker of their psyche and identity. As Udofia (2013)[19] argues, the search for identity and self-discovery is a major commitment of Caribbean writers.

Premdas (2011)[20] identified four levels of identity in the Caribbean: (1) trans-Caribbean identity, which creates acknowledgement of ties between strangers at home to family in a foreign land, (2) regional identity, which is marked by the sharing of a single language by people in regions, (3) insular identity, which is created by nations who have the same colonial masters, and (4) the substrate identity, which refers to diverse cultures. Salau Kayode (2018)[21] notes that the Caribbean writers did not feel adequately represented by Africa or Europe because they were a mixture of all these histories. Thus, they sought to justify their identity by using the Creole culture. Writers like Raphael Confiant, Patrick Chamoiseau and Jean Bernabe declared that they were neither Asian, Africans, nor Europeans but assert: "we proclaim ourselves Creoles". They strengthen the core of their identity by describing Creolness as their "primordial soup" (Salau Kayode 2018: 116).[22]

Things Fall Apart, and Amos Tutuola's the Palm Wine Drinkers *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol 4, No 20 (2014)
https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/issue/view/1425

[17] Edouard Glissant. Poetics of Relation. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 33

[18] Haitian Creole. Structure, Variation, Status, Origin. Albert Valdman (2015) Sheffield and Bristol, CT, Equinox ISBN 978-1845533885.. The book contains a detailed description of the productive strategies of vocabulary development and deals with the origin of Haitian ***Creole***

[19] Ibid

[20] Premdas, R. R. (2011). Identity, ethnicity, and the Caribbean homeland in an era of globalization. Social Identities, 17(6), 811–832.
https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2011.606676

[21] Salau, Kayode. "Deracination and Trauma in Selected Francophone Caribbean Novels". MA thesis, University of Ibadan, 2018.

[22] Ibid

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Salau (2018)[23] further notes that the theme of identity is a major preoccupation of many contemporary black Caribbean writers, although they deal with the subject in different ways and from varying perspectives. Amitabh (2015)[24] observed that the issues of identity in the Caribbean is not unified due to the diversity of the Creole languages. He noted that the Caribbean man has forgotten his shared history of slavery and colonization to focus on issues of colour and inter-ethnicity which has resulted in the division of the Caribbean identity and in a civil war. As a consequence, almost every fragment of the Caribbean can be said to be on a search for "themselves" since there is a dispute over a shared identity, everyone seeks their own identity. Although the Caribbean identity is multiple, the basis and essence is the same. Amitabh (2015) [25]further explains that,

> Though pluralities of identities exist but a society invokes only a specific identity depending upon the situation and context...; the quest for identity rests on the phenomenon which has been derived from the fact that Caribbean is not a single nation but a region with a plurality of nations, and any post-colonial effort to treat it as a nation will create contentions rather than to come up with any sensible solution

On the plurality of identities in the Caribbean, Udofia (2013)[26] noted that the colonial education given to the blacks by their colonizers caused a three-way reaction which included (1) a total acceptance of foreign values, (2) a rejection of Western values, and (3) a judicious blend of both cultures. She explained that the situation of conflicting cultures gave rise to a plural society which formed the Creole culture and dialect. According to her, the Creole dialect was spoken by the lower class while the upper and middle classes maintained Standard English and that the creation of the creole culture was greatly impacted by such issues as homelessness, rootlessness, exile, multiple identity and the search for identity. All these conditions are associated with trauma as both causes and consequences. Also as identitarian issues, the crisis that is associated with them are usually encoded in language as is the case with the Caribbean Creoles which encodes complex memories, both personal and collective memories, social experiences of past pains and present struggles.

Creoleness as Symptoms of Trauma and identity Crisis in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Childhood*

The subject of identity is a major preoccupation of many Caribbean writers, although they explore it in different ways (Salau, 2018)[27]. This is because Caribbean literature in general is the critical response of the individual writers to the Caribbean experience and reality as perceived by them (Julia Udofia,

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

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2013)[28]. The exhibition of the Creole culture in Caribbean literature is vivid in the works of many Caribbean writers. While some exhibit it linguistically in the form of code-mixing, others decide to write entirely in Creole. Writers such as Samuel Selvon in his short novel, *The Lonely Londoners* wrote in the Trinidadian Creole and has remained an important reception for propositions on the subject of Caribbean language in literary culture. Others include Benjamin Zephaniah in "Dis Poetry", Mervyn Morris in "Peeling Orange", Louise Bennett in "Dutty Tough" and Linton Kwesi Johnson in "Sunny's Lettah" among many others.

Patrick Chamoiseau is acknowledged for his contributions to the Creolite movement which was a movement that asserted the cultural and linguistic nature of Creoleness of the French Antilles. Together with linguist Jean Bernabe and novelist Raphael Confant, he wrote *Eloge de la Creolite* (In Praise of Creoleness) which was published in 1989. The primacy of creolisation is evident in his autofictional narratives including Antan d'enfance [Childhood] (1990), Chemin d'école [School Days] (1994) and A Bout d'enfance (2005), in all of which Chamoiseau explores the personal and collective effects of Martinique's history, and address various ways of engaging with the past. For instance, in Creole Folktales, Patrick Chamoiseau recreates in very enchanting and native Martinique expressions and "magical language" (creoles) tales that he heard when he was a child. These creole expressions have been described as "a language as savory as the spicy food". According to Lewis Seifert (2002)29, in these works "Chamoiseau valorizes the orality of the Creole past as a means of unsettling the fixity of writing as defined by the colonial and postcolonial West" (214).

The function of the Creole culture remains the identification of peoples who were colonized and, as a result of their painful history, became a blend of different cultures and peoples. *Childhood* is a work by Chamoiseau that recalls his experience in Fort-de-France, Martinique. He captures his wanderings around the house in which he grew up, the patched memory of the community and the distance of memory he feels at the remembrance of such past. He pays homage to the Creole culture and language as part of his experience, thus switching between Martinican Creole and English. This confirms Olivia Sherigham (2015)[30] observation that "Martinican identity thus involves the constant negotiation of multiple, overarching, identity 'markers': French, European, Caribbean, Martinican, black, or Creole – to name the most prominent" (245). According to Lucia Llano Puetas (2017)[31], Martiniquais creole is a constant reminder of the creolized culture of the Caribbean islands. The creolisation of cultures is abundantly present in Chamoiseau's use of language through in which he persistently engages Martiniquais creole in his work. Structurally, *Childhood* is divided into two parts, namely "Feeling" and

[28] Ibid.
[29] 'Jack Zipes & the Sociohistorical Study of Fairy Tales' *Mevels and Tales* Vol. 16, No 2(2002) 214-230.
[30]Sheringham, Olivia. "Markers of Identity in Martinique: Being French, Black, Creole." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 39. 2(2016) 243-262. Taylor & Francis Online, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1105992.
[31]Llano Puertas, Lucia. "Touching the Past." *Callaloo*. 40. 4(2017) 78-93. The Johns Hopkins University Press, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26776395.

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"Leaving". In "Feeling" for instance, Chamoiseau describes the songs Ma Ninotte sang:

> C'est par un soir de mai
> Que je l'ai rencontre'
> Par un ciel plein de lune
> L'amant aux l'evres brunes…

The song is rooted in the oral tradition of storytelling. It is a nostalgic and emotional reflection on love and memories. It is the story of a man reminiscing about his past love, Ninon, and the beautiful moments they shared together. The lyrics are filled with emotion and poetic imagery, capturing the essence of longing and affection. This is storytelling strategy of the oral Creole tradition employed by Chamoiseau to achieve his goal of connecting histories as a way of interrogating the past.

Patrick Chamoiseau's *Childhood* portrays the trauma of the Martinique colony and reveals a disposition towards the history of the colonized, a history which cannot be forgotten, and one that is marked by trauma and displacement. *Childhood* was originally written in French as *Antan d'enfance* in 1993 before it was translated by Carol Volk. The novel is split into two parts: "Feeling" and "Leaving", which tell the story of Chamoiseau's childhood. In "Feeling", Chamoiseau recounts his childhood, and narrates the story of his growing up. The text portrays the age gap between Chamoiseau and his siblings, and his isolation in the populated house he lived in. In "Leaving", Chamoiseau is older and is responsible for running errands for his mother who is a Black Caribbean. As he writes, "The mamas cultivated pride. For their children not to eat well was unthinkable." Chamoiseau portrays this as an inherent part of the Creole culture. Thus, he gives credit to the strength of the working-class Caribbean women who devote themselves to working and raising their children despite the odds in the society. His mother, Ma Ninotte, is the figure he uses to represent the Caribbean women; meanwhile his father is portrayed as a distant figure. As is noted in the blob of the text, *Childhood*,

> Using the playful, orally inspired, and partially invented language for which he is renowned, Patrick Chamoiseau recalls the brilliant, magical universe of his early childhood in Martinique. At the center of this universe is his extraordinarily vigorous mother and her creative, pragmatic ways of coping with poverty and five children. As Chamoiseau presents these first impressions of an exceptional child growing up in a rich Creole culture, he also reflects in oblique but incisive ways on colonialism. He probes the boundary between reality and imagination, between the child's awakening understanding and the adult's memory of those earlier days.

Chamoiseau's narratives dramatizes various and numerous examples of the conflict and difference between the Creole world realities which is vibrant and colourful as represented in the Creole children and the comparatively dull and unattractive world of the French teachers. Through this he underscores the

traumatic and psychologically damaging impacts of the French education system on the students. This depiction of realities of growing up in the 1950s is representative of both personal and collective. It constitutes his memory of childhood and how critical this memory is in the appreciation or negotiation of the present and perhaps the projection of the future. As he states, "You never leave childhood, you hold it tight inside. You never detach from it, you repress it. It's not a process of improvement that leads to adulthood, but the slow sedimentation of a crust around a sensitive state that will be the core of what you are" (*Childhood* 49[32]).

Therefore, what Chamoiseau does in the *Childhood* is to bring together as memory the complex consciousness of a private Creole self and the public self of a French identity through storytelling. By this he attempts to excavate and recover the past as both individual and collective memories. Essentially, Creole is associated with poverty, backwardness and an obsolete past, while the French language represents modernity and progress. He achieves these by creative a Creole consciousness through reproduction of several memorable figures and individuals who represent the Creole history both at the level of the society and at the level of his own personal family history. This narrative structure and style are noted by Bonnie Thomas (2017) thus:

> Chamoiseau's portrayal of his childhood in sensuous terms, emphasising color, feeling and fragmentary memories, appeals to a different aspect of the historical project. It connects more deeply to the imagination, to perception rather than definite memories, and in this way allows the recollections of his childhood to form its own narrative structure (20).

The realisation of this comes through passionate and emotional recollection which is portrayed in the show of anxiety and in laughter. As he states, "what predominates is the memory of impatience" (*Childhood*, 4).

Childhood trauma is a common experience of the Caribbean man who has not been able to walk past his colonial experience. John Patrick Walsh (2005)[33] argues that while Francophone and West African literature portray the pain of children who encountered colonialism in postcolonial societies, literary representations of childhood memories must expose colonial oppression. Chamoiseau seems to agree with this as he presents the case of an ordinary family who is displaced by migration in Martinique. Ma Ninotte arrives with her three children to stay with her brother; however, her movement was not a mark of acceptance but of survival. This is why she must work day and night to ensure that her children do not go hungry and, according to Chamoiseau, Ma Ninotte is able to form memories that were traumatic, as he recalls her sacrifices. In addition, Ma Ninotte's reaction to migration causes trauma for young Chamoiseau who is often alone in the house with his cousins and half-

[32] Ibid.
[33] Walsh, John Patrick. "What Children Say: Childhood in Francophone Literature of the French Antilles and North and West Africa". PhD dissertation, Harvard University, May 2005

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brothers as his mother was rarely around. The house in which Ma Ninotte raised her children becomes a museum for memory and nostalgia for Chamoiseau. The structure of the house, the feeling of nostalgia in remembering past expriences are markers of a traumatic past which is painfully remembered in the present; this experience becomes a narrative memory. In *Childhood*, as Suzanne Crosta [34]observes, "Place is of primary importance in this book, and …. Displacement of "who am I" emphasises the places of identification in one's identity formation" (4).

Ilari Pass (2018) [35]suggests that the idea of identity and home for the Caribbean is rooted in trauma and violence, especially with the history of colonialism which robbed Caribbeans of their identity and resulted in the forceful adaptation to a new language and culture. This view was corroborated by Marco Mazzetti (2008) [36]who noted that the experience of migration, dislocation or any form of movement always leaves an impression on the mind of migrants that causes "an irreversible change in how they viewed themselves in the world, causing a true and real fracture between 'before' and 'after'" (286). The idea of examining the trauma of the Black identity was pushed forward by Frantz Fanon in his 1950 book, *Black Skin, White Masks*[37]. Fanon portrays the Black man as a product of assimilation to a different identity through education, language and culture. Chamoiseau grew up in Martinique and later went to Paris to school. He pictures two dimensions of the Black man who has two identities, damaged by colonialism and racism; a Black man in a white mask. According to Ilari Pass (2018)[38], Fanon's idea of wearing a white mask indicates the complex identity struggles of the Black man which Homi K. Bhabha [39]described as the complexity of identity and is underscored by Fanon's idea of masks as a reality and evidence that the colonized do not completely fit into the society, and are thus, always wearing masks.

The idea of race and the concept of racism takes on a new dimension in a Creole society, since the people have witnessed a mixed experience with the Creole culture. Young (1995) [40]described Creolisation as, on the one hand, the mixing of people who were previously divided, but on the other hand, connotes the mixed individual who is not in the position to know where they belong. Thus, they live an everyday life plagued by racial dilemma and multiple identities which cause a struggle between cultures and people. Chamoiseau's C*hildhood* is a reflection of the Creole culture and the reality of the Caribbean person who

[34] Suzanne Crosta, 'Maronner le r6cit d'enfance: Antan denfance de Patrick Chamoiseau et Ravines du devanljour de Raphad Conflant' (1999)
[35] Pass, Ilari. "The Storytellers' Trauma: A Place to Call Home in Caribbean Literature". MA thesis, Gardner-Webb University, 2018.
[36] Marco Mazzetti "Trauma and migration: Transactional Analytical Approach TowardRefugees and Torture Victims". Transactional Analysis Journal Vol. 38. 4(October, 2008) 285 – 302.
[37] Fanon, Frantz. Black Skins, White Masks. New York: Penguin Random House, 2021.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture. Routledge, 1994.
[40] Young, Robert. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Teory, Culture, and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995

must identify with a culture and language that is not theirs.

In an interview with Martin Munro in 1999,[41] Chamoiseau expounds on the existence of the Creole culture in the Caribbean society and thus questions his personhood. He stated that his conception of memory is related to the duality of cultures present in his identity as a Caribbean man. According to him, "Identity does not exist. You always produce it. For this reason, identity is always plural and contradictory. It is the product of a complex process which never stops". On his literary aesthetics, he explained that the Creole dialect is not one worthy of literary reception and praise, but that it has come to be considered the literary language of the Caribbean. This is the reason he writes his experiences in Creole and it is the heart of Chamoiseau's project, the projection and depiction of the Caribbean content; it is critical to the meaning and narrative strategy in the book. This content and strategy is derived from an oral Creole tradition.

Benjamin Zephaniah's "Dis Poetry" as a Creoles Manifesto

Benjamin Zephaniah is a British African-Caribbean poet. He was born and lived his early years in Birmingham, in the Handsworth District, an area which he called "Jamaican capital of Europe". He was dyslexic, attended a special school but left at aged 13 still unable to read or write. Zephaniah is a performance poet who employs the Rastafarian Dub poetry, a kind of poetry that, according to Susan Sathyadas (2017)[42] "abandon the genteel European manners of their white contemporaries and write in plain and sometimes rough language, using rhythms close to native speech and music" (83), to voice out against the oppression and abandonment of disadvantage members of the society. He thus uses poetry as an instrument of resistance and protest. His kind of poetry is performative and combines an assimilative quality that enables it to employ the Standard English alongside a creole or native speech which at the same time serves as resistance to the English language and culture.

Zephaniah's poetry is described as being strongly influenced by the music and poetry of Jamaica and "is characterized by the rhythms and cadences of speech". By adopting this form of Creole and oral language, he is able to reflect what he calls 'street politics, and issues that affect Black people. According to the poet, his aim is to fight the 'dead image' of poetry as an elitist academic discipline, incomprehensible to many, and instead to 'take [it] everywhere', including to non-readers. He has published a number of poems including his first book of poetry, *Pen Rhythm* (1980), and his second collection of poetry, *The Dread Affair: Collected Poems* (1985). He published *Too Black, Too Strong* in 2001 and *We Are Britain* in 2002, a collection that celebrates cultural diversity in Britain. Zephaniah also publish a book of poetry for children, entitled *Talking Turkeys* and a novel for teenagers, *Face*, which is the first of four novels to date. He published his biography *The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah*, in May, 2018.

[41] An ***Interview*** with Patrick ***Chamoiseau***. ',*International Journal of Francophone Studies*. 1.3 (.1999)
[42] Sathyadas, Susan. "Benjamin Zephaniah: Contemporary Voice of Resistance in Black Britan" *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL). 7 (4): 83 -90.*

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Zephaniah's poem "Dis Poetry" is a manifesto for Creole literature, language and culture. The poem is written fully in the Rastafarian expression which is a Jamaican Creole. The poem, among other things, states the nature and texture of the Creole and native speech which is accessible to the public irrespective of whether they are able to read well or not. It is written in the language of the people. The poem also states the function of the Creole both as a language and a culture, including its therapeutic function. Compared to works written in the Standard English, works written in the native expression are more able to express the feeling and sensibilities of the ordinary people. According to Ssan Sathyadas[43], in the Caribbean, "creolization proved a more viable poetic strategy to resist the norms of Standard English" (84). As a product of orality, Creoles is viable to empower the thoughts and reality of the people and, as Sathyadas further opines,

> Through Creoles orality was able to resist, infiltrate, subvert and modify the norms of Standard English. It challenged the assumption that in creating works of arts, the Standard form of a European language was the only way to access either the local or the universal (84).

This sensibility is reminiscence of the attitude of the Zimbabwean poet, Dambuzo Marechera, when he noted that it is very important for him to express himself freely and effectively even if he finds the only way to do so is by " abusing the English language in such a way that it can say what I want to say". In the first stanza of "Dis Poetry" Zephaniah describes the Creole poetry as similar to "a riddim that drops" and that is "designed for rantin/Dance Hall style, big mouth chanting" which finds its origin in the oral speech form. It is "verbal Riddim…" that is rooted in the "Reggae Riddim" (stanza 3). The poet goes on to state its nature, quality and how it is realised:

> Yu could call dis poetry Dub Ranting
> De tongue plays a beat
> De body starts skanking,
> Dis poetry is quick an childish
> Dis poetry is fe de wise an foolish,
> Anybody can do it fe free,
> Dis poetry is fe yu an me,
> Don't stretch yu imagination
> Dis poetry is fe de good of de Nation,
> Chant,
> In de morning
> I chant
> In de night
> I chant
> In de darkness

He states the usefulness and benefits of the poem including that it is therapeutic and is capable of empowering the listener and chanter. It is also able to carry

[43] Ibid.

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the weight of the people's story, feeling and pains. It is soothing and give the hearer a sense of belonging:

> Dis poetry stays wid me when I run or walk
> An when I am talking to meself in poetry I talk,
> Dis poetry is wid me,
> Below me an above,
> Dis poetry's from inside me
> It goes to yu
> WID LUV.

As a manifesto poem, Zephaniah's "Dis Poetry" establishes the root of Creoles poetry or Dub poetry as belonging to the Caribbean traditional music which is built with the intonation and rhythms of the Calypso. It is composed in the form of a chant rather than a song. In Africa, chants are [a] aspect of the oral art forms. "Dis Poetry" is an example of several Creoles writings and its poetic expression is a genuine form of Jamaican culture. The style adopted in writing the poem also reflects Zephaniah's Jamaican English accent in which words are spelt the way they are spoken or pronounced. For example, the word "this" is spelt as "dis" just the way it is pronounced as seen in the title of the poem, "Dis Poetry". As a politically engaging writer, he is particularly "concerned with politics and social justice, commonly voiced through a commentary on current events" (Sathysadas, 2017: 84). [44]

Conclusion

Patrick Chamoiseau wrote his autobiography of childhood as a reflection of the Caribbean Creole culture. He expresses his development and understanding of his world and also gives credit to the existence of the Creole dialect as the literary language of the Caribbean people. Chamoiseau's mother, Ma Ninotte is represented as a powerful figure in the narrative which indicates that trauma is intertwined with the Caribbean experience and the memory of it. Therefore, Ma Ninotte's devotion to her children is a recall of the sacrificial lives that Caribbean mothers and women live and this experience is presented as a collective experience, a collective history and memory of the Caribbean people. To achieve his goal of projecting this history and memory of the Caribbean people and the trauma it bellies, Chamoiseau employed the oral narrative structure and strategy of storytelling, which is done oral using the oral Creole tradition. The projection of this content of the Caribbean experience is the heart of Chamoiseau's project in *Childhood.*

Similarly, Zephaniah's poetry generally and "Dis Poetry" in particular "dramatizes the predicament of a society whose assimilation into a rapidly globalizing modernity is marked by multiple forms of resistance" (Sathysadas, 87)[45]. The acceptance of the Creole dialect as a standard form of expression in the Caribbean society becomes a subject of relevance to the study of Caribbean culture. This paper has revealed the contribution of the Creole culture to Caribbean literature and has explored how it is symptomatic of the trauma that

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

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underlines the history of the Caribbean people and existence of multiple identities through the works of Patrick Chamoiseau and Benjamin Zephaniah.

Caribbean literature has since its inception been concerned with the representation of traumatic experiences and events whether in the violence of slavery, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, the postcolonial failures and its psychological consequences. The description of events, the narrative strategy, the choice of language and the projection of the history and memories of the Caribbean people in *Childhood* and "Dis Poetry" depict the processing of psychological trauma. The linguistic choices, particularly the deliberate use of Creoles words, expressions and syntax demonstrate the traumatic undercurrent of the writers' experience as individuals and as the collective experience of the Caribbean people. At the core of all of these are the issues of identity construction and the search for self-apprehension, of displacement and re-placement.

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