行政院國家科學委員會補助專題研究計畫成果報告

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行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫成果報告

真理的危機： 非裔加勒比海女性小說中的創傷與記憶(1/2)

Crisis in Truth : Trauma and Memory in Afro-Caribbean Women's Fiction

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一、中文摘要

近年來研究創傷與記憶之批評文獻大多著眼於再現（創傷經驗）的有限性及「虛構」與「歷史」敘事之間模稜兩可的關係。誠多阿多諾所言：「在奧舒華茲的事件之後，任何詩歌都顯得殘酷不仁」。對於文學創作者與批評者而言，如何書寫無法理解而且令敘事主體感到有滅頂威脅的極端經驗，仍然是一大問題。非裔加勒比海女性作家更特別需要面多重的創傷記憶。其中最「始源性的創傷」，就是中間航道的歷史經驗；然而弔詭的是非裔加勒比海人民漂泊離散的認同也源於此一創傷。因此本計劃主要研究當代非裔加勒比海女性小說文本中如何重新思考創傷與記憶以及如何在藝術創作與歷史紀錄之間達到平衡。

本年度計劃除了整理各種創傷與記憶的批評理論之外，也研討女作家如何藉非裔加勒比海宗教來言其不可言。非裔加勒比海宗教深受非洲本土宗教、基督教與北美原住民宗教的多重影響，經由劇烈的文化混語過程而產生。在布洛柏的《魔奧》及艾迪莎的《由淚水開始》中，非裔加勒比海的民俗儀式成為解放的工具。兩部小說中都探討如何經由「再記憶的儀式」得到心靈與心理的治療。這些儀式根植於加勒比海地區融合性的信仰系統，可以動員社群的集體力量，經由同情心的力量使得蒙受創傷的小說人物再不受制於被壓抑的記憶，而且也使他們得以向種族、性別與階級壓迫挑戰。

計劃最終的目的證明布洛柏及艾迪莎等作家如何藉由非裔加勒比海的民俗宗教，提出一些解決創傷與記憶再現困難的途徑。她們的努力，也使得「新世界書寫」逐漸成形，使得創作家與批評者得以更深入探討美國與加勒比海地區複雜之新殖民關係。

關鍵詞: 加勒比海文學，創傷 ，記憶，非裔加勒比海女作家

二、英文摘要

Recent theoretical works on trauma and memory place special emphasis on the limits of representation and the ambivalent relations between fictional and historical narratives. Theodor Adorno's famous remark—"To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric"—still rings true. How to write about extreme experiences that elude immediate understanding and threaten to

destroy the narrating subject remains a question for literary artists and critics. Afro-Caribbean women writers, in particular, need to confront multiple layers of traumatic memories and among them, the "original trauma" of the Middle Passage, in which their diasporic identity is paradoxically originated. This project, aims to study the ways in which how trauma and memory are refigured and how artistic creation and historical documentation reach a certain kind of equilibrium in contemporary Afro-Caribbean women's fiction.

The project starts with a preliminary research on theories on trauma and memory, and then proceeds to investigate how Afro-Caribbean religions are deployed as a way to speak the unspeakable. Deeply influenced by African religions, Christian and Native American beliefs, Afro-Caribbean religions are created out of a vigorous process of cultural creolization in the Caribbean. In texts by two Afro-Jamaican women writers, Erna Brodber's *Myal* (1988) and Opal Palmer Adisa's *It Begins with Tears* (1997), Afro-Caribbean folk rituals are regarded as a strategy of liberation. Both texts explore the possibility of spiritual and psychological healing through the performance of various "rituals of rememory." Rooted in the syncretized belief systems of the Caribbean, these rituals mobilize the collective force of the community and through the power of sympathy free traumatized characters from their repressed memories and further empower them to battle against imposed racial, sexual and class oppressions.

Finally with this project, I demonstrate how through the deployment of folk religions and orature, Afro-Caribbean women authors such as Brodber and Adisa provide artistic ways to cope with the difficulties of representing trauma and memory and how these writers also contribute significantly to the creation of a New World writing that addresses the complicated colonial and neocolonial interrelations between the United States and the Caribbean.

Keywords：Caribbean literature, trauma, memory, Afro-Caribbean women writers

Rituals of Rememory:
Afro-Caribbean Religions in *Myal* and *It Begins with Tears*[1]

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> If we succumb to a blackhearted stasis—to enclosures of fear—we may destroy ourselves; on the other hand, if we begin to immerse ourselves in a new capacity or treaty of sensibility between alien cultures—we will bring into play a new variable imagination or renascence of sensibility steeped in caveats of the necessary diversity and necessary unity of man. In short we won't oversimplify or crudify similarities or differences, but will seek, as it were, however difficult, even obscure, the path, to bring all perspectives available to us into an art of the imagination, an architecture of the imagination.
>
> Wilson Harris
>
> **History, Fable & Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas**

Recent theoretical works on trauma and memory place special emphasis on the limits of representation and the ambivalent relations between fictional and historical narratives. Theodor Adorno's remark, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," still rings true. How to write about extreme experiences that elude immediate understanding and threaten to destroy the narrating subject remains a question for literary artists and critics. Afro-Caribbean writers, in particular, need to confront multiple layers of traumatic memories and among them, the "original trauma" of the Middle Passage in which their diasporic identity is rooted. Many works of Afro-Caribbean writers reveal an amazing amount of psychological resilience and physical endurance. The emergence of such a body of powerful literature out of what Antonio Benítez-Rojo calls "the black hole of the plantation" (56) is a source of constant wonder to readers and critics. Wilson Harris summed up a strategy practiced by these creative artists in his 1970 lectures on Caribbean history, fable, and myth: instead of surrendering to historical stasis, they opt for a creative synthesis of available perspectives, thereby opening a gateway to a possible rebirth of imagination and sensibility. The emergence of Caribbean literature is, therefore, "a 'creole' act"—the process of creolization "in which cultures originally foreign to the Caribbean adjust and relate; lose and offer some of their own, pick up some of the patterns of the 'host'; so that all groups move…towards a kind of eventual homogeneity" (Brathwaite 45).

Looking into the liminal space carved out by the history of transatlantic slave trade, Afro-Caribbean writers delved into their creolized heritage in search of possible alternatives for racial healing and located one of their most important psychic resources in Afro-Caribbean spirituality, which Toni Morrison calls the "discredited knowledge" of peoples of African descent. Through their strong emphasis on the healing aspect of folk rituals and the importance of rememory,[2] Afro-Caribbean writers re-define folk religions and an Afro-Caribbean "ceremonial spirituality," which is a creolized synthesis of multiple legacies of the Americas. This paper presents an investigation of the possibility of spiritual and psychological healing through practice of what I call "rituals of rememory" by way of a close reading of the deployment of Afro-Caribbean folk rituals in texts by two Afro-Jamaican

women writers: Erna Brodber's *Myal* (1988) and Opal Palmer Adisa's *It Begins with Tears* (1997).[3]

Both Erna Brodber and Opal Palmer Adisa were born in Jamaica and educated in the United States. Adisa stayed in the U.S. to further the cause of literary multiculturalism in the academic world, whereas Brodber returned to the island nation to teach sociology and to pursue her research on the African diaspora. Although their geographical locations are now different, they share common aesthetic and political positions. They are both determined to bring together the cultures of the "shipmates," Brodber's term for peoples of African descent in the Americas. Brodber states her political agenda in writing *Myal*: "*Myal* is my tentative exploration of the links between the way of life forged by the people of two points to the black diaspora—the Afro-Americans and the Afro-Jamaicans" because historically "black initiative is weakened by the misunderstanding between Caribbean and U.S. blacks and both and Africans" ("Fiction in the Scientific Procedure" 167).[4] Embodied in their works is therefore a call for the construction of a New World writing that will successfully re-assemble the multiple traditions of the Americas. In this respect Brodber and Adisa are not alone; Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, Morrison's *Tar Baby*, and Alice Walker's *Temple of My Familiar*, for instance, all contribute the creation of this New World tradition.

Importantly, in *Myal* and *It Begins with Tears* Brodber and Adisa both choose to frame their efforts of constructing a New World writing in religious contexts. *Myal* is a third-person narrative that operates on multiple time lines. Amidst these intersecting temporalities, readers encounter further complications in terms of emplotment. With mixed chronotopes as textual background, Brodber presents us with a story of double crimes and double tellings. The protagonist Ella O'Grady is born to an Irish father and his black housekeeper. In her teens she is adopted by a creole Methodist minister and his white British wife and gets a chance to visit the United States. There she comes across Selwyn Langley, a wealthy white American who is fascinated by Ella's racial background and beauty. He marries her and prompts her to tell stories about her home village, Grove Town. So in 1919 Ella tells Selwyn about this rural Jamaican community and in particular what has happened to another village girl Anita in 1913. Anita suffered spirit possession from a secret obeah man, or sorcerer. This evil man was discovered to be the respected village elder Mass Levi, who was trying to steal Anita's youthful spirit to regenerate his sexual prowess. He was punished with death for this performance of transgressive black magic. Meanwhile, Ella's own spirit is being "thieved" when Selwyn turns her story into a coon show. When Ella loses her sanity because of this betrayal, Selwyn sends her back to the island to be cured by an Afro-Caribbean religious ritual, myal. Yet Ella's spiritual treatment is not complete until she can finally recognize her own internalization of colonial indoctrination and come to a de-colonizing reading of her own experience as well as those of her people.

Like *Myal*, *It Begins with Tears* is also set in a rural Jamaican village, Kristoff, and delineates the nuances of interpersonal relationships in this community and the redemptive function of rituals. What is interesting is that Adisa interweaves the daily lives of Eternal

Valley, including Devil's family and God's, with those of Kristoff Village. While Devil and his wife are busy preparing their son's wedding, the inhabitants of Kristoff are dealing with their collective and personal wounds. The routine lives of the village are interrupted by two returns. Monica returns after a long sojourn in Kingston as a prostitute to seek a steady life. Yet she gets involved with a married man and suffers a terrible revenge at the hands of three jealous women. Another villager Rupert also returns from New York with his African American wife, Angel. Surprisingly, Angel turns out to be no stranger to the village but the daughter of Beryl, a Kristoff woman who was raped while working as a hotel maid in the northern resort of Montego Bay. Toward the end of the novel all the wounded women gather around the river to undergo a healing ritual and found comfort and sympathy in a spiritual sisterhood.

Crucially, in both texts the authors deliberately play out historical traumas upon black female bodies. Thus the female body functions as a kind of "theatrical site on which a range of competing discourses and ideologies battle for supremacy" (107), as Denise deCaires Narain observes of *Myal*. These textual representations of the female body thus create a close affinity between corporeality and textuality. This practice of inscribing traumatic experiences upon the female body demands a counterdiscursive de-scribing. Moreover, both texts stress the importance of being able to name the crime or trauma, which corresponds to the belief in the mysterious power of word or *nommo* (name) in African tradition.[5] Significantly, both authors concur in their invocation of spirituality in general and rituals in particular as the ways in which these traumas can be described and *de-scribed*. In their recognition of the productive potential of religious creolization, they both belong to a "twilight or cusp poetics" (Puri 105) that draws its creative energy from the ceremonial spirituality of the Caribbean.

I. Afro-Jamaican Religious Creolization and Rituals of Rememory

Before a close reading of religious practices in the two novels, we first need to explain the creolized nature of Afro-Caribbean religions and define the concept of "rituals of rememory." Deeply influenced by African religions as well as Christian and Native American beliefs, Afro-Caribbean spirituality and ritual practices were created out of a vigorous process of cultural creolization. To illustrate how these rituals work for the psychological well-being and creative imagination of the Afro-Caribbean community, we may again turn to Wilson Harris and his discussion of limbo. For Harris, the popular West Indian dance limbo,[6] "which emerged as a novel re-assembly out of the stigma of the Middle Passage," accommodated Catholic features, and exemplifies "the renascence of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures" (20). As Harris emphatically states, "It is my view—a deeply considered one—that this ground of accommodation, this art of creative coexistence—pointing away from apartheid and ghetto fixations—is of the utmost importance and *native* to the Caribbean, perhaps to the Americas as a whole" (20). Most significantly,

limbo implies

> a profound art of compensation which seeks to re-play a dismemberment of tribes…and to invoke at the same time a curious psychic re-assembly of the parts of the dead god or dead gods. And that re-assembly which issued from a state of cramp to articulate a new growth—and to point to the necessity for a new kind of drama, novel and poem—is a creative phenomenon of the first importance in the imagination of a people violated by economic fates (21).

In this shared imagination Harris also sees a rapport between West Indian limbo and Haitian vodun,[7] which along with Carib Bush Baby and Arawak zemi are among the "the misunderstood arts of the Caribbean" that hold "the subtle key to a philosophy of history" (48).

The image of dismemberment succinctly summarizes the history of African diaspora. And Harris is most insightful when he stresses the importance of the creative co-existence and constructive re-assembly of alien cultures and when he recognizes the liberating power of ritualistic cultural expressions such as limbo and vodun. In almost all of the African diasporan religions there is an attempt to remember the historical separation and by extension an underlying desire for reunification with the African homeland, Ginen or Guinea, in what Joseph M. Murphy terms the "orientation to Africa" (185).[8] Through the practices of these rituals, therefore, Afro-Caribbean people can start what I call their "rememory" of collective and individual memories, which leads to a re-membering with their ancestral cultures and to a certain extent frees them from the traumatic nightmares resulting from tribal dismemberment and racial encounters.

Rooted in the creolized belief systems of the Caribbean, rituals of rememory mobilize the collective force of the community and through the power of sympathy free traumatized characters from layers of repressed memories and further empower them to battle against imposed racial, sexual, and class oppressions. Thus the traumatized characters are able to survive the crime of "spirit thievery" and physical violence inflicted by representatives of colonial powers, and finally come to terms with their individual and collective haunting experiences. Here, what I call "rituals of rememory" is actually comparable to Wilson Harris's West Indian limbo and vodun and Houston A. Baker Jr.'s Afro-American "conjuring" or "mythomania" (74) since a shared belief in a creolized spirituality essential to the cultural survival of Afrosporic communities runs through all these terms. Another common point is the trope on spatial images. Harris argues for the empowering potential of the subconscious reality of the Caribbean or the West Indian "architecture of consciousness," while Baker points out how womanist conjuring "institutes the type of locational pause that Bachelard might have called *eulogized place*—a revered site of culturally specific interests and values" (99). My emphasis is on how the performance of rituals of rememory in Afro-Caribbean women's fiction leads to the construction of a discursive space in which the fountain of liberating and life-saving spiritual resources can be tapped.

The power of Afro-Caribbean religions resides in Afrosporic peoples' ability to resist Christian monotheistic domination with the support of their African-belief-system legacies. Despite Christian proselytizing in the Caribbean, Christianity has never achieved full hegemony, even though colonial powers established religious and educational institutions, profound interpellative instruments intended to erase the cultural identity of the colonized and to reproduce the colonizer's culture at the colonial site. As Dale Bisnauth stated in his study on the history of religions in the Caribbean, "the most orthodox practice of Christianity in the Caribbean by blacks is affected by a spirit that is identifiably African" (100). Moreover, the master's tool has been used to dismantle the master's house; the Baptist War of 1831-32 and the Morant Bay uprising of 1865 in Jamaica, both led by black Baptist ministers, are two examples.

Richard D. E. Burton's insight on the continuous creolization of Jamaican religious beliefs nicely illustrates the process in the making of Afro-Caribbean religions:

> What had emerged from half a century of primarily black proselytism was an unstable compound of Myalism and Christianity that we may call Afro-Christianity, provided that we recognize that the relative proportions of the "Afro" and the "Christian" were always in flux, that the African substrate was forever threatening to break through the Christian, and that until well into the twentieth century, and perhaps even today, Afro-Christianity remained an amalgam of potentially discordant elements rather than a fully achieved and 'stable' synthesis of different religious traditions. The Afro-Christianity of the ex-slaves and their black ministers contained a multiplicity of elements—dancing and drumming, "prophesying," speaking in tongues, spirit worship, trance, and possession—that were inimical to the Euro-Christianity of the white missionaries. (97) [9]

A continuous process of religious creolization, as Bisnauth argues, is a part of the "survival mechanism" of the Afro-Caribbean people (100). This endless exercise of religious hybridization, I would argue, is also part of their tactics of opposition in that the Christian system imposed by the white oppressors has been creolized and multiplied into all kinds of Afro-Caribbean religions. The remnants of African beliefs in these religions can be regarded as sites of collective memory of a deprived homeland. And the Afro-Caribbean rituals help to reactivate these memories for the sake of racial health. Writers of Afro-Caribbean descent clearly are alert to the potential healing power of these rituals of rememory. As Elaine Savory points out, "Although this perception is not shared by all Caribbean writers, there is certainly an important literary extension to the role that religion and ritual have played in the history of Afro-Caribbean resistance to racism and colonialism" (217).

Although the healing and liberating power of Afro-Caribbean rituals is recognized, all religious practices are not beneficial, neither are they to be understood in binary terms as either good or evil. A case in point is the social functions of obeah and Myalism. Although for former colonizers obeah has often been associated with the power of black magic and political power, such as slave uprising, in some Caribbean texts obeah is regarded as a powerful practice to battle against colonial authorities (Richardson 173).[10] In other texts, such as Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* (1933), we can observe certain ambivalence towards

the practice of obeah. For instance, in his description of the Jamaican society in the early twentieth century McKay at once celebrates obeah as a part of Jamaican folklore—"the spiritual link" with the ancestral origin, as in the Anancy stories and folk songs (125), and satirizes the practice of obeah through the figure of the obeah man Wumba.[11]

Myalism, a religious practice that originated in eighteenth-century Jamaica, is often regarded as corrective of evil obeah practices. Based on historical records from the 1830s and 1840s, Monica Schuler points out that "Myalists believed that all misfortune—not just slavery—stemmed from malicious forces, embodied in the spirits of the dead and activated by antisocial people. The Myal organization provided specialists—doctors—trained to identify the spirit causing the problem, exorcise it, and prevent a recurrence" (32). Winston Arthur Lawson makes a similar point about Myalism as "one significant formalized religious ritual that was geared at combating Jamaica's societal ills. Its philosophy was based on the notion that these ills were pervasive and deep rooted in the spiritual psyche of all those who selfishly pursued anti-communal acts" (28). Joseph J. Williams is more specific in that he identifies myal men or women as "the people who cured those whom the obeah man had injured" (145).

But even myal practices are not always positive. Maureen Warner-Lewis identifies an alternative etymology for myal as "*mayal<Mayaala*, Kikongo, 'person/thing exercising control,'" which creates for it a kind of moral ambiguity.[12] Perhaps Joseph Murphy best sums up the complementary nature of the relationship between these two doctrines in the Jamaican plantation system:

> *Obeah* is the art of sorcery, practiced in private, if not secret, and reflecting the disintegrative forces of a society under stress. By contrast, *myal* might be seen as a force for social integration, bent on the exposure of *obeah*, and defusing it with the power of communal values expressed in public ceremonies….The *obeah* practitioner provided medical and jural aid for the plantation workers in a society devoid of these institutions in any other form. If the *obeah* specialist was fearful, he or she was also the source of comfort, healing, and justice.
>
> *Myal*, too, represents a reassertion by the community of its authority over the legitimate and illegitimate uses of invisible power. *Myal* dancers and seers are exposing what the community has determined to be the illegitimate uses of *obeahs*, rather than a condemnation of the private use of spiritual force….To find justice in the unjust world of slavery and emancipation, Jamaicans could turn to *obeah* practitioners, whose work was brought under scrutiny by the communal consciousness of *myal*. (120)

To distinguish a good practice from an evil one, in the case of Afro-Caribbean religions, therefore, depends on whether it is for the benefit of the community or just for the fulfillment of personal desires. In the following close reading of *Myal* and *It Begins with Tears*, we shall see how Brodber and Adisa embody this communal concept in fictional context and address the issue of trauma of the Afrosporic peoples.

II. *Myal* and De-Scribing Spirit Thievery

In *Myal*, Erna Brodber analyzes the crime of "spirit thievery" and the way in which one may survive it with the help of Afro-Caribbean religions. The act of writing, in this case, is similar to that of performing a myal ritual. Thus Joyce Walker-Johnson observes a textual analogy between the role of the healer and that of the artist in Brodber's text (49). I would argue that Brodber also invites her readers to participate in this ritual; our understanding of the depth of the crime is meant to prevent spirit thievery from recurrence. Another important

point is that in this text myal is a combination of various religious practices, including Myalism and Kumina, which aims to exorcise sources of evil from both within and without the community.

Mass Levi is the evil within the community and Selwyn Langley is the evil from without. Although the two perpetrators are apparently different in terms of race and class, Levi and Selwyn are nonetheless twin representatives of colonial powers. The "incorruptible" Mass Levi was a "DC—district constable" and "would use his cow cod whip on mule, on men and on women though no one could say for certain he ever had" (31). The irony in the epithet is that Levi *is* corrupted enough to obeah the fifteen-year-old Anita in order to regain his own virility. Equally sinister is how he threatens the community with the shadow of a whip, which is reminiscent of the slavemaster's device of control and symbol of authority and power. As a former DC, Levi has also been an instrument of colonial rule and a patriarch figure in the community.

And yet Levi's whip may also refer to the staff of an African king, which is at once a symbol of authority and a metaphoric connection with Africa.[13] This possible allusion complicates the dynamic between obeah and myal in Brodber's text. In a sense, Levi "rules" Grove Town with the authority of an African king. In the post-plantocracy rural society of *Myal*, the evilness of Levi's scheme against Anita resides in the egocentricity of his purpose. He can be "incorruptible" when he has the community benefit in his mind, but when he turns ancestral magic to private and selfish uses, he needs to be corrected by a communal force. In her portrayal of the evilness of Levi, Brodber also goes back to the African roots in which obeah refers to worship of an evil spirit, Sasabonsam (Bisnauth, 89-90), and suggestively links devil worship with the evilness of colonial exploitation. The character Levi thus personifies the complexity of African diasporan religions in which many facets coexist with one another. The religious world in *Myal* is then a deliberate portrayal of what Kamau Brathwaite calls "the Afr/american communion complex: *kumina-custom-myal-obeah-fetish*."[14]

The ritual led by the Kumina priestess Miss Gatha is battling in part against the specter of slavery and colonization.[15] This ritualistic combat with the evil obeah man, furthermore, mobilizes all the spiritual powers of the community and involves a broad spectrum of religious practices that significantly cross the boundaries of race and gender. As Catherine Nelson-McDermott contends, the myal practices in the text "set up an inclusive beat-based (drum-based) communicative network which works to bring all, even those who must be taught to hear, into the action" (62). Except for support from the prophet figure of the community, Ole African, whose name suggests a mysterious ancestral power, and from Reverend Simpson, whose native Baptist church represents the mass of black people in the community, there is also the involvement of "White Hen," code name for Maydende Brassington, a white woman and the wife of the mulatto Methodist minister. The main ritual to exorcise the evil power is of course the Kumina dance, representing a religious cult in Jamaica that is the most (culturally) African, according to George E. Simpson (157). Together, these representatives from different religious practices formulate a marvelous "spiritual community" in which they can communicate with each other telepathically. Importantly, this telepathic power strongly suggests that human sympathy is a requisite for healing. Anita is finally saved by this collective magic of sympathy mobilized from the interstitial spaces from which the hybridized religious practices of the community derived their power.

Of course a community is not always positive, especially in its interaction with the marginal members. In *Myal*, the nicknaming of Ella as "Salt pork," "Alabaster baby," "Red Ants Abundance," or "ginger," which renders Ella invisible in the community, is one example of the community's malice. The homophobic Jamaican community in Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* that "murders" its gay members with gossip and sneers is another. The basic spirit of myal practices, nevertheless, has always been communal. Schuler observes an interesting

psychological underpinning for the stress on community values in Myalism:

> in a real world of limited resources…anyone enjoying unusual good fortune is suspected of doing so at the community's expense. Such antisocial people, placing personal goals above those of the community, are thought to employ ritual to satisfy malevolent forces believed to permeate the universe and produce evil. The major function of religious ritual—which, unlike magic, is always community-centered—thus become the prevention of misfortune caused by the antisocial and the enhancement of the community's good fortune. (33)

Thus Levi's unusual good luck in terms of material prosperity can be suspicious, although unstated, in this context. Besides their sympathy for the innocent Anita, Grove Town enacts a communal ritual to stop Mass Levi's selfish pursuit of masculinity (and money) that threatens the interest of the whole community.

Ella is the other victim in the novel who is rescued from spirit thievery by this spiritual community. What is striking in Ella's case is the "obscenity" of how her "spirit" has been robbed. Here I am using Shoshana Felman's description of the Holocaust experience as a model to read Ella's ordeal. Selwyn literally steals Ella's story and makes it into a minstrel show. This transformation of Ella's cultural experience is comparable to the mis-representations of black experiences by white journalists and travel writers (Walker-Johnson 58). In his coon show, entitled *Caribbean Nights and Days*, what Selwyn has done to Ella's memory of Grove Town is an aestheticization of colonial appropriation: by claiming for himself the authority of a (white) author he aesthetizes his act of violence and violation upon another race, just like the Schoolteacher in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, who thinly disguises his inhuman racial ideology with a pseudo-scientific theorization. Selwyn's plagiarism of Ella's story is also based upon a model of colonial capitalism. "That which Ella had given him was for him purest gold. He had only to refine it. He was going to put on the biggest coon show ever," the third-person narrator informs us (79-80). Ella is like a Third World country that supplies "raw material" for the consumption and the use in advanced production by a First World country as represented by Selwyn, whose family pharmaceutical business is itself, of course, built upon an ideology of capitalist expansion.[16]

This transnational usurpation of Ella's "spirit" and the spirit of a black community, moreover, reifies white domination. In fact, the marriage between Ella and Selwyn is built upon a particular kind of aesthetic and racial relationship. When Selwyn first met the seventeen-year-old Ella, she was totally ignorant of racial difference and her own racial identity. He sees in Ella "[a] marvelously sculpted work waiting for the animator" (46) and a possible artistic vocation. Selwyn starts to engage in a Pygmalion type of project as a warm-up for his would-be film career: "Until it came, Selwyn occupied himself with one production: the making of Ella O'Grady" (43). Therefore Ella herself, not just her memory, is the raw material Selwyn wants to exploit to fulfill his artistic ambition. Furthermore, although he is "fascinated" by Ella's mulatto identity and marries her against the miscegenation law, Selwyn nevertheless abides by the law of racial demarcation when it comes to reproduction: Ella can be his wife, but not the mother of his children. Thus Selwyn not only steals Ella's body and story but also deprives her of her reproductive rights. And his parasitic exploitation of Ella does not stop until she is completely drained of memory, language, and finally, sanity. Only then does Selwyn become frightened and ship her back to Jamaica.

Brodber's writing, in turn, is an aesthetic counter-discourse: by writing about Selwyn's violation against Ella's memory, Brodber is "*creating* (recreating) *an address*, specifically, for a historical experience which annihilated the very possibility of address" (Felman 41). Here Shoshana Felman's discussion of Holocaust literature and archives again provides a way to narrate the past experiences of victims. These testimonies, as Felman argues, are created "to

tell the story and *be heard*, to in fact *address* the significance of their biography—to *address*, that is, the suffering, the truth, and the necessity of this impossible narration—to a hearing 'you,' and to a listening community" (41). Brodber's *Myal*, like all of her writings, reveals a strong belief in the power of *nommo* and provides a literary testimony to the spiritual holocaust of Afrosporic peoples. Through Selwyn's racist appropriation of Ella's storytelling, Brodber also alerts her readers to a danger inherent in the consequences of such testimony falling into the wrong hands. Selwyn's greatest crime, I would argue, is to deprive Ella of her role as a witness and turn her into a local informer.

Even more devastating is that Ella is led to blame herself for this theft. In her "trip" to the land of madness, she sings out "Mammy Mary's mulatto mule must have maternity wear" in a Morrisonian manner (84). The way in which Brodber presents different renditions of Ella's refrain invites comparison to the Dick-and-Jane story at the beginning of Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, which is another story of racial and sexual victimization and madness. In *Myal*, Ella's refrain at once communicates her self-perception and indicts Selwyn for robbing her of her right to be a mother. The way she refers to herself as a "mule," besides functioning as an act of self-depreciation, is also reminiscent of Hurston's famous remark about black women's burden in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that "De nigger woman is de mule uh de world" (29). By using this refrain Brodber seems to engage in a dialogue with the tradition of Afro-American women's writing, an intertextual strategy that is indicative of her dedication to bridging the two Afrosporic communities and to the construction of a New World writing.

As a mulatto, Ella is a colonial "legacy" since she is the child of an interracial liaison. The etymological origin of the word "mulatto" refers to the sterility of mule, which makes the epithet "mulatto mule" linguistically redundant. And this epithet reveals how Ella sees herself as a sterile surplus product of a colonial history. As a psychological compensation, Ella, in her madness, experiences a mock pregnancy: her belly swells to accommodate what she believes is the baby Jesus. What comes out of this self-deluded Madonna is, ironically, "the stinkest, dirtiest ball to come out of a body since creation" (2). A double-edged message is embedded in this parodic version of the messianic birth: it signals both victimization and possible redemption.

Ella regains her sanity after Mass Cyrus's myal ritual. Contrary to the full description of the Kumina dance that cures Anita, Brodber is not very specific about the details of Ella's myal cure. Nonetheless, it is obvious that natural forces are closely involved. A "mighty hissing electric storm" breaks out when Mass Cyrus starts the ritual:

> It was the noise that agitated those trees and shrubs that Mass Cyrus kept closest to his person—the bastard cedar, the physic nut and shy shame-mi-lady, mimosa pudica to you. On their shoulders he always placed the sin-generated afflictions of the human world. They felt it. The bastard cedar's eyes were quick to tears….And often times Mass Cyrus used these same tears turned to gum, to glue together a broken heart

or a broken relationship until the organism could manage on its own again. (2-3)

In this ritual, the natural world, through sympathetic "magic," takes up the burden of human sins and facilitates the healing.

Again, Brodber refuses to romanticize the regenerative power of nature by listing the casualties involved in the cure in August 1919. Even the Myalist Mass Cyrus needs to repeatedly excuse himself for causing the havoc outside his grove because after all "[a] man has a right to protect his world" (2). Besides the tens of thousands coconut trees, breadfruit trees and human residences damaged in the storm, "It killed 1,522 fowls, 115 pigs, 116 goats, five donkeys one cow and one mule. Several humans lost their lives…" (4). The tall-tale catalogue attests to the extent of spirit thievery committed upon Ella's psyche. The hurricane that has claimed so many lives is an externalization of Ella's private turmoil. This again in a double-edged way demonstrates the power of Myalism and the extent to which Ella has been traumatized.

Even after all these sacrifices of livestock and human lives, Brodber makes it plain that the myal ritual is just half of the cure. Ella's cure is not complete until she can conceive of an alternative scenario to that of spiritual thievery. She needs to transform herself into a different reader and change the animal fable of Mr. Joe's farm in the children's textbook that serves to mentally indoctrinate Jamaican school children to colonial rule.[17] In this fable that is meant to be a moral exemplum for British colonial subjects, Mr. Joe's animals decide to quit the farm because they want freedom; but they soon choose to return because apparently they cannot take care of themselves outside the farm. The ending of the story reverses the biblical origin: "In no time, life was back on the farm to what it had always been, and no one seemed to remember that there had been an exodus except Ella to whom they gave their depression" (103). Whereas the animals willingly go back to their confinement, Ella is enlightened by this "negative lesson" (103).

Ella's problem with the story authorized by the British colonizers when she rereads it as a teacher and as a victim of spirit thievery is that the colonial textbook offers no "alternatives" (105). Through her discussion with Reverend Simpson, Ella discovers the source of her discontent, a discontent that is personal as well as communal. It is the way in which the colonial writer "has robbed his characters of their possibilities" (106) and, as Simpson terms and defines it, "[z]ombified them": "Taken their knowledge of their original and natural world away from them and left them empty shells—duppies, zombies, living deads capable only of receiving orders from someone else and carrying them out" (107).[18] The greatest crime committed by the colonizer, Brodber suggests, is this zombification of the body and the spirit of the colonized.

At the same time, Brodber is suggesting an embedded alternative story within the colonial one. As Walker-Johnson observes, Brodber's use of animal fable "alludes to the comparisons of the Negro with children or animal in travel books, diaries and some historical writing by Europeans" (60). Within the context of the novel, however, this fable provides a

way to healing and liberation. All the leading figures of Grove Town's spiritual group, for example, are codenamed after the farm animals in the fable. Instead of being ignorant and willing victims of oppression, as exemplified by the animals in the story, this group enjoys a powerful spiritual agency that enables healing through collective efforts.[19] As Evelyn O'Callaghan argues, "The fractured, 'pre-scripted' past of the colonial subject is recuperated and articulated *within*, this time, the group's own diffuse, eclectic creole discourse" (101).

Ella, a willing oral instrument reciting Kipling's verse of "the whiteman's burden" at thirteen (6) and a believer in a fantasy land created out of British juvenile literature and fairy tales, finally understands her own complicity in the theft as that of someone who has been mentally colonized. After all, she also participated in the drama of racial imagination when she first met Selwyn—"Ella saw someone like Peter Pan smiling at her and knew she was feeling particularly warm" (46). She is now rehabilitated into the Afro-Caribbean spirituality, which marks her reintegration into the community. At the beginning of the text "these new people…in-between colours people" like Ella are identified by Mass Cyrus as a source of societal dis-ease and disorder. Toward the end, Ella, with her in-between creole heritage, represents the "new" Jamaican people who are capable of formulating an alternative reading of colonial text, which not only challenges the educational system but also leads to mental liberation and final completion of the healing rituals.

III. *It Begins with Tears* and Collective Healing

Rituals help deliver victims from spirit thievery in *Myal*; likewise Opal Palmer Adisa's *It Begins with Tears* tells how rituals bring forth the healing power of collective sympathy and release the pain of victims who suffer the traumas of physical violation. The title of Adisa's text itself suggests a kind of collective cleansing. Compared to *Myal*, *It Begins with Tears* places even more stress on Jamaican folk/oral culture and rituals with the use of patois in the characters' dialogues. Although traces of Christianity can still be seen in Kristoff Village, the villagers' belief is closer to that of their African ancestors. We don't see any Methodist minister, or a Baptist reverend, just people from the community serve as spiritual leaders. And the name Kristoff is purposely ambivalent since it can either be an allusion to Christ or a pun suggesting that Christ is off in this remote rural area. While there are both God and Devil in the text, they appear to be on an equal footing and amiable terms. The inserted interludes of the Devil's family, in which every member speaks and acts in the most down-to-earth manner, further erase the line dividing the divine from the human, the sacred from the profane. This alternation between the narrative of rural Jamaicans and that of the immortal, to me, also sets up at the formal level a jazz cadence similar to that Kamau Brathwaite is trying to identify in the West Indian novel.[20] In this jazzy text that emphasizes folk culture and rituals Adisa writes about the bodily and mental traumas resulting from neo/colonial contacts, the power of collective spiritual healing, and the importance of narrative memory.

Crucially, the spiritual agency in Adisa's text resides with the women. This emphasis

on female spiritual agency, like Brodber's intertextual dialogue, suggests another effort to connect the traditions of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean women. The importance of conjure women in the poetics of Afro-American women's writing that Houston A. Baker, Jr. has observed may well apply to the Afro-Caribbean tradition,

> In Afro-America, the richest cultural wisdom resides in what Derrida calls the resources of a pharmacy—a space in which mythomania works. African women in America have been wise workers of this space. Embroidering, improvising, troping on a standard pharmacopoeia, they have transmitted the soul or spirit of a culture with rainbringing energy. (99)

While acknowledging the importance of conjure women, I am not suggesting an essentialist or romanticized reading of black women's spiritual power. Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, for instance, demystifies such romanticism by exposing women practitioners' collusion in female castration. Nevertheless, in *It Begins with Tears* Opal Palmer Adisa presents her homage to Afro-Caribbean "wise women" throughout the text. This extended praisesong to women's spirituality is most significant in the ritual performed at the end of the novel in which a group of women, each with their individual grievances, gather at a river to complete the healing that has been in progress throughout the text.

Although not specifically identified by name as in the case of Brodber's myal or kumina, this water ritual performed under the supervision of female spiritual agency is invested with rich symbolic significance. As George Eaton Simpson states in *Religious Cults of the Caribbean*, "Water is a major element in West African religions, and the belief about water and the water rituals of Jamaica revivalists are syncretism of these traits and Christian water concepts and ceremonies, especially of those of the Baptists" (199). The Christian connotation of water baptism is clearly in the text since one of the participants, Angel, imagines that she is "baptizing herself" (214). But the women's water ritual is mostly performed in "observance of their ancestors' ways" (214). Arnella, the priestess in training in the novel, urges the women of her group to search out a private place and "[l]et her, de river, talk to you so she can soothe oonuh worries" (214). Each woman, it seems, needs to articulate her pains before she can come to terms with her suffering. Here the image of the river is also definitely maternal. During her near-drowning, for instance, Angel resigns herself to the maternal power of the water: "Suddenly she was overcome with a desire to know her real mother; she could taste her salty tears mingling with *the warm, sweet, breast milk that was the river water,* and she allowed herself to surrender, feeling very close to the mother she never knew" (214 emphasis mine). The regenerating and nurturing power of the river water/milk nurses Angel, as well as the other women, into a new life and reestablishes bonds with "mothers" they were deprived of long before.

The ritual of bathing is performed foremost as a communal service. When the individual bathing is done, the women gather again, circling and splashing water on the one most in need of healing. With this support from a "community of women," Monica breaks

her silence and is able to name the violators of her body. As a former prostitute, Monica is portrayed as a sensual woman who enjoys physical pleasure. She is punished for this indulgence in self-centered pleasure. But her punishment, the peppering of her vagina and womb by three village women, goes beyond the limit. One of the most serious crimes presented in the novel is violation of the female body and therefore demands the greatest effort in terms of exorcism. Moreover, a violation against one woman in the community is portrayed as a transgression against all. Hence when the peppering Monica suffers is discovered, all the women who come to her rescue participate in the suffering, "The lips of their vaginas throbbed in sympathy, their wombs ached, and their salty tears left stain marks on their faces" (136). The ritualistic expurgation of traumatic experience is also carried out in a physical and collective way: "Monica's moans were a circle that enclosed the women, forcing each of them to release their internal frustrations and bottled anger. Monica began to throw up bile and the stench caused the other women to hold their breaths and widen the circle" (216). This ritual therefore involves both private and collective cleansing. This assemblage is like Kai Erickson's description of a community that has experienced a collective trauma: "a gathering of the wounded" (187).[21]

Even Angel, an educated black woman from the United States, whose class and educational experiences are seemingly different from those of the village women, shares this kinship. Raised in the privileged society of upper-class whites, her trauma originates in the shock of discovering her "colored" identity since "[u]ntil she was eleven Angel believed she was white" (93). Upon this discovery she begins to see herself as others have seen her. Angel is hence forced into the symbolic order of racial difference through a traumatic mirror stage. After an unsuccessful attempt at taking her own life, Angel learned to put on an indifferent exterior to disguise her difference; yet her life in this rural Jamaican village and her participation in the women's ritual give her a sense of closeness and security. First, in the funeral service for Beryl's mother right before the water ritual Angel finally allowed herself to shed tears because she realized, "Grief was not a shame to be experienced in private or concealed from the rest of the world" (198). Her joining her village friends in the ritual further leads her to a symbolic rebirth and a biological membership in this sisterhood. As mentioned above, in the water she tastes the "milk" that she was denied as a child. Near the end of the novel Angel even discovers her blood kinship when she finds her long lost mother in Beryl, who could not feed nor raise her daughter because of the trauma of rape. At this point Angle's symbolic function in the novel becomes clear: as an embodiment of the neo-colonial relation between the United States and Jamaica, Angel is at once the "evidence" of a crime committed against Beryl's body and a way to the latter's salvation. As in Morrison's *Beloved*, the "ghost" of the daughter has to come back before the mother can recognize her own worth.

Angel's biological kinship comes as somewhat of a surprise although the author has hinted that Beryl lost a daughter in the past. However, the text, as if in agreement with its character, remains taciturn about Beryl's rape trauma. Although there is no injunction of

silence from the white rapist, Beryl keeps the reason for her broken body and spirit a secret. For five years Beryl was literally mute when she returned to the village after the trauma. Even in the narrative present she does not know how to communicate her feeling when disturbed by an imagined calling of a child:

> But Beryl had forgotten how to open her mouth and talk. She no longer remembered the pleasure of sitting with a friend and enjoying a good laugh. She no longer felt the satisfaction of telling someone her mind and knew the taste of her tears. Beryl had lied to herself too long. (35)

Beryl as a trauma victim becomes socially aphasic; along with the loss of language she loses the capacity to enjoy ordinary communal life. What she needs is to regain speech through narrative memory.

Narrative memory, according to French psychologist Pierre Janet, "consists of mental constructs, which people use to make sense out of experience" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 160). To make a traumatic experience into a narrative memory, in Toni Morrison's terms, is to make something "unspeakable spoken." Providing a narrative form for an unspeakable memory helps the victim go beyond the dis-ease of individual suffering and reach the reality of a history, in this case, the history of physical and mental colonization. In Adisa's text the ritual of female sympathy preludes and provides a way of re-gaining access to the past and allowing it to attain the form of narrative memory. Not until the village women gather at the water and perform the ritualistic bathing is this persistent "latency" broken. In Beryl's case the "incubation period" has lasted for more than twenty years.[22] This total resistance to memory on Beryl's part bespeaks the extent of her psychic numbing as a rape victim who is trying to forget the perpetrator. When she finds a place in the river, Beryl is "willing to unload, to forgive herself, to begin again to remember the early light of daybreak that was a sign of perfect beauty and hope" (214). But first she needs to calm the voice of her lost child who has been calling out to her for years. Rescuing Angel from drowning is a way to stop the voice and to see the sunshine again. So when another priestess Dahlia announces—in the spirit of Ole African's enigmatic phrase in *Myal* about "The half has been told" (34)—that "[s]till some things not said dat need to be said" (220), Beryl is finally able to release herself from her self-imposed repression and start her story.

What Beryl recounts is how she was raped by a white American tourist in the famous northern resort of Montego Bay, the white man's excuse being that "I've decided today is the day that I'll have Jamaican meat….I know about you black women; I've had plenty where I come from" (224). Clearly the author means that what has been violated is more than the body of a single Afro-Jamaican woman. What has been repressed and told again is a collective story of black women who have been racially dehumanized and sexually exploited ever since the beginning of the black diapsora. It is also a story about how Jamaica has been ravaged by white tourism. The gruesome details of how Beryl is ordered to change the sheet after the rape and forced to perform sexual servitude repeatedly for her rapist attest to the ways in which race, gender, class, and capitalist neocolonialism conspire to break black women. In the words of Miss Cotton, the spiritual leader of Kristoff Village, "There was too much evil in the world. Too many pains that could never be eased, too many memories for tears to erase." Whereas Afro-Caribbean women were physically exploited during slavery,

an institution originated in colonial economic expansion, they now continue to suffer in a new economic order based on tourism.[23]

Beryl's physical and mental cleansing is completed with a steaming herbal bath attended by all village priestesses: "After she had steamed for about fifteen minutes, Dahlia and Olive sponged her body, Valerie dried her off, and Miss Cotton anointed her body, telling her she was clean and unblemished again, fit for the best of men" (228). This ceremonial ritual signals Beryl's full return to communal life. Adisa even compensates Beryl for the lost time with her daughter by again giving her a chance to raise a female infant, whose mother was one of Monica's violators and died in childbirth. Through magical water baptism and rituals of rememory, Beryl, Angel, and Monica finally triumph over their traumatic experiences and set to continue their life stories. Ending the novel on a positive note, Opal Palmer Adisa is undoubtedly casting a nostalgic glance toward her island childhood while affirming the liberating power of folk rituals and female sympathy in this community at the same time.

In both *Myal* and *It Begins with Tears* we witness gendered embodiments of traumas resulting from the encounters between the United States and the Caribbean. Both novels aim to exorcise sources of evil both within and outside of the community. Together Brodber's and Adisa's stories of Afro-Caribbean rituals bring forth a part of the Afrosporic narrative memory, thereby delineating a way to healing and resistance. This investment in Afro-Caribbean memory is as ambitious as Morrison's historical project in *Beloved*. It also lights a way for Afrosporic women "to re-source America[s]," as William Boelhower phrases it (28). Moreover, by exploring the links between the "shipmates," the Afro-American and the Afro-Caribbean communities, through creolized spirituality, Brodber and Adisa are making an effort to formulate a New World writing that addresses the complicated colonial and neocolonial interrelations between the United States and the Caribbean and to work toward structural changes of these neo/colonial situations. With the courageous examples of their African American predecessors such as Zora Neale Hurston, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, Afro-Caribbean women writers like Brodber and Adisa will continue to enrich the black literary tradition in Americas and contribute their creative energies and genius into the construction of a New World tradition of women's writing.

Notes

[1]Shorter versions of this paper have been presented at the conferences "Black Liberation in the Americas: The Third International Conference of Collegium for African American Research," University of Westphalia, Münster, Germany, 3-7 March 1999 and "Reading the Fin de Siécle, Writing the Millennium: Comparative Literature at the Crossroad: The 8th Quadrennial International Conference on Comparative Literature in the R.O.C.," Tamkang University, Taipei, Taiwan, 27-29 August 1999. I would like to thank the National Science Council of Taiwan, R.O.C. for five years of generous support for my research on Caribbean Women writers. Also I would like to express my gratitude for the insightful comments from the editor and two readers of *MELUS.*

[2]This is the term that Morrison uses in her *Beloved* to indicate the effort to uncover the unsightly past of history.

[3]Murphy borrows the term "ceremonial spirituality" from William A. Wedneoja, who uses it to describe Jamaican Revival (204n6). Murphy defines this particular diasporan spirituality thusly: "I am interested in the way in which each tradition constructs and develops a code of relationships between human beings and 'spirit,' however this word may be defined. These activities toward the spirit are the tradition's 'spirituality.' Each tradition 'shows' these relationships, enacts it spirituality, in community activity, that is, in ceremony" (2). Murphy further quotes Victor Turner's aphorism: "Ritual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory" (203n3). I believe that "ceremonial spirituality" aptly represents the non-European spiritual tradition. I nevertheless choose to use "*rituals* of rememory" here because of my special emphasis on the potentially transformative power of these Afro-Caribbean rituals.

[4]This writing process further helped Brodber create *American Connection*, an academic work that explores the black diaspora in the Americas. Adisa also addresses the loss of political alliance owing to a mistaken distrust between Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans" (" I Will Raise the Alarm" 26).

[5]See the section on *nommo* in Brathwaite's "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" for a delineation of the secret power associated with word/name (236-42).

6Harris describes the way how limbo is practiced: "The *limbo* dancer moves under a bar which is gradually lowered until a mere slit of space, it seems, remains through which with spreadeagled limbs he passes like a spider" (18).

[7]Vodun is commonly known as Voodoo, one of the many religious practices of African origin. There are many different ways to spell Voodoo, such as Vodou, Vodoun, and Vaudon. According to the editors of *Sacred Possessions*, the term actually "evolved from the Dahomedan word *vodu* or *vodun*, meaning spirit or deity" (3-4).

[8]In his comparative study of Haitian vodou, Brazilian candomblé, Cuban santería, Jamaican Revival Zion, and the Black Church in the United States, Murphy identifies three common features of diasporan spirituality: "its orientation to Africa, its reciprocity of spirit and human being; its sharing of the spirit in the service of the community" (185). For a more specific example, his interpretation of vodou is worth quoting: "Haitian proverbs say: 'Haiti is the child of Dahomey'; 'Haiti is the child of Ginen.' Followers of vodou remember the different African nations of their forebearers as long lost children remember stern parents. They have been given a harsh destiny by the spirits, but the lwa have come to their aid again and again. Ginen lies over great waters, and it is a memory of crossing waters that underlies the liturgy of vodou" (38).

[9]According to Burton, Jamaican syncretism and creolization had created a correspondent religious continuum by the 1820s, "ranging from the Euro-Christianity—principally Methodist—of the free colored class through the 'Creo-Christianity' of the white-led Baptist

churches to the black-led Afro-Christianity of the slave masses" (37). From 1838 to the present, a succession of Afro-Jamaican religious practices, including Native Baptism, Myalism, Revival, Kumina, Bedwardism, Pentecostalism and Rastafarianism, have appeared on the Jamaican scene.

[10]In his analysis of the Romanticist's reaction to the concept of obeah in England from 1797 to 1807, Alan Richardson also points out the ideological function of obeah in respect to collective memory. Richardson states, "As did Voodoo, Obeah played a role at once inspirational and practical in facilitating resistance and revolt among the slaves: it provided an 'ideologically rallying point' in sanctioning rebellion, afforded meeting places and leaders, and formed a repository for the 'collective memory of the slaves' by preserving African traditions which could be opposed to the dominant colonial culture" (173-74).

[11]Anancy stories are popular trickster tales featuring Anancy the spider as the central character. Significantly, in *Banana Bottom* the homage to obeah is delivered by a respected English folklorist Squire Gensir, who is clearly modeled after McKay's patron and the compiler of *Jamaican Song and Story* (1907) Walter Jekyell. McKay's ambivalence reveals a compromise between middle-class and roots values.

[12]This is quoted in a footnote in Carolyn Cooper's *Noises in the Blood*. In the same note Cooper further alludes to Warner-Lewis's unpublished paper "Masks of the Devil: Caribbean Images of Perverse Energy": "Warner-Lewis argues that the universe is governed by opposing energy flows, one, which is creative/sustaining ('good'), the other, destructive/negating ('evil'). The myal/obeah dichotomy seems to have its genesis in an afrocentric cosmology where good and evil, though distinguishable, are derived from a common energy source" (16n2).

[13]I am indebted to Professor Wlad Godzich for this reference and his kind reminder against reading obeah and myal dichotomously.

[14]Brathwaite observes that originally the principle of obeah was to seek healing and protection through identifying the source or cause of the disease or fear but was debased by the slave master and missionary. Thus he suggests that to understand obeah properly we must restore it to its proper place in the Afr/american communion complex (195-96n10)

[15]Miss Gatha is the "queen" in this Kumina dance. Schuler describes the role of the "queen": "Controlling ritual secrets and ritual paraphernalia, including the two Kumina drums—the large *kimbanda*, a base drum; and the smaller, higher-toned playing kyas (cast?)—is the responsibility of a queen and her disciples, who together constitute a Kumina band. The queen, the most important officer, leads the dancing, and, with her attendants, formally presents petitions from a living family to the shades. Greatly respected, queens are 'scientists' like their Myal counterparts—counselors, doctors, and ministers to the people" (73).

[16]Selwyn's family inheritance is also an ironic comment on the way in which racism has turned a would-be healer into a spirit thief.

[17]Brathwaite points out how education has been used to attack African religions in order to control ex-slaves in the Caribbean (196-97). See Tiffin's insightful analysis of how the library and the classroom had been used as tools of cultural invasion and colonization. Cooper also points out that "[w]hat Brodber actually writes in *Myal* is an alternative curriculum that challenges the process of zombification whereby the colonised/educated mind assumes the convenient state of living dead, easily manipulable" (3).

[18]One of the most well known descriptions of zombies is perhaps in Zora Neale Hurston's anthropological fieldwork *Tell My Horse* (1938). Hurston describes how the Haitian zombies are spoken of: "They are the bodies without souls. The living dead. Once they were dead, and *then* they were called back to life again" (179). She also provides a real life example of a Haitian woman who reappeared as a zombie after being dead for 29 years. In Voodoo practices, Hurston explains, the victim of zombification is either chosen to be a

beast of burden, a target of an act of revenge, or someone who has been offered "as a sacrifice to pay off a debt to a spirit for benefits received" (182).

[19]Kortenaar argues against Tiffin's metaphorical reading of *Myal* and makes an interesting distinction between ancestral and demonic possessions in the novel, the former providing a chance for the Afrosporic peoples to share the wisdom of their African ancestors and the latter being the kind of evil spirit thefts of Levi and Selwyn. She regards Grove Town's spiritual group as performing a kind of ancestral spiritual communion: "This is a communion with ancestral spirits that is related to Kumina but does not involve trance. In Brodber's novel, the spirits Willie, Dan, and Perce have been in conversation for centuries—ever since Africa….These myal spirits possess living hosts in each generation….The link between spirit and host is mutually beneficial: the spirit gains bodies through which they can act in the present, and the living acquire memories that extend back centuries. They attain a spiritual force with which to act on the world, and the means of communicating with each other across distances" (53).

[20]In "Jazz and the West Indian Novel," Brathwaite defines the "jazz novel" as follows: "Dealing with a specific, clearly-defined, folk-type community, it will try to express the essence of this community through its form. It will absorb its rhythms from the people of this community, and its concern will be with the community as a whole, its characters taking their place in that community, of which they are felt and seen to be an integral part" (107).

[21]Erickson points out that besides the typical clinical way of looking at trauma as something personal that draws an individual into a state of isolation, trauma can also work in an opposite, centripetal way by creating "a spiritual kinship" among people who are similarly marked (186). The women in *It Begins with Tears* clearly share a similar kind of spiritual kinship because they are always already "marked' by the collective experience of being black, female, and diasporic.

[22]In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud theorizes traumatic neurosis as a kind of pathological amnesia or an "incubation period" or "latency" before the effect of a traumatic experience becomes apparent. See Caruth's chapter on *Moses and Monotheism.*

[23]A quote from a website reveals a history centered around tourism in the area: "Originally developed into one of the world's premiere tourist destinations around the turn of the century, Montego Bay is experiencing a new renaissance and is well positioned to enter the next century, more popular than ever." (http://www.fantasyisle.com/mobay.htm)

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大專學生參與專題研究計畫成果報告

被厭棄者之復返 --- < 微物之神 > 中雙胞胎的創傷

The Return of the Abject:

The Twins' Trauma in The God of Small Things

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一、中文摘要

在進行此研究前，原先的主題是東妮．莫里森的著作《摯愛》(*Beloved*)中女主角塞絲創傷的再記憶與重生過程，但在接觸文本與批評文獻後，發現研究者早已多不勝數，而，我在閱讀過阿蘭達蒂．洛伊(Arundhati Roy)的《微物之神》(*The God of Small Things*)後，對書中種姓階級制度下的創傷故事亦多所感觸，遂決定以《微物之神》為本，重新著手另外一個研究主題。

《微物之神》是阿蘭達蒂．洛伊初試啼聲之作，此書於一九九七年獲得英國布克文學獎。這是一部悲劇小說，洛伊在書中呈現了性別壓迫和種姓制度下的階級宰制，並深入人性的殘酷面。小說的場景主要設在南印度的克洛拉(Kerala)。艾斯沙和瑞海兒是一對七歲的雙胞胎，故事的悲劇便在他們眼前推展、揭露，讀者則經由雙胞胎的觀視而領會到何謂「野蠻的天性」。故事裡大部分的事件是在一九六九年中的兩個星期內發生，這對雙胞胎目睹、經歷了英國籍小表姐的溺斃、已離婚母親和賤民情事的曝光、兄妹被迫分散，至家族的衰落與崩解。

克洛拉的人們因不同的宗教信仰區分成數種群體，印度教佔絕大多數，基督教、回教繼而次之，儘管如此，印度教中的種姓階級制度(Caste system)卻是深深地內化在其他宗教信仰中，因此，克洛拉的種姓制度亦是世代傳承，階級上的逾越相當少見。於此，洛伊的《微物之神》實際上是在描繪此禁制下有關性別和階級的逾越，而故事中最大的逾越情節即是雙胞胎母親阿慕和賤民維魯沙的戀情。

這篇論文首先將根據朱莉亞．克麗絲蒂娃(Julia Kristeva)有關「厭棄」(abjection)的心理分析論點來追溯雙胞胎在印度父權階級宰制下的心理創傷。作為見證人，他們目睹了種姓制度如何排拒賤民和他們的母親；排拒的結局導致了維魯沙的死亡，阿慕亦被驅逐出自己原屬的階級，迫使雙胞胎和母親不得不分離。接著，我將討論此創傷經驗如何糾葛在雙胞胎的成長過程中，揮之不去。就艾斯沙而言，在阿慕和維魯沙的關係曝光後，他被迫指控維魯沙強暴了阿慕。由於做出偽證而合理化了維魯沙所遭受的暴力迫害，之後，他漸漸地沉默，放棄了語言並渴求一母性空間(Chora)的慰藉。對瑞海兒而言，她試圖以出國來逃避記憶，然而卻因為恐懼自己如同母親般被排拒而無法得到平靜。當雙胞胎長大成人時，終究為了這創傷經驗而回到傷心地。在重建記憶與過去之時，他們發展出亂倫關係，藉此，雙胞胎於創傷中釋放了自我而得到新生，過去頗受壓抑的「母性形象」則因而象徵性地復甦。

關鍵字：創傷（trauma）
種姓制度（Caste system）
厭棄（abjection）

二、英文摘要

Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize with her debut novel The God of Small Things in 1997. The novel is set in Kerala of southern India. With a tragic story of transgression, she not only presents the oppressions of gender and caste but also provides an in-depth exploration of the dark side of humanity. The tragedies are unfold in the story before the eyes of Estha and Rahel, a pair of seven-year-old "two-egg twins," and it is through their perspectives that the "nature of brutality" as suggested in the novel is understood. Most episodes of the novel happen during two weeks in 1969. The twins witness and experience the drowning of their British cousin, the disclosure of the affair between their divorced mother and an Untouchable man, the forced separation between brother and sister, and the falling apart of their family.

Although people in Kerala are divided into several religious beliefs, such as Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, the caste system is internalized by all. Therefore, the caste system in Kerala is maintained generation after generation and allows little social mobility. According to this, this story is actually about "transgressions" that come from confinements based on caste and gender. And, in the novel, the most serious transgression refers to the affair between the twins' mother, Ammu and the outcaste, Velutha.

Based on psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva's conception of "abjection," this paper first tries to trace the twins' traumatic experience as they encounter Indian patriarchy. They witness how the patriarchal caste system abjects the outcaste and the mother, which results in the smashing of Velutha, expulsion of Ammu from her original caste status, and separation of the twins with their mother.

Then, I will discuss how the trauma haunts them during their processes of growing up. Estha, is forced to confirm the rape charge of Velutha when the affair is blabbed out. Silence traps him for committing such a perjury and further the cause of violence. Rahel, on the other hand, never gets peace because she is always afraid of being abjected like her mother. Even when she goes abroad she cannot escape the memory. When they grow up, they return to the sad place and re-construct the tragic experience. The twins finally get psychological release and metaphorical rebirth by developing an incestuous relationship, through which the "mother" that is formally repressed now symbolically returns.

The Return of the Abject: the Twins' Trauma in The God of Small Things

Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize with her debut novel The God of Small Things in 1997. With a tragic story of transgression, she not only presents the oppressions of gender and caste but also provides an in-depth exploration of the dark side of humanity. The novel is set in Kerala of southern India. As Emily Gutheinz comments, the novel tells "the story of forbidden affections, of children abused and criminalized, and of families ruptured" (Gutheinz). These tragedies are unfold in the story before the eyes of a pair of seven-year-old "two-egg twins," and it is through their perspectives that the "nature of brutality" as suggested in the novel is understood. Most episodes of the novel happen during two weeks in 1969. The twins witness and experience the drowning of their British cousin, the disclosure of the affair between their divorced mother and an Untouchable man, the forced separation between brother and sister, and the falling apart of their family. Based on psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva's conception of "abjection," this paper first tries to trace the twins' traumatic experience as they encounter Indian patriarchy. They witness how the patriarchal caste system abjects the outcaste and the mother, which results in the smashing of Velutha, expulsion of Ammu from her original caste status, and separation of the twins with their mother. Then, I will discuss how the trauma haunts them during their processes of growing up; finally they have to go back to the sad place and re-construct the tragic experience. I argue that the twins finally get psychological release and metaphorical rebirth by developing an incestuous relationship, through which maternal presence that is formally repressed now symbolically returns.

This story, as Roy puts it, is about "transgressions" that go against the social restrictions about caste and gender. And, in the novel, the most serious transgression refers to

the affair between the twins' mother, Ammu and the outcaste, Velutha. In the story, Ammu appears as an abjected woman at the beginning. The term "abjected" comes from Kristeva's conception of "abjection." Kristeva bases her argument on the theory that "the emergence of the 'self' depends on the constitution of the 'not-self' " (Li 6). According to this, the subject has to separate itself from "the abject" that is part of the subject. She also suggests that abjection happens for "what disturbs identity, system, order" (*Powers of Horror* 4). In The God of Small Things, the caste system acts as the "subject" that abjects part of itself, that is, the transgressors, because they don't "respect borders, positions, rules" (*Powers of Horror* 4). In the story, Ammu is one of the transgressors. She has actually committed multiple transgressions in the novel. First of all, she marries a man of Hinduism, although she belongs to Kerala's Syrian Christian community. Then, she has an unhappy marriage that ends up with a divorce and brings her twin children home, suffering from "the constant, high, whining, mewl of local disapproval" (*The God of Small Things* 42). In Kerala, the twins regard Ammu not only as their Ammu but also as their Baba who loves them "more than Double" (142). This woman, although is repressed in reality, acts in spirit as an omnipotent mother in the twins' minds. However, the twins realize that the mother is powerless under the Indian patriarchal system because Ammu's brother, Chocko, tells them that legally "Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property" (56). The twins' first lesson in abjection is that as a divorce Ammu is a shameful woman with low status in the family who relies on men's support and could be abjected at any time.

Eventually, the system cannot put up with the resistant woman who is "from an intercommunity love marriage" (45), a feeling of abjection, like "loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung" (*Powers of Horror* 2), overshadows Ammu's last transgression, her affair with the Untouchable man, enters in the twins' minds and makes them innocent complices of the abjection of Ammu and Velutha.

Unlike Ammu, Velutha is a Paravan who comes from the lowest of the Untouchables. Although people in Kerala are divided into several religious beliefs, such as Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, the caste system is internalized by all. As a result, Roy mentions that the Syrian Christian community shares "their Hindu neighbors' revulsion at Untouchability" as "Caste Christians" (Jaggi). Therefore, the caste system in Kerala is maintained generation after generation and allows little social mobility so that the community can ensure "the permanence of ascribed marks of caste purity or pollution" (Chatterjee 194). The Untouchable men are similar to women who are controlled by patriarchy and also under the danger of being abjected by the caste system. Although the Untouchable are regarded as polluted outcastes, it is undeniable that they actually constitute a section of the society. Their existence, their untouchability, becomes an unspeakable taboo of the caste India.

Yet, in the story, the twins consider Velutha as an ideal father, because they lack a father figure after Ammu's divorce. "They had grown to be the best of friends" although being "forbidden from visiting his house" (*The God of Small Things* 75), as the narrator tells us. This downward, trans-class identification, in some degree, threatens to undermine the reified differences of the caste system. When the affair between Ammu and Velutha is blabbed out, the patriarchal caste system reacts to Velutha's transgression with the law and the rape discourse and promptly proclaims that the Untouchable man raped Ammu.

By doing so, the system can again rationalize the power to dominate and enslave the lower class and reestablish a firm grip on social classification. Besides, like "inoculating a community against an outbreak" (293), the system intends to abject and is ready to react to any potential threat. By resorting to the rape discourse, the system thus tries to uglify the Untouchable man. When the police catch Velutha, "they noticed his painted nails" which are painted by the twins only for fun, "…waved the fingers coquettishly at the others," and called him "AC-DC," an androgyne (*The God of Small Things* 294). Here the police are operating under a homophobic discourse which imposes feminine features on Velutha, trying to combine the images of women with the Untouchable. That is to say, the "androgynous," Untouchable Velutha blurs the borders of gender and caste, and it's hard to define him. He becomes a monstrous figure that draws forth "civilization's fear of nature, men's fear

of women, [and] power's fear of powerless" (292)--he has to be abjected. At last, the police even tread on his penis, which is a symbolic revenge of the system in its attempt to control by castrating the Untouchable man.

In the incident, the twins first witness how the police as representatives of the caste power smash Velutha till he is critically hurt. To save Ammu, furthermore, they have to commit a perjury by accusing Velutha of rape. Yet, they cannot stop the patriarchal caste power from abjecting Ammu, who according to the system has been polluted. Later, the brother, Estha, is sent away. Ammu then dies. And Rahel, the girl child, goes to America to escape from the tragic memory. Though in different places, the twins both cannot free themselves from the traumatic experience. They have to find a way to heal. And, although Ammu is abjected after the affair is revealed, she acts as a mother whose influence "doesn't disappear because of abjection, it is repressed only in consciousness and becomes a subversive power in the Symbolic world" (Tsai 41). And the power will gradually come back during the twins' re-construction of self-hood and their healing of the trauma.

On the day of doom in 1969, when Estha said yes to confirm the rape charge, we are told that for the twins "childhood tiptoed out" and "silence slid in like a bolt" (*The God of Small Things* 303). After his separation from Ammu and Rahel, language becomes meaningless for Estha and he becomes mute. As Michael Payne suggests, it is a social law that " 'the symbolic dimension which is given in language' governs every social practice" (19). We can infer that, Estha's rejection of language seems to be a rejection of this social law. Besides, as far as psychoanalysis is concerned, "using language and identifying an imaginary father mark how one gets on in the Symbolic order" (Tsai 38), a world which is dominated by reason and patriarchy. In the novel, Estha first loses Velutha, an imaginary father figure. Later, he loses the company of language and merges into a life of silence as he grows up. This kind of double losses makes Estha become a subject who refuses to enter into the Symbolic order and thus loses a place to adhere to and becomes homeless. Therefore, he keeps wandering to and fro. Thus, in the story, Estha is always walking--"he started his walking" and "walked for hours on end" (*The God of Small Things* 14).

Later, it becomes clear that in his search for a "home," Estha turns to "chora," a feminine space that is "nourishing and maternal," "in which the linguistic sign has not yet

been articulated" (Payne 239). Therefore, in the space there is no possibility of speaking. The loss of language traps Velutha, and "it rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, fetal heartbeat" (*The God of Small Things* 13). Estha's state of silence makes him in a similar position to a fetus who longs for a warm womb, the ultimate maternal space. Thus, maternal image emerges because of his desire. This "mother" is not simply a repressed one as before. The maternal presence may have a chance to return and respond to Estha's desire.

Estha's rejection of language, we can say, is his rejection of the role of a witness whose use of language has furthered the cause of violence. His silence, at the same time, also reflects on the fact that the truth of history is in danger of becoming voiceless because of its unspeakablity. Therefore, Roy has Rahel return home in 1992 after years of sojourn in the United States. Now she comes back to remember what she tries to forget. She becomes instrumental in the process of re-constructing the traumatic experiences. Rahel speaks for Estha's silence, witnesses for "the nature of brutality" and so that both of them may "exorcize the memories that haunted them" (182).

In The God of Small Things, Rahel is an inheritor of her mother's image. She not only inherits "her mother's melted wedding ring" (88) but also the destiny brought by the ring, that is, a divorce. Unlike Estha who turns to embrace an abjected mother figure, Rahel shows an ambivalent feeling toward the relationship to her mother. She is always anxious how Ammu may want to reapportion Love between Estha and her and is thus always afraid for "a little less her Ammu loved her" (*The God of Small Things* 107). Nevertheless, when she realizes that the caste has abjected Ammu, she considers that "she hated her then." "*Hated* her" (153).

However, to Rahel, she is Ammu. They share the same fate because they are both women under the control of the caste system and the patriarchy. In addition, as Roy describes it, she "appeared to have grown into the skin of her mother" (88). The relationship between

mother and daughter in the novel, therefore, is ambiguous and can't be so simply put down as hatred. Also, Julia Kristeva suggests that to a daughter, the state of symbiosis--"I am She, She is I" (*Black Sun* 29)-- is how she considers the relationship with her mother. Therefore, the abjection of mother is actually the abjection of the daughter herself. And, the horror of being abjected will be locked in the daughter's mind, haunting her till death, if she doesn't release herself from it. For this reason, the daughter, Rahel, has to regain the maternal power and rebuild an image of her mother to fight against the repression of the Symbolic world and finally breaks away from the destiny of being abjected.

As a result, the twins instigate a way for release by committing incest to satisfy Estha's desire for a mother and comfort Rahel's fear of being abjected. In the story, the twins are also somehow cured of the trauma when they develop an incestuous relationship, which signifies the symbolic return of the repressed mother. To Estha, Rahel is the "spokeswoman" of his mother, because he considers her as the one who has "their beautiful mother's mouth" (*The God of Small Things* 284) and the one who had "grown into their mother's skin" (283). To Rahel, on the other hand, she watched Estha "with curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin." Although she "flew these several kites at once" (89), she chooses a maternal role at last.

Through sex, the twins carrying a traumatic memory have a chance to heal. Their losses and ambivalence get a way out so that they regain a sense of completeness and peace. Estha successfully gets a mother figure that he desires; Rahel also saves a "mother" from being abjected. At the same time, through the sexual relationship, the twins get a symbolic reunion after twenty-three years of separation from each other. Finally, both of them symbolically return to the Mother's womb, the place where they have an unbreakable connection.

Desiring for Mother, becoming Mother, and returning to Mother, these are three

ways of the maternal power to subvert the laws of the Symbolic world in the novel. To the twins, this is also a mission of "saving Ammu." However, it's quite different from the last time when they become complices in the rape charge and indirectly kill Velutha. When they grow up, as the witness of the trauma, they try to collect all the episodes, find the victims covering by History, and look for a way for release. This time, they symbolically complete the mission and save Ammu from being repressed. The sufferings of the trauma finally find a way out. As Dori Laub, M. D. suggests, traumatic experiences must be re-constructed even if it is repressed, because "it nevertheless invariably plays a decisive formative role in who one comes to be, and in how one comes to live one's life" (Laub 87). The incest, to the twins, is definitely a "decisive formative role," through which they reunite and throw away all sadness with maternal comforts. Therefore, the incest influences how they come to be, and how they come to live their lives. In other words, the incestuous relationship gives the twins a rebirth.

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