

**'HYBRIDITY' IN THE
NOVELS OF ANANDA
DEVI**

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Abstract

Hybridity is a term that has garnered a great deal of attention in the postcolonial world and has considerable critical purchase in the contemporary world. Its proponents, from Bakhtin (1981) and Bhabha (1994) to more recent theorists of hybridity in its various forms are many. However, it also has many dissidents. Hybridity's ambiguous status as a colonial, negative term that has been reappropriated to undermine notions of purity and essentialism, can be quite problematic. Nevertheless, in its more positive aspects, it can prove to be quite enabling for postcolonial intellectuals like Ananda Devi. Devi expresses this point of view in an interview where she speaks of herself as being 'hybride dans le bon sens du terme' (Indes Réunionnaises 2003).

This thesis examines Devi's novels in order to gauge the extent to which these can be read through the lens of hybridity, especially given the recent reference to texts emanating from the Indian Ocean as being hybrid (Hawkins 2007, Prabhu 2007). Chapter One investigates the positive aspects of hybridity that Devi underlines in her interview, namely her ability to use the different cultures and traditions at her disposal in her writing. The chapter demonstrates the linguistic hybridity (Bakhtin 1981) and formal hybridity of the novels, which is the result of Devi's own upbringing in multicultural society. The subsequent two chapters focus on what can be interpreted as the negative aspects of hybridity. The second chapter explores the psychological dislocations of Devi's characters who cannot reconcile two identities either because they are made to choose one identity over the other or because they do not have the memory of the ancestral past. This chapter looks at Bhabha's notion of hybrid identities (1994), in order to determine whether this concept of 'hybrid identities' is possible in Devi's novels. The third chapter explores the concept of hybrid bodies using theories of the grotesque (Bakhtin 1984 and others), suggesting ways in which Devi uses othered bodies in order to undermine the notion of categorised identity and social classification that is prevalent in the Mauritian society she depicts.

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Introduction

' [Je] me perds totalement dans mon propre corps démembré. Pagli.
C'est moi.' (P : 31)

'[...] une femme seule qui cherchait un lieu où elle aurait pu se
rassembler et redevenir entière et une.'(P : 153)

Daya-Pagli, the eponymous character of *Pagli* (2001) highlights the problems surrounding the negotiation of identity in the society depicted by Ananda Devi. Her yearning for a single identity stems from the inability to construct a stable and coherent Self because of the complex notion of belonging(s) that is prevalent in Mauritian society. Indeed, as the narrator describes the 'mofines', the guardians of Hindu traditions in *Pagli*, the notion of attachment to India is highlighted as Daya-Pagli is burdened with her Indian ancestors' will. In her own words: 'elles ont tissé des liens entre ces gens venus d'ailleurs et moi' (P: 42), while she does not recognise their values as her own nor does she think she owes them anything: 'je n'avais fait aucun serment d'allégeance à tant d'inconnus' (P: 43). Daya-Pagli, in the text, remains the only Hindu woman who does not follow the 'sentier tracé pour [elle]' (P: 41). The notion of belonging is complicated because Daya-Pagli lives in her own present and seeks a future with a man she loves. Conscious of herself as an inhabitant of an island rather than the Indian sub-continent, she repeatedly denounces the insistence on clear boundaries being maintained between the different communities on the island, especially since the man she

loves is Creole,¹ that is of mixed African descent: 'la Pagli et Zil. L'entrave. La transgression. La petite faille qui deviendra grande [...]' (P: 106).

Pagli highlights an interesting aspect of Mauritian society, namely the attachment of Indians to their ancestral 'home', prompting some researchers to refer to the island as 'Little India', given that the population is 70% of Indian origin.² However, Mauritian society is multicultural and multi-linguistic. It has been referred to as a 'hybrid' space by a few critics: Peter Hawkins includes it in his *The Other Hybrid Archipelago* (2007), for example. 'Other' in Hawkins's title refers to the Caribbean, from where theories of *métissage* and 'Créolité' have emanated. In Mauritius, the population is a mix of descendants of mostly French colonizers, African slaves, Indian indentured labourers (Hindus and Muslims) as well as Chinese traders, who have all lived together in relative harmony since the colonial period.

Culturally speaking, there are different ethnic groups that each has a public holiday attributed to them in an attempt at showing equal rights for all communities. Similarly, there is proportional representation in the National Assembly, 'So, no matter what the result by party in the general election, this

¹ According to Hugh Tinker, 'The term "Creole" is employed with very different meanings. Originally, it meant persons born in the sugar colony, whose ancestors came from France (by contrast to those who were actually immigrants from France). Very soon a local man of pure French descent was distinguished as 'un créole français'. The general term 'créole' was applied to persons of mixed descent who followed the Catholic religion even though they were also descended from slaves or 'free men of colour'. Gradually, the term was extended to all Mauritians: except the Indians' (Tinker 1977: 324). Nowadays, however, only those of mixed African descent are referred to as Creoles in Mauritius.

² Indeed, Patrick Eisenlohr's study of diaspora in Mauritian society is entitled 'Little India' (2006).

guarantees seats for ethnic minorities such as the Chinese and Muslims' (Srebrenik 2002: 278). This system has been criticised by Hansraj Mathur who asserts that it involves the 'constitutionalisation' of ethnicity (Mathur 1997: 60-4), which exacerbates the existing divide between the different communities on the island. Nevertheless, each community tends to participate in the cultural festivals of the other and as such it is not uncommon to find Creoles celebrating Cavadee, the Tamil religious festival, and many people, who are not necessarily North Indians, walking to Ganga Talao for Maha Shivaratree, while members of the Chinese community also make cakes for Diwali, for example. Yet, there is still a marked rift between the communities as they do not want to lose their ancestral identity through intermarriage (except in many cases for the Creoles who have mixed ancestry), or their place within hierarchy that has been established since independence, with Hindus at the top and Creoles at the bottom, although Franco-Mauritians remain the wealthiest.

English, French and especially Creole are the languages that are used on a daily basis by the majority, but most individuals are associated with a community through an original ethnic language that almost nobody speaks fluently or frequently.³ In Patrick Eisenlohr's words, 'in fact few of these languages are actually used in everyday life, and among them Mauritian Creole is by far the most dominant and is known by practically all Mauritians' (Eisenlohr 2006: 30). This paradox highlights the nature of culture in

³ For more analyses of the positioning of language in Mauritius see Lionnet (1993), Hookoomsingh (1993).

Mauritius: one that is highly mutable and constantly being interrogated by Mauritian authors like Ananda Devi.

Hailing from the Mauritian Telegu community, Devi writes from France, where she has lived for almost thirty years and was educated in the United Kingdom. She remarks 'je considère l'hybridité comme un processus essentiel pour reconnaître ce qu'on est, parce que ce qui nous réunit c'est peut-être justement le fait d'être issus de composants différents' (Devi in Corio 2005: 149). She states,

Je me sens bien le produit d'une telle coïncidence de cultures: j'ai puisé de toutes les ressources culturelles et créatrices qui m'étaient ouvertes dès l'enfance du fait que j'étais née à Maurice [...] pour devenir aujourd'hui quelqu'un d'hybride dans le bon sens du terme. Je me sens Mauricienne parce qu'un peu Africaine, un peu Européenne, un peu Indienne. C'est une richesse formidable dont je suis pleinement consciente, tant est immense le bonheur que je ressens à détenir les clés de ces grandes civilisations. (Interview Indes Réunionnaises 2003)

Thus, for her, hybridity is inscribed in the very fabric of Mauritian society. However, there are different kinds of hybridities as evidenced by 'dans le bon sens du terme' and even the positive type of hybridity is not lived in the same way by everyone. In fact, many resist it or deny it. Given Devi's statement about her own hybridity stemming from the society she was brought up in, and the influence of all the 'ressources culturelles' on her writing, this thesis considers the forms of hybridity that appear within Devi's text and their significance as representations of Mauritian identity. I propose to define and contextualise hybridity. I then place hybridity in the Mauritian context in order to gauge whether hybridity actually corresponds to the formal and thematic aspects of Devi's texts. There are different variants of hybridity in the

postcolonial world and I attempt to demonstrate the different ways in which Devi's novels can be read through the lens of hybridity and whether this notion of hybridity as being both positive and negative can be seen in the different texts.

Hybridity: History, reappropriation and current debates

Hybridity is one of the terms that are most commonly deployed in current postcolonial contexts. Hybridity is not only a subject of intellectual inquiry but also a critical tool through which cultures and identities are analysed. In the constantly mutating intellectual terrain of the postcolonial sphere, hybridity is perpetually being reworked and appropriated by critics and theorists in different parts of the world. Used today in multifarious ways and across disciplines, it also has a very charged history.

First used in botanical terms, hybridity refers to the genetic combination of one or two species to produce a third which has characteristics inherited from all its component agents. In such cases, the hybrids are usually sterile. This concept of hybridity was appropriated during the colonial period to refer to children born of white and black parents. Robert Young remarks that a hybrid is in technical terms a cross between two different species and thus hybridity evokes both the botanical term and the Victorian conviction

that different races were other species (Young 1995: 10). In this way, hybridity developed as a negative notion since the white colonizers upheld the belief that their colour and race were superior to the colonized Other, who were more often than not enslaved because of their so-called barbaric nature and blackness. Hybridity thus became a form of racial corruption for Europeans and the hybrid a category emblematic of the undermining of whiteness (Farr 1864). While intercourse between the European master and the African slave frequently took place, the children born of those illicit relationships were generally not recognized by their white fathers. Hybridity as a colonial concept thus intensified notions of binaries and dichotomies because the ostensibly essential nature of the White Self and the Black Other was the basis for the understanding of hybridity as a form of dilution of their race.

Consequently, 'hybrid' became a categorization of its own, in French often under the term 'métis/se'. In certain parts of the world, it was mostly given negative connotations as the hybrid does not in reality belong to any specific community, though sometimes he/she was perceived positively, as a 'part White', that is people who were fair skinned were perceived as superior to their Black counterparts. In the worse cases those who were 'métissés' were marginalized and rejected by the other 'pure' communities. While evidently essentialism held currency in colonial times, the advent of decolonization, and later postcolonialism, radically transformed the notion of hybridity. For Ania Loomba, 'Postcolonial studies have been preoccupied with issues of hybridity, creolisation, mestizaje, in-betweenness, diasporas and liminality, with the

mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism' (Loomba 1998: 173). The range of terms employed by Loomba reflect the number of theories that have attempted to create a discourse that endeavours to contextualize the postcolonial condition. Theories of hybridity, 'mestizaje' or 'métissage' abound in a world which is characterized by culture-mixing, for it is societies like Mauritius that have spurred the rethinking of notions of identity and culture in the postcolonial world.

In the last decade or so, many theorists have tried to approach hybridity as a means of countering the hegemony of Western identity politics. The concept has appeared before to highlight the mixing of cultures in different ways. Alfonso De Toro calls hybridity 'a paradigm, a condition of our time' (2006: 11), and in the Francophone world, Edouard Glissant looks at it from the point of view of 'relation' and 'tout-monde' (1990, 1997). For Prina Webner (1997), hybridity has two forms, based on the concept adopted by Bakhtin for the analysis of discourse (1981). Indeed, for Bakhtin, organic hybridity is a natural process wherein in all cultures incorporate elements from others as they come in contact with them, while intentional hybridity creates an ironic double consciousness, a 'collision between differing points of views on the world' (Bakhtin 1981: 360). However, Bhabha, one of the main proponents of hybridity does not make this distinction. Discussing the notion of hybridity with John Rutherford, Bhabha states: 'all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity' (1990: 211). While Bakhtin argues that it is intentional hybridity that permits dialogue between these different

perceptions, Bhabha conflates organic and intentional hybridity by using the same term to denote both processes.

Indeed, for Bhabha, 'the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to [him] is the "Third Space", which enables Other positions to emerge'(1990: 211). Thus, Bhabha transfers the notion of hybridity from the biological and racist spheres to the spatial. Bhabha's hybridity is one that proposes to shift the location of culture and identity to the liminal space, that is, outside the dualities of centre and margin, of Europe and the Third World. It represents the will to move from the fixed to the fluid, to the space of the 'in-between', for, 'an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness. [...] it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order', writes Bhabha (1994: 94). He argues that the Third Space is a productive space from which alternative perspectives and new conceptions of identity are possible. However, since it is born of the attempt to undermine predetermined colonial identities and categorizations, Bhabha insists that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or post-colonial provenance (1994: 56).

Similarly, Latin-American theorists have attempted to conceptualise the notion of a space that is enabling in its transcending of barriers of state or identity. Thus, the physical space of the border has been appropriated by theorists like De Toro for whom "'border"[...] is no longer a separating or excluding concept but rather a "transversal" or "hybrid" category - a site of

enunciation and a strategy for thinking about the World, Life, Subject...’ (2006: 10). As with Bhabha, the physical space of the border allows for a renegotiation of identity and subjectivity, the margins permitting an expression of multiplicity due to their contact with other cultures. Analogously, there are shifting paradigms that include the gendered and geographical perspective. Gloria Anzaldúa, for example, envisages the border as a space where she can fully enact her role as a mestiza lesbian chicana, that is her sexuality, gender and cultural positioning: ‘Because I, a mestiza, /continually walk out of one culture/ and into another, / because I am in all cultures at the same time, /’ (1987: 77). It ultimately also becomes the space that exists ‘wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy’ (1987: “Preface”). In this space, ambiguity is enabling as it permits the taking up of several positions simultaneously.

Borders are both physical and notionally fluid spaces but they can acquire their own cultural specificity. Such is the theory of Renato Rosaldo. According to Rosaldo, ‘border zones’ are ‘neither necessarily coherent nor always homogeneous’ (Rosaldo 1988: 87). Rosaldo’s concept is analysed in Lionnet’s introduction to *Postcolonial Representations* where she highlights the importance of a hybrid language ‘that is a site of creative resistance to the dominant conceptual paradigms’, in the ‘border zones’ of Rosaldo (Lionnet 1995: 6). In this respect, the frontiers provide a means of locating the

marginalized voices that were heretofore silenced because of their inferior positions as subalterns or hybrids belonging to no specific community. Lionnet's use of Rosaldo's theory of the 'border zones' in her introduction to analyses of works by African, Caribbean and Mauritian authors' works demonstrates the applicability of such theories to writings emanating from different regions. Rosaldo, like Anzaldúa and Peña, advocates a view of the border as unfixed and mutable and this characteristic renders it malleable, much like Bhabha's 'Third Space' or hybridity.

However, hybridity comes with its dissidents even within the sphere of postcolonial studies. Those who oppose the theory cite several reasons, amongst which are its historical baggage, the problem of the reification of the term and the lack of cohesion of the theories themselves. Indeed, in the first place, as has been set out, hybridity has colonial resonances. As Vinay Lal and Anand Lal aptly note, the re-appropriation of hybridity is also form of resistance on the part of theorists like Bhabha, whose objective is to move the focus away from essentialist binaries (1992: 71-2), but despite all this, the term carries with it its negative connotations. Hybridity is reminiscent of colonial prejudices and eugenic biological legacies. Borsó, in this way, has reservations about the use of the term 'hybridity', especially because of the understanding that it is based on the mixing of two or more stable cultures: '[h]ybridity is a questionable term. It means the crossing of plants, and metaphorically, of cultures. However, if we consider hybridity as an ontological property of culture, we still presuppose homogeneity to be a previous mode of culture'

(Borsó 2005: 39). Mapping the trajectory of hybridity, Nicholas Papastergiadis notes the ambivalence associated with the term, an ambivalence that it carries in its wake even in the postcolonial sphere:

For as long as the concepts of purity and exclusivity have been central to a racialised theory of identity, hybridity has in one way or another, served as a threat to the fullness of Selfhood. The hybrid has often been positioned within or beside modern theories of human origin and social development, mostly appearing as the moral marker of contamination, failure or regression. Yet, one of the 'achievements' of poststructuralist theory was to liberate the subject from notions of fixity and purity in origin. (Papastergiadis 1997: 257)

The question is then whether it is possible to construct a new theory that purposes to shift from binaries while using a word that carries with it the very notions that are being undermined.

Secondly, one of the issues that are highlighted by critics is that of reification, that is, there are risks that while hybridity is supplanting the notion of an all-encompassing single and stable identity, the idea of unity is still appealing. The problem revolves around the question of methodology, that is, how to advocate a notion of hybridity that does not become a new identity. For example, it is Radhakrishnan's belief that hybridity, as a new model, will serve as a new category of identification and thus become another means of fixing identity again: 'though theoretically speaking, it would seem that hybridity functions as the ultimate decentring of all identity regimes, in fact and in history, hybridity is valorized on the basis of a stable identity [...]' (Radhakrishnan 1993: 753). Radhakrishnan's criticism of hybridity unveils a concern with the different kinds of hybridities that exist in the world, for there is Western hybridity and Eastern hybridity: one is laden with positive,

enabling virtues and the other is marked by the agony experienced by the subject, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Moreover, Arif Dirlik criticises Third World intellectuals who, from their prominent positions in academia, in the First World, propound theories that are far from being practical in their countries of origin. For him, Bhabha, Spivak and Said, the trinity of postcolonial studies, are too far removed from the lived reality of Third World countries to arrive at the most suitable solution for the feeling of dis-ease that prevails in the postcolonial world (Dirlik 1994: 328-56). In addition, as it has been pointed out, Bhabha, for example generalises his concept of 'the postcolonial intellectual' who is supposed to 'elaborate a historical and literary project' from 'this hybrid location of cultural value' (Bhabha 1994: 248). For him, all postcolonial intellectuals seem to share the same values and status. This has provoked severe rebuttals from various theorists. For instance, Anne McClintock states: 'women and men do not live postcoloniality in the same way' (1994: 261). Similarly, Aijaz Ahmad remarks that 'the postcolonial subject in Bhabha's theory is remarkably free of gender, class [and] identifiable political location' (Ahmad 1995: 13). Discussing hybridity as a concept, Spivak herself remarks that the preoccupation with hybridity in academic discourse is at the expense of gender and class division (1995). Hybridity thus has many drawbacks, as with all concepts. Yet, as Bill Ashcroft et al have stated:

Hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen to be the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past

and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth. (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995: 183)

Thus while the theory of hybridity has certain flaws, it remains one of the principal features of the postcolonial world.

However, there are different models of hybridity. In the early nineties, Ella Shohat, writing on the 'post-colonial', voiced concerns regarding the notion of hybridity and the necessity of differentiating between different types of hybridities. She remarks:

Negotiating locations, identities, and positionalities in relation to the violence of neo-colonialism is crucial if hybridity is not to become a figure for the consecration of hegemony. As a descriptive catch-all term, "hybridity" per se fails to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political cooptation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence. The reversal of biologically and religiously racist tropes - the hybrid, the syncretic - on the one hand, and the reversal of anti-colonialist purist notions of identity, on the other, should not obscure the problematic agency of "post-colonial hybridity." (Shohat 1992: 110)

Like Radhakrishnan, Shohat maintains that hybridity can become a totalizing mode of conceptualising agency and also glosses over the very differences that underlie the dislocations experienced by various peoples.

This brings us back to Devi's notion of hybridity as quoted at the beginning of this introduction. For Devi, hybridity involves being able to use different traditions that are available to Mauritians because of the multiple influences that are present on the island. It is an enriching experience wherein as a Mauritian she feels she is 'un peu Africaine, un peu Européenne, un peu Indienne'. However, whether each of the communities of the society live this

hybridity in the same way is debatable. The distinctive colonial history and the consequential specificity of Mauritius in a postcolonial age are very important from this perspective.

Mauritius : A Socio-Linguistic History

Second island in size and distance from Madagascar, Mauritius is named after Prince Mauritz (Mauritius in Latin) Van Nassau, the stadtholder of Holland in the sixteenth century. Although Arabs and Portuguese had visited the island before the Dutch,⁴ the latter were the first to settle down in Mauritius in 1638.⁵ They attempted to deforest and construct buildings, as well as to bring slaves to help them in their settlements, but the inclement weather conditions and the marooning of slaves who rebelled against them spurred their subsequent return to Holland in 1710.

The island's strategic position in the Indian Ocean was then exploited by the French, with Guillaume Dufresne d'Arsel claiming Mauritius as the property of King Louis XV in 1715 and renaming it 'Ile de France', the name it kept until the British took possession of the island in 1810. The French governors encouraged the development of the island as a sugar colony, importing slaves and establishing sugar estates everywhere in Ile de France.

⁴ The collective name of Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues is the Mascarene Islands, which was given to them by Dom Mascarenhas a Portuguese sailor who visited the islands in 1512.

⁵ For more information see Richard B. Allen *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Labourers in Colonial Mauritius* (1999: xiii, 2, 12-13, 35-54); Jean Houbert 'Mauritius: Independence and Dependence', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (1992).

Under the government of Mahé de Labourdonnais who arrived in 1736, Ile de France successfully flourished as a trade centre and sugar exporter, while towns and villages also started growing under his management. The subsequent governors such as Pierre Poivre maintained this economic expansion, so much so that the British Empire began to be interested in its potential as a colony.

Moreover, the fact that French privateers and licensed pirates, according to William Miles, 'greatly antagonized the British, the usual targets of the maritime raiders' (Miles 1999: 213), encouraged British sailors to attack the troops stationed on the island. French General Decaën admitted defeat in December 1810, and Ile de France reverted to being Mauritius. The island continued to prosper economically under British rule, with the sugar industry reaching its peak during the 150 years of British government. With the advent of the abolition of slavery, the British resorted to mass-scale importation of indentured labourers from India to ensure that the production of sugar and its by-products would not be affected by the former slaves' release from the plantations. Mauritius became independent in 1968 and in 1992 became a republic.

According to Devi, Mauritian society is 'une société plurielle [...] aux clivages marqués,' (in Corio 2005: 146). One of the most important factors that have contributed to plurality in the Mauritian society is immigration. Mauritius has no indigenous population and its population 'consists exclusively of the descendants of immigrants who have arrived in consecutive

waves since 1715' (Eriksen 1994: 552). These 'waves' are of two different orders: the first is that of slaves, both African and Indian who came to the island compelled by their masters to join the settler community and work for them, and secondly the large-scale immigration of indentured labourers from India. The first African slaves brought to the island by the Dutch fled to the forests and were later exterminated by French troops in the 1720s and 1730s (Miles 1999: 213), but those who arrived under the French government form the earliest ancestry of the current Creole population in Mauritius. Aside from them, many of the French colonizers did not leave after the island became a British colony and thus there is a vibrant community of Franco-Mauritians on the island. Together, the Creoles and Franco-Mauritians form the category of Mauritian society referred to as 'general population', with Catholicism being the common denomination.

Both William Miles and Hugh Tinker point out that the popular Creole identification with the continent of their forefathers is ambivalent: to them Africa is 'barbarous' and this contempt is extended to Madagascar as well (Miles 1999: 225, Tinker 1977). Interestingly, their detachment from the land of origins and recognition of Mauritius as their real nation has led the Creoles to 'regard themselves as the only genuine Mauritians' (Miles 1999: 219). Nevertheless, in recent years, there has been a growing sensitization towards the slavery past, and one of the current main public holidays in Mauritius is the first of February, which is generally recognized as emancipation day on the island.

In 1993, Father Roger Cerveaux, a Catholic priest, coined the terms 'Le Malaise Créole' to refer to the tension present within the Creole community. Edward A. Alpers has observed 'the significant absence of an educated African elite in the Indian Ocean world as one of the historical features that has contributed to the general lack of awareness of the diaspora in this part of the world' (Alpers 2000: 87). This is mostly due to the low academic attainment of the Creole population. While in the Caribbean, intellectuals of African descent like Aimé Césaire and Marcus Garvey have established discourses using their land of origins, Africa, in Mauritius no such theories have been developed. Miles remarks, 'Creoles are stereotypically regarded, by themselves as well as by other Mauritians, as those Mauritians who have adopted an epicurean philosophy, enjoy partying, eschew savings, and put little stock into education' (Miles 1999: 219), and as such they do not have sufficient means of providing extra tuition to their children who therefore take up the same low-paid jobs. This vicious circle results in the constant economic and social marginalization of Creoles.

Freed slaves did not stay on the plantations where they had suffered at the hands of the French masters; instead, they went to the coastal areas and into towns to seek a living, mostly as fishermen, stevedores and so on.⁶ The sugar cane fields were thus mostly worked by Indian labourers both Hindus,⁷ and Muslims who therefore received minimum pay and yet continued

⁶ For more information see Jean Houbert (1981).

⁷ Hindus came from different states: Bihar, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

arriving in droves. Putatively, this was because quite a few were cheated into believing that they were in fact going to Calcutta and instead boarded ships to Mauritius. For example in *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (2002), Khal Torabully and Marina Carter include case studies of Indians who were compelled to sail off to Mauritius in this way. Stories of how credulous Indians were convinced that they could find gold under the rocks in Mauritius are found in literary works,⁸ but also in real-life accounts of the 'Coolies'⁹ that Torabully and Carter quote. Thus, according to Hugh Tinker, 'in 1830, the population was approximately 100,000 of whom 76,000 were slaves imported from Africa; by 1871, the population had increased to 317, 069. Of these, 216, 258 were Indians' (Tinker 1977: 324).

Indentured labourers were alternately victimized and praised: they were sought after for their resilience, but paid a high price, sometimes even with their lives (Allen 1999: 56). Wary of the tradition of 'maroonage'¹⁰ that had been instilled during slavery, sugar planters treated the Indian labourers as slaves¹¹. As Allen remarks, 'faced with the need to control a huge alien workforce, planters and their allies in the colonial government relied upon the same kinds of measures they had used to control the island's slave population'

⁸ See Nathacha Appanah *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or* (2003) and Abhimanyu Unnuth, *Sueurs de Sang* (1987), first published in Hindi as *Lal Pasina*.

⁹ 'Coolie' is the term that was often used to refer to Indian indentured labourers, especially out of derision. It refers, in India, to the man who carries luggage for travellers and is quite pejorative in this context. Torabully's 'Coolitude' seeks to re-appropriate the word in the same way as Césaire re-appropriated the word 'nègre' in his Negritude movement.

¹⁰ 'Maroonage' is the noun that Allen uses to refer to the fact that slaves fled to the forests to escape life on plantations, i.e. became maroons. (Allen 1999: 56)

¹¹ The Royal Commissioners appointed to investigate the treatment of Indentured labourers in 1872 use the terms "traditions of slavery" (Allen 1999: 56).

(ibid: 56) Constantly repressed, they started their own movements of resistance in the first half of the twentieth century, with such figures as Manilal Doktor and Anjalay at their head. For about a century, Indians in Mauritius were considered to be outsiders,¹² but gradually they started owning or renting land to produce sugar, thus becoming part of the social and economic landscape. With this economic contribution and the social mobility that accompanied it, they were also able to afford education for their children¹³. Not only is the Mauritian population today 68% of Indian origin, but most government employees, politicians, economists and educated individuals hail from this community.

The Indian and Creole populations of Mauritius have therefore undergone quite different patterns of development. On the one hand the Creoles' jobs as fishermen and low-paid servants did not allow for much social advancement and education remains limited, whilst on the other, Indo-Mauritians have progressed and prospered. Moreover, while the Creoles were forced or chose to adapt to their master's way of living and religion, the Indians' initial marginalization kept them separate and within the cultural and traditional boundaries of their own group. The British policy of letting the immigrant population keep their distinct customs and traditions, which was perpetuated after independence (Eriksen 1994, Mahadeo 1999), ensured that the Indians had the freedom to practise their religion, so much so that temples

¹² For more information on the social positioning of the Indians in colonial Mauritius, see Tinker (1977)

¹³ See Houbert (1981: 98).

were built all over the island. The Indians themselves can be divided into North Indians and South Indians, and subdivided into various communities: Marathis, Gujratis, Biharis, Tamils and Telegus, who each have their own religious practices and cultures.¹⁴ Hence it is to be expected that India is still considered to be a part of the Indo-Mauritians' life and that political and cultural relations with the subcontinent are preserved.

According to the 2000 census, the ethnic population of Mauritius is approximately 52 % Hindu, 15% Muslim, 3 % of Chinese origin and 30 % are classed as 'General population', that is of either Franco-Mauritian descent or of mixed/mulatto/Creole origin.¹⁵ Schools conduct classes in various languages from years one to six, and ethnic languages become optional in secondary schools.¹⁶ English is the official language and the primary one of courts and parliament, while most educated Mauritians speak French as their second language.¹⁷ Creole (also referred to as Kreol or morisyen) is the language spoken by the vast majority of the population, an estimated 95% according to Prabhu (2007: 55), but it is not valued as a primary language. Like most Mauritian authors, Devi chooses to write in French 'le français m'est

¹⁴ The Muslims came from Bengal but have for long associated themselves to Islam rather than to India, which explains their support of Arabic and Pakistani politics.

¹⁵ For more information, see Peter Hawkins, *The Other Hybrid Archipelago* (2007:5, 9, 13, 98, and 100).

¹⁶ For more on languages at school see the special Edition of *Notre Librairie* on 'Littérature Mauricienne', 114, pp.32-35.

¹⁷ As Miles points out, most Mauritian parents 'want their children to achieve maximum proficiency in English and French' (2000: 227), for economic and social motivations, as the current language of globalization is English, and the French language remains privileged. It is also for social, political and economic purposes that the country is a member of both the Commonwealth and 'La Francophonie'.

venu tout naturellement en tant que langue d'écriture parallèlement à l'apprentissage de la lecture dans cette langue [...] Je puis ainsi dire que le français a grandi avec moi et en moi et que j'ai grandi avec le français. Il n'y a pas eu d'interrogation à ce sujet ni de conflit personnel' (Devi Interview with Sultan 2001). For her, French remains the language in which she can 'exprimer l'émotion' (ibid). Coming from a certain 'milieu', she believes her Creole is not as complete as the 'Créole des rues' with all the images, constructions and its very 'puissance' (ibid), so that French remains the language she privileges. Thus, while she writes about a variety of characters who sometimes come from the bottom rungs of society, French remains the language that she uses throughout, although 'l'affleurement du Créole a son importance' (ibid).

Devi's notion of hybridity where she is able to take advantage of 'une telle coincidence de cultures' and the different canons and traditions that accompany them, is a product of the multicultural society. While the identities are plural on the island in terms of ethnicity, she conceives the result on the people, including herself, as hybridity, that is, a mixing of the different cultures. Similarly, in her study of Mauritian society through literary texts, Srilata Ravi maintains that Mauritian society is 'culturally hybrid but ethnically plural' (Ravi 2007: 47). Thus, while there is one ethnic belonging associated with the ancestral language, the individual is still influenced by different cultures.

However, if identity in Mauritius depends on which ancestral language the individual associates himself with, what happens to the segment

of the population who have lost their ancestral tongue, the Creoles? How should they define their identity in Mauritian society? The question this also raises is whether their sense of identity can be as stable as the rest of society. Anjali Prabhu suggests that the African (and Malagasy) narrative is 'suppressed' in Mauritian political discourses, leading to the 'difficulty of articulating hybridity' because of the Creoles' predicament (Prabhu 2007: 51). Moreover, the fact that they choose to claim 'French as [their] language of identity, while in general considering [themselves] superior to Indians', as Prabhu states (2007: 61), further complicates their identity, since they are not Franco-Mauritians. Prabhu defines two models of hybridity which she temporarily calls 'diaspora' and 'creolization'; the first one is the shared link between people who have been displaced and share a 'homeland' and remains essentialist, while the second one implies a mixing of tradition and culture through interaction with different cultures (Prabhu 2007: 4). If Mauritian society is to be analysed from this perspective, Indo-Mauritian communities would belong to the diaspora. However, she maintains that the Creoles cannot fit into 'creolization' comfortably for the reasons stated above.

This Indo-Mauritian-Creole dialectic is important in Mauritian society and in Devi's novels as her main protagonists hail from these two communities. As will be outlined below, the question of ethnolinguistic belonging and the problem of hybridity has not been addressed extensively in critics' interpretation of Devi's novels, although Hindu religion has been analysed by Srilata Ravi (2006), as well as aspects of Creole identity (2007).

Patrick Eisenlohr's (2006) study of Mauritian society through ethnology and language is so far the only book-length non-literary analysis of this phenomenon, while Anjali Prabhu devotes two chapters to it, with the first focusing on policy and politics on the island, and the second on a literary study of Marie-Thérèse Humbert's *A l'Autre bout de moi* (1979). This thesis attempts to analyse hybridity 'dans le bon sens du terme' as well as in the negative sense, in Devi's texts, with particular attention to the representation of the Creole and Indo-Mauritian communities.

A brief review of Mauritian Francophone literature and criticism.

There is a long tradition of literature in French in Mauritius, and indeed in the Indian Ocean itself. Anthologies devoted to Francophone literature in the Indian Ocean have been published in the early 1990s, edited by Camille de Rauville (1990), Jean-Louis Joubert (1991), Joubert again in collaboration with Liliane Ramaroso and Amina Osmane (1993)¹⁸. These have provided a list of all authors from the Indian Ocean up to the point of publication, analysed some of the works and highlighted the main concerns of the writers: those of insularity, the relationship with France, amongst others. While Rauville sets out the principal attributes of what he calls 'L'Indianocéanisme', that is the blending of French traditional writings with

¹⁸ Camille de Rauville, *Littératures francophones de l'Océan Indien* (1990), Jean-Louis Joubert *Littératures de l'Océan Indien* (1991) et Jean-Louis Joubert, Amina Osmane et Liliane Ramaroso, *Littératures francophones de l'Océan Indien* (1993).

mystical Indian themes, Joubert underlines the discourse of 'La Lémurie',¹⁹ that is the notion of a lost continent that would effectively place the South-Western Indian Ocean as the birth place of civilization. This concept thus reversed the claim of supremacy of the West and dislocated the problematic origins of the population from issues of slavery and colonialism. Many writers from the Indian Ocean have won the praise of French literary circles and some like Robert Edward Hart, a governor of Mauritius, one of the proponents of 'La Lémurie' became members of The Académie Française. More recently, Créolie, a movement started by Jean-François Sam-Long and Gilbert Aubry in Réunion Island, became the first to try and devise an all-encompassing identity for the inhabitants of the islands. The movement resembles that of the Créolité of the Antilles, although it does not extend its influence to all islands of the Indian Ocean.

The Francophone Indian Ocean has not been the subject of many studies: Kumari Issur and Vinesh Hookoomsingh brought together papers in 2001 in their *L'Océan Indien dans les Littératures Francophones*, which deals with a range of themes relating to the islands: from mysticism to mythology, through the quest for identity. Identity is also one of the different themes that Peter Hawkins also discusses in his *The Other Hybrid Archipelago* (2007), which serves as an overview of the current literatures and cultures of the Indian Ocean. Moreover, 2008 saw the online publication of a special volume of *e-*

¹⁹ This notion was discovered by Jules Hermann a Reunionese writer but propagated through poetry by Malcolm de Chazal and later Robert Edward Hart two well-established Mauritian poets.

france on Indian Ocean literatures edited by Julia Waters: “‘L’ici et l’ailleurs’”: *Postcolonial Literatures of the Francophone Indian Ocean*’. The volume comprises a number of articles analysing Mauritian, Reunionese and Malagassy texts in relation to publishing trajectories, the notion of collective memory and postcolonial identities. It focuses on the open dialectic between the rootedness of island literature and the concept of the ‘ailleurs’ either connected with history, that is pre-colonial ancestry or former centres of colonialism in Europe.

With the French settlers’ ties to France, the Francophone literary scene in Mauritius has always flourished. From the arrival of the first ‘Imprimerie’ in 1768 to the modern era, literature in French has been marked by various well-known names. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Voyage à l’Isle de France* (1773) and *Paul et Virginie* (1789) remain the most famous novels published at the beginning of the French rule in Mauritius. Authors like Baudelaire with his *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) have also contributed to the representation of the Mascarene islands in European literary circles. Jean-Georges Prosper in his *Histoire de La Littérature Mauricienne de Langue Française* (1993) highlights the importance of French literary movements in Mauritius: according to him, Mauritian writers echoed the concerns that French Romanticists and Surrealists had for a long time (1993: 28-42), but gradually, they started developing their own particular styles and themes that relate to the very specific situation of Mauritian society. For example, Malcolm de Chazal’s poetry focuses on Mauritian landscape, flora, fauna and mystical experiences.

Marcel Cabon's novels unveil the uniqueness of Mauritian villages. However, for the purposes of this thesis, it is women's writing in Mauritius that must be explored in greater detail.

Before the early to mid-twentieth century, as Prosper has shown, the literary field in Mauritius was largely dominated by men.²⁰ This does not mean that women did not write before this, but merely that they did not receive as much recognition as their male counterparts. Prosper's *Histoire* highlights Raymonde de Kervern (1899-1973), a woman poet, who was as regarded as the first woman to appear on the literary scene in Mauritius. Her contemporary, A.M.V de Kermorvan, also wrote verses and both women shared a propensity towards mysticism and religion. However it was Edmée Le Breton, a writer of the mid-twentieth century, whose metaphysical poetry was praised by such poets as Malcolm de Chazal (Prosper 1993).²¹

The pre-independence period is marked by a shift in the main concerns of women writers. Indeed, whilst until then the few women who were at the forefront of the literary scene in Mauritius mainly wrote poetry, this era sees the publication of Marcelle Lagesse's *La Diligence s'éloigne à l'aube* (1958) a novel portraying Franco-Mauritian society, politics and economy on the eve of the abolition of slavery in 1833.

²⁰ See Prosper's *Histoire de la Littérature Mauricienne de Langue Française* for more on the history of Mauritian Literature in French (1993).

²¹ For more on the women poets of the early to mid-twentieth century and analyses of their poetry see Prosper's *Histoire de la Littérature Mauricienne de Langue Française* (1993)

Marie-Thérèse Humbert is undoubtedly the most well-known Mauritian female novelist of her time with novels that explore themes of social segregation, class, race, family relationships and the plight of women in mixed-race communities. Her best known novels are *A l'Autre bout de Moi* (1979) and *La Montagne de Signaux* (1994). Humbert, Devi's contemporary, had already published collections of short stories and won prizes in the late 1970s, but whose first novel *Rue La Poudrière* was only published in 1989, that is a decade after Humbert's.²²

Over the last two decades, Devi has published a further nine novels which deal with various themes: marginalization, the plight of women, madness, memory (slavery, indenture), religion, superstition, metamorphosis, family relationships, geography and the City amongst others. Devi's novels have won many prizes, both at a regional and international level, with *Eve de ses décombres* obtaining the *Prix des Cinq Continents de la Francophonie* in 2006. It is interesting to note that Devi is the first Indo-Mauritian Hindu woman to obtain a prestigious position in the literary field locally as well as internationally. In a way she has paved the way for new women writers of other ethnic communities in Mauritius, such as Mauritian Telegu author Nathacha Appanah²³ and half Creole and half Muslim Shenaz Patel²⁴. Both share some of Devi's concerns with family ties and the past, as well as with

²² For more on Humbert and Lagesse see Prosper's *Histoire* (1993) which also provides a preliminary analysis of some of their novels.

²³ *Les Rochers de Poudre D'Or* (2003), *Blue Bay Palace* (2005), *La Noce d'Anna* (2007)

²⁴ *Portrait Chamarel* (2002), *Sensitive* (2003), *Le Silence des Chagos* (2006).

the notion of marginalization which is a recurrent motif of contemporary women's writing in Mauritius.

Women writers and the representation of women writers in Mauritius have not been discussed extensively by critics. Shakuntala Boolell and Bruno Cunniah are the only critics to have articulated discussions on the representation of Mauritian women in literary discourses by both men and women writers so far in their work *Fonction et représentation de la mauricienne dans le discours littéraire* (2000). In recent years, nevertheless, Ananda Devi's works have begun to receive a lot of attention. Boolell and Cunniah examine her novels in their sections dedicated to the representation of the Indian and Creole women in the post-independence period, with specific reference to *Le Voile de Draupadi* and *L'Arbre fouet*. . In 2007, Srilata Ravi published a literary ethnography of Mauritius, entitled *Rainbow Colors*. Ravi proposes to look at the image of Mauritius as a 'rainbow' nation and firstly assess the extent to which the purported harmony exists. Secondly, she analyses the concept of skin colour in a society where separation between communities is frowned upon. Patrick Corcoran's introduction to Mauritian writing in *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature* (2007) is emblematic of a shift in the perception of women's writing in the island for the main author he evaluates is Devi, closely followed by Appanah.²⁵ His argument hinges on the themes of madness and hybridity in Devi's writings, which is relevant to the second

²⁵ As mentioned earlier, the most famous or known writers had always been male, which is why Devi was only mentioned in passing by Joubert and Prosper previously (1990, 1993).

chapter of this thesis So far, no published critical work has focused exclusively on Devi's writings.

Interviews (Indes Réunionnaises (2003, 2008), Patrick Sultan (2001-2), Mar Garcia (2007)) have mostly centred on Devi's thematic concerns: femininity, memory, culture and tradition, the status of the island, oppression and the oppression of women amongst others. Alessandro Corio's interview (2005) is perhaps the most fruitful for this thesis as the notion of hybridity is discussed at length. I use Devi's responses to Corio as a means of furthering the debate on the notion of a hybrid language in Chapter One. In addition, the underlying concept of identity is briefly discussed by Guillaume Cingal (*Pagli*, 2001), Jean-Louis Joubert (*La Vie de Joséphin le fou*, 2003), Marson (*Le Sari vert*, 2009) and Christine Rousseau (*Le Sari vert*, 2009) in their respective 'notes de lecture'. These serve as points of departure/comparison in Chapters Two and Three where the psychological and corporeal aspects of the representation of hybrid identity are developed.

Moreover, India is an important part of Devi's writings, as some critics have remarked in various articles. For example, Véronique Bragard in her two articles (2000, 2001) situates the main protagonists as firstly Indo-Mauritian women faced with the traditions imposed on them by the society they live in. In both, Bragard explores the themes of marginality, Karma and suffering that women from this community are victims of in Devi's novels (*Le Voile de Draupadi*, *L'Arbre fouet*), because of their inability to cope with the oppression of such a patriarchal society. Srilata Ravi's article published in 2006, and

reworked into her book *Rainbow Colors*, on the other hand, evaluates the relationship between the Indian woman and religion, but her reading of Devi's second novel is based on Indian perspectives and traditional texts. Both Bragard and Ravi's analyses are relevant to the second chapter of this thesis.

In Devi's novels, issues of religion and communities are very often inextricably linked to femininity and womanhood, as indicated by several articles. Notions of maternity and couple life are briefly discussed by Maya Goburdhun-Jani in her comparative article on Ananda Devi and Calixthe Beyala (2001). More importantly for this thesis, however, the very concept of femininity in Devi's novels is articulated in Julia Waters's article "'Ton continent est noir': Rethinking Feminist Metaphors in Ananda Devi's *Pagli*" (2004). Waters is the first critic to apply Western critical tools like Feminist theory such as Cixous's theories to Devi's novel. In her close textual analysis of *Pagli*, she underlines the intricate metaphors of femininity like the colour red, the ocean and the island itself, while articulating the notion of the feminization of the male protagonist. In 2007, Magali Compan's book chapter entitled "'Cette terre qui me ressemble": Re-writing the Island, Re-writing the Self in Ananda Devi's *Pagli*" reiterates this notion of femininity and feminist metaphors with the image of the Gorgon Medusa, positing *Pagli* as the woman who is the victim of the uncomprehending and inflexible male gaze. Waters's article will be useful in the discussion of Daya's identity construction in Chapter Two, while Compan's use of Greek mythology will further the argument on the use of multiple literary traditions in Chapter One.

Guillaume Cingal and Kumari Issur devote their articles exclusively to madness in some of Devi's works. Cingal's 'Note sur Pagli' (2001) reads the whole novel as an 'affabulation, an 'affolement', suggesting that the entire novel is constructed on the wild imaginings of the protagonist who invents her lover. Whilst Cingal reduces the whole novel to the status of a lie, Kumari Issur views Daya's madness as a means of resistance against the oppressive patriarchal society in her article 'Psychopathologies dans l'œuvre d'Ananda Devi' (2005). Her analysis also includes a close reading of some of the short stories of Devi. Chapter Two of this thesis proposes to look at the madness of characters as a result of 'hybride dans le mauvais sens du terme' as implied by Devi in the quotation cited at the beginning of this thesis.

The notion of madness is very often associated with identity and subjectivity in the Devi's writings. Female subjectivity is one of the main themes of Devi's novels as most of them feature a main female protagonist. One of the first critics of Devi, Françoise Lionnet, has written two interesting analyses of *Rue la Poudrière*, in 1994 and 1995, positing Paule as the 'universal urban subject' and highlighting the close relationship between the individual and the city in the novel. Lionnet's articles on this topic are echoed in an article by Vicram Ramaharai in 2001, which evaluates the position and function of the city in relation to the main character, in the same novel. The same year, Ramharai's attention shifts to the very important quest for identity in Devi's novels in his second article 'Ananda Devi: Repenser l'identité de la femme mauricienne', wherein he traces the tragic trajectory of Devi's

protagonists from Paule to Daya, and concludes that for the lot of women in Mauritius to be better, men would have to be re-educated.

Critics' appreciations of Devi's novels have highlighted different facets of Devi's writings, but some of the most detailed evaluations have stemmed from close analyses of the novels' forms. Indeed, Patrick Sultan (2001), Rohini Bannerjee (2005) and Danielle Tranquille (2004) have analysed *Pagli* and *L'Arbre fouet* in order to extricate the stylistic and formal devices that Devi has used to enrich her texts and according to this thesis, render the hybridity of her novels more apparent, as will be developed in chapter three. Sultan and Bannerjee both look at the hybrid style, circularity and poetic devices present in *Pagli*, although the latter introduces the notion of the 'ghazal' musicality.²⁶ On the other hand, Tranquille does not analyze the poetry in the text, but in the paratext. Her discussion centres on the epigrammatic references to T.S. Eliot in *L'Arbre fouet*. All three critics thus discuss the notion of intertextuality in Devi's novels, highlighting the importance of hybridity within the very form of the novels themselves. These discussions will be points of departure or comparison in Chapter One of this thesis, where I analyse linguistic hybridity as well as formal hybridity in the novel.

Finally, relevant to Chapter Three of this thesis is Magali Marson's article on 'Carnalité et Métamorphoses' (2006) in Devi's novels. Using the Deleuzian concept of becoming as a point of departure, Marson proposes to

²⁶ A 'ghazal' is a piece of Urdu poetry which is often sung. Devi herself asserts that ghazals are part of her writing in her interview with Patrick Sultan, 'Ruptures et Héritages' (2002)

look at the different transformations of characters like Mouna and ambivalent ones like Joséphin as a means of questioning the society depicted. Her conclusion is that the hybrid 'humanimal' represented by the transforming body, an idea conceived by Michel Surya, brings a 'surplus d'humanité' to the characters. Chapter Three uses parts of Marson's article as a platform for the discussion of hybrid bodies in Devi's oeuvre in order to situate these bodies and their function in Devi's narratives. Moreover, another form of bodily resistance is highlighted by Njeri Githire (2009) who analyses anorexia in *le Voile de Draupadi*, and which will be used to analyse the appearance of the *Unheimlich* in Chapter Two.

Chapter Outlines

Existing studies offer little extended analysis of Devi's oeuvre. The current thesis draws on all of her novels from 1989-2009. It proposes to discuss Devi's texts through the lens of hybridity, exploring the multiple ways in which I suggest hybridity can be applied to Devi's texts, and the Mauritian society and identity she depicts. According to Corcoran,

Nowadays writing from Mauritius reflects these hybrid elements of Mauritian society, both through the ethnic origins of the writers themselves (Khal Torabully, Ananda Devi or Shenaz Patel for example), or through a concern to explore aspects of sociocultural diversity on a thematic level (Carl de Souza or Nathacha Appanah). (Corcoran 2007: 111-112)

In this thesis, I examine Devi's texts through different theories of hybridity in order to determine whether hybridity is a useful tool for understanding the various forms of in-betweenness, mixing and dislocations that can be seen in Devi's texts. Each chapter will probe the issue of hybridity from a different angle: linguistic/formal hybridity, the psychological aspects of hybridity as well as corporeal hybridity. The extent to which hybridity is perceived as positive will vary according to the specific focus of each chapter, so that Devi's words: 'hybride dans le bon sens du terme' can be fully examined.

For the purposes of this thesis, linguistic hybridity refers to any way in which languages are used together either through code-switching, that is employing words from different languages in one utterance (Bakhtin 1981), or code-mixing, that is blending languages at word or sentence-level. It also includes instances where the structure and the language do not belong to the same language, for example using the structure of Creole but French words. Linguistic hybridity is a useful term to describe a variety of mixing in the written text as hybrid, through its very definition, implies a fluidity which is relevant when postcolonial texts are analysed. Similarly, formal and textual hybridity refers to the variety of forms that novels incorporate: stories within stories (metanarrative), prose, poetry, prose poetry, dialogue, diverse narratorial voices among others. References to both Eastern and Western literary traditions and demonstrating a wealth of images and mythologies that pertain to both are also important in this context. Chapter One thus explores the nature of the language employed by Devi in order to gauge the extent to

which it demonstrates hybridity. Moreover, C.L Innes argues that some postcolonial writers undermine colonial narrative forms by using different structural and literary devices such as myths and writing against conventional methods through 'formal experimentation' (Innes 2007: 132), in order to mirror their nation's development. To what extent can it be argued that Devi uses formal and textual hybridity in a similar fashion?

Moreover, for Shohat,

"Hybridity" and "syncretism" allow negotiation of the multiplicity of identities and subject positionings which result from displacements, immigrations and exiles without policing the borders of identity along essentialist and originary lines. It is largely diasporic Third World intellectuals in the First World, hybrids themselves, not coincidentally, who elaborate a framework which situates the Third World intellectual within a multiplicity of cultural positionalities and perspectives. (Shohat 1992: 107)

Shohat underscores the empowering aspects of hybridity underlined by intellectuals like Bhabha who seek to find new ways of conceptualising identity as hybrid and positive. Hybrid identities for these intellectuals enable a negotiation of identity that eschews established notions of identity as singular and fixed. A hybrid identity, in this context, is one that can be made up of different identities at the same time. However, not all those who dwell in this Third World are able to constructively and positively negotiate such an identity which remains fluid and unrooted. Chapter Two discusses the extent to which psychological dislocations (splits, doubles, and fragmentation) are caused by the inability to reconcile different identities in Devi's texts. Notions of hybrid identities are called into question and considered under Radhakrishnan's premise that it is between two types of identities that

Mauritians in general are compelled to choose. According to Alberto Melucci, identity is 'both a system and a process' and 'two crucial and perplexing problems arise here: the continuity of the Self and the boundaries of the Self' (1997: 64). Two solutions are proposed: either dissolving the subject or attaching 'ourselves to a stable nucleus in a desperate attempt to reconstitute an essence – for example, by reviving primary bonds of belonging' (ibid 64-5). This chapter explores the loss of primordial identity in the case of the Creoles, and the overemphasis on the ancestral identity when it comes to the Indo-Mauritians in order to gauge how far 'hybrid identities' are firstly, possible in Devi's text, and secondly, whether they can be as positive and empowering as Third World intellectuals intend them to be.

Finally, corporeal hybridity, the third aspect discussed in this thesis, can take many forms. A hybrid body, in this case, can be one that consists of two or more species simultaneously or is in the process of transforming into such a body. It is equally a body that transcends the barriers of race, that is can be white or black at the same time, such as the case of mulattos. It is in general a body that is not easily categorizable and remains ambiguous. Chapter Three analyses the notion of the 'hybrid body' in Devi's texts in several ways: in the first place, the perceived whiteness of a Creole character's body serves as a questioning of identity construction. The importance of language in creating this hybridity is explored in the second section of the analysis when female bodies hover between one species and another. The final section focuses on the bodily hybridity of characters who physically belong to two

species at the same time. Do these hybrid bodies represent to an extent the problematic construction of identity that has been discussed so far in the thesis? To what extent are these characters criticising the Mauritian society depicted by Devi's way of categorizing individuals according to communities?

The Conclusion draws together the various threads of the argument in an attempt to gauge whether using theories of hybridity is a useful way of reading Devi's texts. It also suggests alternative ways of conceiving identity in the Mauritian context.

Chapter One

'Hybrid contexts, hybrid texts?'

Introduction

Hybridity, as argued in the Introduction to this thesis, is a fundamental concept in Mauritian society insofar as Mauritian society comprises several ethnic communities that co-mingle. Hybridity, to some extent, is expected since Mauritian society, on the surface, is quite similar to that of the Caribbean, for example. However, Mauritian society is quite different from other so-called hybrid spaces, because of the compartmentalization of society. Its relationship to language is equally very complex. In positive portrayals of Mauritian society, the image of a rainbow is used to describe the different 'colours' (cultures) that make up the society. Srilata Ravi's literary ethnographic analysis of Mauritian texts takes up the imagery in its very title *Rainbow Colors* (2007). Mauritian critic Isa Asgarally, exploring the socio-cultural landscape of Mauritius in his *L'Interculturel ou la guerre* (2005), argues that the society remains a rainbow whose colours do not mix, highlighting the negative aspects of such a society. This absence of 'mixing' at times extends to language itself. Critics describe the linguistic situation in Mauritius in various ways. For example, Valérie

Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo asserts that 'l'île Maurice, déchirée entre plusieurs langues comme autant de territoires de pouvoir de partage, ne parvient pas à concilier, dans sa littérature comme dans sa politique linguistique, les différentes parts qui la composent' (Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo 2004 :142).

Indeed, language plays an important part in the division of Mauritian society. As Anjali Prabhu has remarked, post-independence political ideologies have treated language as a very sensitive issue: 'Cultural difference becomes an event that is actualized through language and in speech [...] discourses around the language question have always been highly charged in the Mauritian context' (2007: 52, 54), especially since language in Mauritius carries with it the burden of identity. Indeed, ancestral languages determine the identity of each community and thus Mauritian society is fragmented and power is contested within this linguistic segregation.²⁷ It is therefore not surprising that when the political powers had to choose the official

²⁷ For example in the late 1990s an incident involving ancestral languages demonstrated the close association of language with power in Mauritius. Traditionally, Mauritian bank notes feature a few of the languages spoken in Mauritius, including Tamil and Hindi. While Hindi is the language of the Hindu majority, since the introduction of the rupee in Mauritius, Tamil was always the first ancestral language to appear, followed by Hindi. On this occasion the order was reversed, causing Tamil societies to manifest their discontent and resulting in the resignation of the Director of the Bank of Mauritius. While this may be considered a minor incident, the fact that the Director had to submit his resignation demonstrates how politically charged such a decision concerning language in everyday life is, in Mauritian society.

language, it was English that was chosen, both for its importance in the economic world and for the fact that it was deemed to be a neutral language. As Françoise Lionnet (1993) indicates, the Franco-Mauritians' fear that Hindi would be adopted nationally— because of the demographic majority of Indo-Mauritians— played an important role in the choice of English as a middle ground. However, neither English nor French is the mother tongue of Mauritians, of whom 95% claim Creole as their mother tongue. However, as Vicram Ramharai states, 'le français et l'anglais se rattrapent en s'affirmant en tant que principales langues de l'écrit [...] comme celles qui ouvre l'accès à la connaissance et à la promotion' (Ramharai 1993: 31). Yet, English is not the preferred language of literary and aesthetic production: as underscored in the introduction to this thesis, there is still a marked preference for French in literary circles.

Despite critics' remarks about the use of neutral languages to eschew political and cultural impasses, certain critics argue that linguistic hybridity is present in texts emanating from the region, including Mauritius. Norbert Dodille, for instance, asserts that 'la pratique des écrivains de l'océan Indien est indubitablement marquée par le métissage linguistique, sous les formes les plus diverses' (Dodille 2005: 19). Similarly Carpanin Marimoutou (2001) suggests that

linguistic practices reflect the different layers of cultural complexity that make up Mauritian society through the presence of multiple languages. Devi herself admits that she uses the different cultures and traditions at her disposal in order to write, as quoted in the Introduction to this thesis: 'j'ai puisé de toutes les ressources culturelles et créatrices qui m'étaient ouvertes dès l'enfance du fait que j'étais née à Maurice' (Interview Indes Réunionnaises 2003). She is 'hybride dans le bon sens du terme' because she takes advantage of all the opportunities that such a rich background provides her.

Glottopolitics, or the politics of language usage, affect Mauritians on a daily basis, but whether this extends to the literary texts produced by Mauritian authors is still being questioned. In this chapter, I will discuss Devi's novels in the light of differing opinions enunciated by critics, in order to gauge whether there is the emergence of linguistic hybridity in Devi's novels. Whether hybrid contexts give rise to hybrid texts, be it in the language used or in the very form of the texts is a question that this chapter attempts to answer. This chapter also seeks to contextualise the notion of 'métissage linguistique' (Dodille 2005: 19), while comparing it to Caribbean societies in order to highlight the specificity of the Mauritian text's relationship with language. Moreover, the notion of Creole as a hybrid language is also central to the

discussion of hybridization within the texts, and the use that Devi makes of it will be examined, along with the different 'imaginaires'—the hybridity of cultural references such as legends and mythologies—that make up the world of Devi's texts. Ultimately this chapter seeks to analyze the very 'travail d'écriture' that is present in Devi's novels in order to determine whether it exemplifies hybridity.

In this way, it becomes imperative to determine whether a culture becomes hybrid through contact with other cultures and traditions and if this leads to a hybrid literary output, a hybrid language even. The notion of linguistic hybridity is examined by Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*:

It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of a single utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated by one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by any other factor (Bakhtin 1981: 270)

Bakhtin argues that literary language in the novel always demonstrates heteroglossia: it contains a range of stratifications of styles, genres and variegating narratorial voices that lead to a 'diversity of languages' (ibid: 294). Bhabha, discussing Bakhtin's work in the postcolonial context, focuses not on heteroglossia itself but on Bakhtin's 'important attempt, in speech genres, to designate the enunciative subject of heteroglossia and dialogism' (Bhabha 1994: 269). However, I suggest

that in the postcolonial context, the notion of linguistic hybridity becomes embedded in the political ideologies that accompany the choice of styles and language. Dodille defines the concept of 'métissage linguistique' in the following terms: 'il s'agira en général de mélanges discursifs, d'interactivité stylistique, de travail d'écriture, de parlers métis, etc' (Dodille 2005 :16). Accordingly, a hybrid text, is one that, through content and form, shows the blend of diverse genres and traditions, languages and styles that influence the 'imaginaire' of the author. It is with this perspective in mind that Dodille explores the idea that Mauritian literature is marked by linguistic hybridity (Dodille 2005: 19).

The notion of 'métissage linguistique' is opposed to that of diglossia,²⁸ which presupposes an aggressive power relation between two languages, and therefore entails a blending of languages, sometimes to the extent of a continuum wherein the boundaries between languages become imperceptible (Dodille 2005: 16). In order to consider the concept of linguistic hybridity in Mauritius, it is imperative to engage with the politics of language usage on the island. As discussed in the Introduction, the tension that exists between ethnic

²⁸ Diglossia is a linguistic situation wherein two languages coexist in a given space. These are two distinct codes used in specific circumstances. The languages are usually in a hierarchy, with language A being more prestigious and valued, and language B is less valued. This term was coined by Charles A. Ferguson in 1959 in a widely cited article entitled "Diglossia".

languages is obscured through the use of the official neutral language, English, but French is also seen as a culturally privileged language. William F. Miles indicates for example that most Mauritian parents want their children to be educated in English and French (Miles 2000). One interesting aspect of language usage in Mauritius is that there seems to be little animosity between the colonial languages and the local Creole as the latter remains a spoken language and the former highly prized as tools for development and the Arts. Insofar as French and English are seen to represent no particular segment of the population, French is not seen as a threat to ancestral identities. Thus, Devi's texts pertain to a class of writing appreciated for the aesthetic value it brings the Mauritian literary field. As Maryse Condé aptly remarks, 'the main contribution of this new generation of writers living in exile is to eliminate the opposition between "colonial language" and "mother tongue"' (2000: 34).

However, this is the opposite of what happens in the Antilles for example, where French is seen to be the language of the oppressor, of the colonizer and Creole the language of the inhabitant and the site of resistance. Writers like Chamoiseau, Bernabé and Confiant engage with the complex and difficult relationship they have with the French language, preferring to turn towards Creole as their language of

resistance and identity. It is thus that they came to establish the notion of 'Créolité' in 1989, followed by the second Creole manifesto *Lettres Créoles* (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1999). In the Mauritian context, Creole has a different status: if a tension exists, it is not essentially between Creole and French but between Creole's two statuses: that of the signifier of identity and that of the hybrid language. As a language that was born as an interface or middle ground between the French masters and the African slaves, later reinforced by words belonging to Indian languages, Creole is emblematic of hybridity and the ability of languages to mutate and adapt to different situations. Yet, the fact that the descendants of slaves and the mixed population in Mauritius have lost their original languages through the centuries has led to their association with Creole language (Prabhu 2007: 60). Furthermore, while Creole is a properly scripted language in the Antilles, it remains only a spoken language in Mauritius, despite the efforts of writers like Dev Virahsawmy who uses Creole as a medium of writing.

Moreover, in her comparison of the uses of Creole and linguistic hybridity in Antillean and Mauritian texts, Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo argues that the language in Antillean texts becomes a ' "langage social" qui consiste en des variantes sociolinguistiques populaires du lexique, de la syntaxe, de la phonétique' (Magdelaine-

Andrianjafitrimo 2004 : 151). She affirms that in the first few of Devi's novels, as with Carl de Souza's this 'langage social' is present whereas in other Mauritian novels, 'l'hybridité linguistique [...] ne recouvre pas ce langage social' (ibid). Thus, while on the one hand she asserts that the inability to reconcile languages and identity in society is reflected in Mauritian texts so much so that the authors sometimes fix the text (Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo 2004) – they make it recognizable as 'Mauritian' through set forms, predetermined use of language and literary conventions according to her – she cannot deny that Devi's use of language is closer to the 'langage social' she perceives in the Antilles.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the hybrid contexts of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean differ in the fact that politically the Antilles are still a part of France and, as Départements d'Outre-Mers (DOM), have a problematic relationship with Metropolitan France, which for example Richard Burton highlights in his study, *La famille coloniale: la Martinique et la mère patrie, 1789-1992* (1994). The absence of a conflictual relationship between the language of the colonizer and the colonized is of the utmost importance, as Mauritius has been independent since 1968 and the decision to remain in both the Commonwealth and 'la Francophonie' has aided the country's development and kept the colonial languages alive as integral parts of

the education system. Mauritius's uniqueness lies in its cordial relations with India and the fact that it maintains economic and diplomatic relations with all the countries its population originates from, so much so that it is part of the South African Development Committee (SADC) as well as the Indian Ocean rim. Its politics in preserving all the ancestral languages and cultures has led to its very rich cultural landscape.

While the Antilles are constantly reminded of their colonial past and the fact that their allegiance is to Metropolitan France, which complicates their relationship with French as the language of colonialism, Mauritius's diplomatic relations with its former colonizers and its willingness to embrace both its former colonial languages avoid a concern with undermining those languages. This insistence on maintaining good relations with all the cultural spheres from which Mauritians originate is reflected in the literary productions to some extent. The question that is raised then is whether when attempting to express this cultural multiplicity in society, Mauritian authors do not fix the text by using the same style and linguistic choices. The notion of 'fixing' is diametrically opposed to Bhabha's conception of hybridity. Bhabha's theory of the 'Third Space' indubitably sets out this space as a zone where one can speak of hybrid cultures since it is always at the

interstices, perpetually moving away from fixed notions of identity and even language. It is because of this that Bhabha refers to the concept of the 'entre langue' in his essay (1994: 36), that is a language that splits the space of enunciation, diffracting the dichotomies of 'I' and 'You' of every dialogue into a plurality of possibilities.

Critics like Danielle Tranquille argue that Mauritian society is marked by a complex form of pluriglossia because of the multiplicity of languages that co-exist. For her, Francophone writing emphasises the impossibility of having one language in order to instaurer la pensée ensauvagée de la pluralité, de l'intervalle, de l'interstitiel' (Tranquille 2008 : 1-3). The notion of the 'One' and the 'Many' and the interstitial evidently evoke Edouard Glissant and Bhabha in the postcolonial world. If in the Francophone world, one language is an impossibility because of the multiple cultures interacting, it is natural that for Mauritian authors, writing in only one language would be betraying the very nature of Mauritian society. By acceding to the various aspects of Mauritian history and the diverging cultural legacies through the medium of writing, using the in-between, the interstitial, the Mauritian Francophone writer defines his or her literature, much akin to Chicano writers like Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Guillermo Gomez Peña (1996)

who found their conceptions of identity on the notions of borders and the in-between spaces of identity because of their geographical location.

Tranquille's argument hinges on the fact that in the plurality of the world we live in, and in the necessary influences of cultures on one another, it is in terms of new theories, such as the interstitial space advocated by Bhabha, that literatures emanating from hybrid spaces can be analysed. She implies that it is through the use of multiple languages and different cultural references that go hand in hand with the diverse origins of the population that the Mauritian author finds the words to write his/her island. It is undoubtedly through the notion of hybridity embedded in Bhabha's in-between or Third Space, that this is possible. Similarly Renato Rosaldo's concept of 'border zones' (1988) inspires Lionnet to posit the postcolonial subject as constantly 'braiding all the traditions at its disposal, using the fragments that constitute it to participate fully in a dynamic process of transformation' (Lionnet 1995: 5). With these notions in mind, this chapter focuses on the aspects of hybridity that are present in Devi's texts themselves: both in terms of languages and also in terms of content, form and structure, so as to gauge whether Devi is indeed 'braiding all the traditions at [her] disposal'.

Towards a hybrid language

The first section of this chapter deals with the nature of language in Devi's texts. It begins with an interrogation of the extent to which Devi's text is written in a French that is hermetically separated from the rest of the languages at play in Mauritian society. In this way, the uses of both Indian (Hindi/Bhojpuri) expressions and Creole and their relationship with French in terms of code-mixing and code-switching will be explored in the texts. In so doing, I attempt to demonstrate that Devi's language is constantly mutating and remains elastic. The notion of fixity will be discussed in order to gauge to what extent the language in Devi's novels is dynamic.

Aside from *Rue la Poudrière* (1989), which was published in Africa and later in Mauritius, all Devi's novels are published in France, and so the question of language becomes very delicate in that Devi's readership is mostly French or Francophone and few of her works have

been translated into other languages.²⁹ French is certainly the main language in her writing, but it is interesting to interrogate the relationship between the different languages that signal the texts as Mauritian. Indeed, one recurrent characteristic of Devi's novels is the demarcation of words that are deemed 'foreign' to the French prose, for example in *Le Voile de Draupadi*, "'chatini de pomme d'amour'" (VD: 149), "'baliés coco'" (VD: 100). These words are singled out through the use of inverted commas in the novel, making them stand out from the French prose, and yet they are part of this narration and help the reader locate the novel in its Mauritian context. Thus, Devi's novels form part of the author's own concerns with the nature of language and as such are experimentations with the constantly mutating and expanding literature of the island.

It is equally possible to see those insertions into the narration as a means of adding a dimension of 'local colour', perhaps even exoticising the novels for the Western audience, as much as rendering the text closer to the characters' reality. However, in Devi's novels, Creole is there less as an exoticising factor than as a means of encompassing the different facets of Mauritian identity and culture

²⁹ However, her own translation of *Pagli* was published in a very limited number in India. It is not currently available. Spanish translations of *Pagli* and *Soupir* seem to exist, but are not widely published.

through the use of the variegating languages that are employed on a daily basis. Magdelaine Andrianjafitrimo remarks that :

Le recours à une langue émaillée d'expressions en langues locales est l'un des propres des littératures francophones, et en particulier des littératures les plus contemporaines qui ne considèrent plus ce stratagème comme un mode d'ancrage dans une couleur locale exotisante mais y voient une forme de signature culturelle (2004 : 144)

This 'signature culturelle' is the writers' way of reappropriating the French language, reworking it through the inclusion of words and expressions that belong to their own reality and culture. Language becomes a marker of culture reflected through processes such as code-switching or code-mixing within Mauritian literature in this case. Instead of fixing language, Devi, I suggest, explores the significance of language as something that is constantly being developed and is always malleable. For, indeed, the literary text can be an enabling space where the glottopolitics of real life can be sidestepped and where language can be used freely to express identity.

Furthermore, the relationship between language and cultural identity is important and this is demonstrated in both positive and negative ways in Devi's texts. For example, the consequences of the inability to reconcile languages and accordingly, construct identity, are represented by Joséphin's story *La Vie de Joséphin le fou*. Indeed, Joséphin

and his broken language are emblematic of an entity whose very existence in Mauritius was marked by anonymity, rejection and violence. Born with a stammer, he loses his ability to speak when one of the 'tontons,' that is the men her mother brings home, breaks a bottle on his head. The loss of language here is tantamount to a loss of his 'Self'. Not only does Joséphin not remember French, he does not recall little 'comptines' which make up the cultural legacy of Mauritian society, such as 'Mo passer larivyer Tanyé',³⁰

Fredonner une comptine pour palper leur sommeil: *mo pasé larivyer Tanyé mo zwenn enn...enn...mama ? granmama ?*

Je sais plus. Je connais pas la suite. On me l'a chantée, il y a longtemps. Elle a jamais chanté le reste. (JF: 10)

Joséphin's incapacity to express himself in any language at all demarcates him as a monster that people fear,³¹ and Solange and Marlène reject him.³² Without language, I suggest that Joséphin is stripped of his humanity, and ultimately, falls to the mercy of nature and the eels which subsequently devour him.³³ His self-imposed exile

³⁰ This folk song has become a frequently reiterated marker of local culture in Mauritian texts as Issur has observed (Issur 2002).

³¹ Mouna's speech impediment has a similar effect on her family, in *Moi l'Interdite*. Since she is not understood, she is treated as less than a human being, as discussed in Chapter Three.

³² Joséphin speaks in broken French that sometimes contains Creole syntactical constructions in the text. Joséphin's lack of education and his status as a man-child might be part of the reason why the novel is marked by 'créolicismes', staccato rhythms (akin to the drum beats in Segá).

³³ It is quite interesting to point out the subtle similarities to Shakespeare's, or in a postcolonial context, Césaire's Caliban, in this case (Césaire 1969). One of the defining

has led to his lack of identity. 'Pas de moqueries, sous la mer. Pas de mots. Pas de mots' (JF: 23): while trying to hide away from hurtful words, Joséphin has reached a place where no word is heard or said, and it is this silence that ultimately causes his death.³⁴

Pourquoi on a tant de mal à se comprendre ?

Sans mots, et même avec des mots, c'est impossible.

Trop longtemps j'ai vécu loin des hommes. Je sais plus comment faire. (JF: 58)

The lack of speech or language is detrimental to Joséphin as a Mauritian, for, embedded in the song 'Mo passer Larivyer Tanyé'³⁵ already is the notion of a hybrid individual: one that has been drudging for centuries to earn his keep (the slave), and especially one that has worked for the French master, as the concluding line of the folk song refers to a well-known French proverb presumably reiterated by the Master on plantations urging the slaves to work in order to eat, according to Issur (2002): 'Faut travailler pour avoir son pain', Present

characteristics of Caliban is the contrast between his earthy, monstrous nature and his ability to use beautiful poetry to express himself, to use language against the very colonial master who has taught him it. Here Joséphin has relinquished both the colonial language, French and its offspring Creole, leading to his inability to communicate with the two Mauritians he takes under his wings.

³⁴ While he chooses to hide away from a repressive society, Joséphin demonstrates that he is experiencing a tension between the lonely freedom given by the sea and the comfort of human company, hence the underlying tone of regret in this sentence. This idea is further developed in Chapter Two.

³⁵ 'Mo passer larivyer Tanyé, mo zouene enn vié granmama. Mo dir li ki li fer là ? Li dir mwa li lapès cabot..Wai, wai mes enfants, faut travailler pour avoir son pain...': 'I walked by the river Tanyé, I met an old grandma, I asked what she was doing, she said she was fishing 'cabots'(a type of fish), Wai, Wai, children, one must work to earn one's bread' (*all translations are mine*).

in the Creole folk song is another aspect of Mauritian society which has been forgotten by the character, much like in *Soupir* as will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Indeed, in this narrative of remembrance, where most of Joséphin's past story and his inability to remember the song his mother sang to him—and his history beyond his mother—lies the paradigm of the loss of history of the Creole population or loss of 'Africanness' (Prabhu 2007: 69). The appropriation of the former coercive words from the colonial power into a Creole song marks a domestication of French into daily existence on the island on one level, but also the neutralization of French which loses its status as the language of the colonizer as it gains its new place within everyday speech. As demonstrated in the Introduction, Mauritian Creoles have a complicated notion of identity wherein they have no extant ancestral language to which they can associate themselves. Creole language is by default associated with Creoles, even if the rest of the population speaks it on a daily basis. Miles (1999) remarked that Creoles were the only 'true' Mauritians because of their identification with Mauritius as their roots and their use of Creole. Thus, I would suggest that in inhabiting the sea and losing his mother tongue, Joséphin also loses his identity as a Mauritian.

For Kumari Issur, the Mauritian literary text demonstrates code switching rather than code-mixing, that is, it shifts from language to language while maintaining boundaries. For Issur, the languages remain rigidly compartmentalized and given the separation this involves, for her code-switching reflects the actual gap between the communities in Mauritius (Issur 2002). However, Bakhtin argues that the text demonstrates heteroglossia, a form of hybridity, the moment that there is another language occurring within the same utterance (Bakhtin 1981). As mentioned earlier, in some of Devi's texts the reader can automatically detect the change of language through the syntax and form, for instance when Joséphin recounts his mother's birthday episode he says: 'elle a chanté "'happy birthday to you"' (JF: 34), and when Clélio in *Eve de ses Décombres* ruminates on the future sentence he will incur, he incorporates the judge's words into his own description of himself: 'et le juge me regardera gravement et il dira, *are you beyond redemption ?* [...] et donc, moi je suis *beyond redemption*, et le meurtre, on me le colle sans me dire s'il vous plaît' (E: 103). However, this does not happen in all Devi's narratives or even consistently within the same texts. In Joséphin's story, elements of Creole orality are not demarcated at times. For instance, when Joséphin speaks of his love for Solange and Marlène, he tells the reader that had he been the sun, he would not have been content with providing light and heating, 'pas du tout,

missié-madame [no sir/ma'am]', he would have shone on their beauty (JF: 44). Here French is immediately followed by Creole without any demarcation. This is what Dodille calls la 'décrispation du contact français/ créole' (Dodille 2005 : 17), that is the relationship between French and Creole becomes less tense, more fluid, allowing for a dialogue between the two languages. Thus, there are different ways in which Creole is deployed in Devi's texts and this will be explored further.

For Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo in *Pagli*, for example, 'ce recours à la langue créole ne se double pas d'une quelconque utilisation du français mauricien. L'auteur joue de l'écart diglossique, voire bilingue, le plus grand' (Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo 2004 :158). 'Français mauricien' is French that has been coloured with typically Mauritian expressions and is not standard French. For her, Devi wants the differences between standard French and Creole to be flagrant, explaining the fact that as Creole acquires more importance within Devi's writing, so does her French become poetic. I suggest that as Devi alternates between formal, poetic French and the vernacular Creole, she renders the text more hybrid, because of the very fact that she changes the form from prose to prose poetry, which demonstrates characteristics of both prose and poetry. Instead of undermining French through

Creole, she unites the two languages through a hybrid form. In her brief analysis of *La Vie de Joséphin le fou*, Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo asserts that: 'Son langage utilise, dans un registre tantôt familier tantôt soutenu, un français dont le créole ou le français mauricien sont quasiment absents' (ibid: 159). In the novel it can be seen that French and Creole are used together and sometimes the French becomes creolized, especially when Joséphin internalises the language used to describe him or repeats what others have said of him: 'L'instant des yeux flous, lizyé lanwit, je l'appelle' (JF: 67) 'ena zanguï, il a attrapé une anguille' (JF: 69), 'peser touni, j'étais le pêcheur tout nu oui' (JF: 70). However, there are instances where where language becomes hybrid when Joséphin himself speaks: 'les fois où je lookais les gens dans leur maison' (JF : 69). This is an example of 'mauricianismes' used in the novels, here a neologism with the English verb 'to look' which has become part of the Mauritian Creole vocabulary meaning 'to spy on'. Thus, while one text may separate languages (*Pagli*), another one may mix codes. Devi's language then, is never fixed.

Furthermore, the notion of code-switching implies that the languages are juxtaposed, used one after the other, without any sense of violence. Code switching is an integral part of the linguistic makeup of Mauritian society as it mirrors the capacity to relate each facet of

Mauritian identity through the use of language. For example, although Creole and consequently Sega songs, are associated with Creoles because they are sung in the language associated with this segment of the population, Daya in *Pagli* picks up the song that Mitsy sings and integrates it into her own narrative '*Mo mari peser...*', openly rejecting her real Hindu husband for her Creole lover. While Joséphin does not remember the comptine-turned-Sega '*Mo passer Larivyer Tanyé*', Mitsy, as with Clélio in *Eve de ses décombres*, demonstrates that some of the Creole legacy is preserved in certain cases. Language thus takes on various functions within Devi's narratives.

Undeniably, the notion of the fixity of language is itself erroneous in that any language is essentially hybrid, evolving through contact with other languages and other cultures, sometimes within one country. For example, although people do speak of 'The French Language', one cannot really speak of a standard French language, as even in France there are different varieties of French depending on where one is located (Langue d'Oc/ Langue d'Oil, Basque, Alémanique (Alsace) etc). In England for example, there are different dialects and regional varieties present within the country: from the 'Suffolk dialect' to the variant called '*Standard English*' to quote Peter Trudgill, whose introduction to *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*

(2004: 5, 150) defines the different forms that language breaks down into or takes. As Bakhtin stated, 'language...is never unitary' (1981: 334); while attempts at setting down parameters of languages, at defining what is English or what is French can be made, it is a fact that language is never 'fixed'. In Devi's texts, French is the main language, but it is shaped and reshaped through interaction with other languages. As languages become a changing variable in Devi's texts, it becomes a dynamic process.

In the first place, it becomes evident that Creole has different roles to play in each of Devi's novels. According to Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo, Mauritian literature 'a longtemps soigneusement évité de problématiser son rapport au créole et au plurilinguisme local' (2004 : 149). However, Mauritian literature does also include words that belong to other Indian languages or 'indianisms'. The very title of the novel *Pagli* betrays the 'Indianness' of the main protagonists – it is the Hindi word for madwoman- but it is also important to understand that it is this very 'Indianness' that is undermined in the texts through the use of Creole and through the violent destiny of the main protagonist .

Indeed, it is the contention of this thesis that Creole seems to acquire a new place evocative of the hybridity of culture in Devi's novels. Vicram Ramharai claims that most Mauritians do not read, due

to 'l'indifférence des mauriciens pour la littérature'(1993: 30), and thus the novels are mostly read by western francophone readers and a handful of Mauritian intellectuals. The question this raises is why use Creole when the readership is mostly Francophone and not Creolophone? Given that Mauritians do not read in general, what then is the purpose of using so much Creole in a text?

Arguably, in *La Vie de Joséphin le fou*, the use of Creole syntax and 'mauricianismes' can be attributed to the main child-like character, for example 'comme ça aussi on m'appelle' (JF: 15), is a direct translation of the Creole 'coumsa oussi zot apel moi'. In this case the hybridizing of French and Creole suggests a child-like grasp of Creole, but as the narrative unfolds, the hybridized language becomes more poetic with his use of imagery: for instance, Joséphin's self-portrayal 'moi je suis couleur-roche, couleur-galet' (JF: 12).

In the texts, Creole remains a predominantly oral language, sometimes for emphasis, at others to relate a conversation taking place, or to describe the feelings of the narrator. For instance, in *Pagli*, Creole is the language that betrays the vitriolic feelings of the narrator whose anger at her husband reaches its peak in the marriage ceremony where Creole is manipulated to undermine the sacred Sanskrit language that the priest is chanting:

Mo prier mo gagn kuraz dire non. Pu ki mo tuzur mazinn mo duler. Pu mo kapav get mo mari en fas e ki li lir mo laenn dans mo lizie. Mo prie pu mo pas swiv simen fam, simen mama, sime belmer. Pu mo pas vinn enn mofinn ki nek anvi tuy lespwar dimunn. Mo priye pu ki zenfan ki pu ne dans mo vant enn zenafn lamur, pa laenn. (P: 75)

The bride's sacrilegious chanting becomes an anaphoric incantation that chills the priest and terrifies the husband, while giving expression to her own need to defy traditions that repress her individuality and restrict her choices to the man who defiled her body at thirteen.

In Devi's own words,

*L'utilisation du créole dans ce contexte est pour moi très transgressif [...] Prendre une prière en *sanskrit* et la déformer en *créole* avec un langage parfois assez viscéral, c'est une rupture intense entre ces deux langues, entre ces deux cultures qui coexistent à Maurice. (Devi in Corio 2005: 153)*

Devi's aim is two-fold: she uses the language born of the contact between different cultures co-mingling in Mauritius to undermine the language of the ancestors, the sacred language that ironically is not used anymore save for rituals and prayers. In so doing, Devi highlights the fact that some cultural practices are obsolete in modern Mauritian society. Devi demonstrates the distance that separates Sanskrit from the everyday reality of the character, whose choice of language betrays her own allegiance with Creole as the language of communication and resistance. In the interview Devi underlines the fact that Creole culture and Hinduism are completely different: 'ces deux cultures qui

coexistent' asserts that Hindus and Creoles cohabit without mingling. In the text, the Indo-Mauritian woman is subverting the Sanskrit vows, through the use of her real mother tongue, Creole, thus proving her allegiance to a hybrid, creolised culture. It is therefore not surprising that the Sanskrit words are not cited within the text since they are foreign to the narrator who creates her own vows in her own language, Creole, thus undermining the traditional language.

Before analysing further the role played by Creole in the texts, it is important to determine why it is used so much in Devi's novels as opposed to Bhojpuri/Hindi, which as Lionnet, for instance, underlines, is the language spoken in most villages (Lionnet 1993: 105). In the 'Indian' novels, *Le Voile de Draupadi*, *Pagli* and *L'Arbre fouet*, it is interesting to note that after French, Creole is used most, as opposed to Bhojpuri/Hindi. The latter are only used sporadically. This would suggest that in Devi's texts, Creole has more importance than Bhojpuri/Hindi. Nevertheless, 'indianisms' are integrated in the texts and add to the polyphonic and hybrid quality of the novels insofar as they pertain to the different facets of the characters and exemplify what Lionnet has termed 'using all the traditions at its [postcolonial subject's] disposal' (1995: 6). While *Le Voile de Draupadi* is not largely set in a

village, a fair few of its characters hail from villages where Hindu traditions and culture have a stronghold.

Moreover, according to Carpanin Marimoutou, when Mauritian authors introduce ancestral languages in their texts, it is either as a remembrance of the mythical 'langue secrète', or because these languages reflect the reality of culture in Mauritius (Marimoutou 2001: 13). For him, 'Cette présence multiple des langues dans le récit est plus nette encore dans les romans d'Ananda Devi qui décrit de l'intérieur la communauté d'origine indienne (Marimoutou 2001 : 13). It would be relevant here to consider whether pluriglossia leads to the hybridity of languages in this case. Marimoutou highlights here the sense of realism and mystique created by the inclusion of multiple languages in the Mauritian text. The hybrid education system favours English as the official text language, French as the medium of instruction and taught language. This is done concomitantly with the teaching of ancestral languages and the inculcation of cultural references and mythologies. As products of this complex education system, it is not surprising that intellectuals should make use of all the traditions at their disposal in their texts. Marimoutou asserts that Devi's novels exemplify a portrait of Mauritian society 'de l'intérieur'. For him, the texts do not obliterate the presence of a variety of idioms and cultural references that pertain

to ancestral civilizations making up the history of the current Mauritian population. Thus, Devi's novels incorporate the different aspects of Mauritian life, from the '*bouillon cresson* and *bred malbar*' (ML: 28), to '*T'aube une karahi graisseuse*' (ML: 41) and metaphors of Indian cuisine, through the everydayness of Creole and sugar plantations on the island with '*Kann inn brile. Nu fin futi...Bondie inn modi nu*' (ML: 16-17), while the Hindi sing-song of '*soja rajkumari soja*' rings in the attic where grand-mère grenier lulls her grand-daughter to sleep.³⁶

Marimoutou's argument hinges upon two central ideas, the first of which is the fact that the mystical Indian language conjures up images of the glorious subcontinent. The second is the socio-cultural realism it implies given that almost 70% of the population is of Indian origin. As such, Bhojpuri/Hindi, as well as political and cultural relations with India, still plays a focal role in the life of Mauritians.

However, Hindi/Bhojpuri is cast in a very negative light in certain cases. It can be suggested that since this language is not as prominent as Creole in the novels, the very few instances when it is used are emphasised. Thus, when in *Le Voile de Draupadi*, for example, Fatmah's aunt insults her, the fact that she uses Bhojpuri/Hindi with the French exacerbates the pain incurred: '*putain, traînée, "churé!"*,

³⁶ 'sleep princess sleep'.

“veshi” (VD: 103), especially since ‘churé’ means both a woman who has died breaking religious taboos and a succubus, adding to the insult. On a more comical note, Vasanti, in the same novel mimics ways of talking of the workers and the people she grows up with: ‘elle se mettait à parler le “Bhojpuri” criard de la campagne, en commençant toutes ses phrases par “ar-r-ré...baapré” (VD: 45). In this parody of village life and the language associated with it lies the separation of Creole and French once again. Children from the city and towns have a different lifestyle and another way of speaking. This implies that there was a form of segregation within the very fibre of the Mauritian society during Anjali’s childhood. As opposed to the Dior and Cartier that have become part of the daily life of Port-Louis residents like Faisal, Vasanti is cloistered in the ‘gunny’-bag-and-sari-restricted village life that is represented by the Bhojpuri-speaking people.

In Devi’s corpus, there are other novels that demonstrate a rejection of some of the values inculcated because of religious hypocrisy. Aena’s remarks on the similar uses of two languages that have marked her unhappy childhood as a Hindu priest’s daughter, ‘ils parlaient le créole et le bhojpuri avec la même intonation chantante’ (AF: 83), are crucial in this sense. Her associating Bhojpuri with Hinduism and her father results in her rejecting her ancestral language.

For one who has been subjected to the laws of patriarchy, she chooses to occult those languages that remind her of her past as an Indian. Her father who has predicted in his vitriolic Hindi that she will be but a 'bhikarin', a beggar, on the banks of the river Ganges (VD: 86), becomes the figure who is obliterated. The rites of purification symbolised by the Sanskrit Gayatri Mantra he chants become an obsession, an incantation that reverberates in Aena's head until she cannot cope with the language anymore. Since the narration takes place in retrospective, it is no wonder that most of the story unfolds with a minimum of Hindi/Bhojpuri.

However, the question is whether the adoption of Creole in the texts as a 'Mauritian' language, that is the language that is shared by all of Devi's characters, whatever their origins, marks an actual shift from former Hindu allegiances to a homogenizing Creole. It must be stressed that the Mauritian variant of Bhojpuri is also a hybrid language in that it blends Hindi, Creole and Bhojpuri originating from Bihar. Nevertheless, it remains an essentially 'Indian' language, because it is a marker of Hindu identity. Creole, because of its nature as a hybrid language, then becomes the language that reflects the cultural hybridity in Mauritian society, in Devi's texts.

In this way, in the novels, Hindi/Bhojpuri, French and Creole are sometimes juxtaposed, sometimes contrasted within the same sentence. When this happens the languages blend into each other – words are integrated into the narration without any authorial indication of what they mean except for the fact that they are listed with the French/Creole equivalent, thus creating a paraphratic effect: ‘Donnez-moi le nom que vous voulez, rakshas, Shehtan, Satan ou autre’ (ML: 9). There is no opposition or mark of linguistic difference between the two languages as the code switches from French to Hindi without inverted commas or italics. This signals the fact that ultimately all those words reveal the same state of mind of the society and its point of view as regards the physical deformity of Mouna, whose very name is Hindi/Bhojpuri for a female ape.

The Indian philosophical notions that are present within the fibre of the novels, such as karma and reincarnation, all contribute to the mystical aspect of the novels, harking back to the mystical Indian past, yet part of a narration that is very much contemporary, as will be seen in the final part of this chapter. However, the politics of language usage in Devi’s novels seem to be part of an ongoing critique of Mauritian society, demonstrating the unshakeable attachment to the Indian mythical past that has been aggrandized in the diaspora’s imaginary.

Issur, for example, remarks: 'A Maurice, il y a une certaine forme de créolisation, certes, mais cette créolisation n'efface pas la mémoire vive du passé. L'identité est au prix du respect des identités' (Issur 2002: 353). It is my contention that Devi uses Creole as a dynamic language that becomes the closest in expressing the identity of her characters despite the tension present on the island.

The changing role of Creole in Devi's narratives.

'Le Créole est la langue qui, pour moi, évoque plus intimement l'île Maurice' stated Devi in her keynote address at the 'Hybridity in the Indian Ocean' conference in Barcelona (2009). Indeed, contrary to the popular belief that Creole is not a 'real' language and therefore should not be part of the curriculum or the official or aesthetic landscape of Mauritius (Miles 2000), Devi's texts present Creole with several dimensions other than that of the language of the Creole community. I distinguish four distinct functions that can be attributed to Creole in Devi's novels, the first is that of a vehicular language, used on a daily basis for everyday communication; the second is as an affective or 'Home' language; thirdly Creole is used as a means of resisting patriarchal society and dominant discourses; and finally it becomes the

language of poetry. This section of the chapter proposes an analysis of these emergent four aspects of Creole in the texts, in order to show how the valorisation of Creole can be interpreted as a valorisation of hybridity itself.

As a language used on a daily basis, Creole is present in texts like *Soupir* where the language is used much more often in the novel to signal it as a vehicular language, for example ‘*vomye numem*’ (S: 15), ‘*bon die beni nu ena manze*’ (S: 27). The inhabitants of Rodrigues and Soupir use Creole sentences and expressions in their individual narratives because this is the only language they use to communicate with each other. French of course is a ‘*langue de convention*’ used by Devi to write the novel, but the constant inclusion of Creole serves as a reminder that the inhabitants of Soupir hail from Rodrigues where Creole is the only language that is routinely spoken and unifies the community. It is also because of this that Noëlla’s rape is recounted in Creole:

nu pu bez twa to pu gete twa ek to kas pat to pa pu kapav sove kot to pu ale to nek kapav rampe kuma kurpa rampe kuma kulev na pa kriye si to kriye nu pu fann to labus nu pu kas to ledan personn pa pu vini personn pa anvì sov twa kisannla pu anvì sov enn bebet aster to pu kone to pu kone twa osi to pu kone ki sa ve dir get sa tonn deza truv sa tonn deza truv enn zom to kone kyete sa enn zom tonn deza santi li ala li la pran li pran li gete ki sa ve dir enn zom twa to enn la mwatye fam ala to kone ala to gagne aster nu pa pu arete ziska to sipliye nu ziska to dir ase ziska to dir

Ayo mama. (S: 215)³⁷

In the rape scene, Creole is not translated, despite the fact that a Francophone readership would experience difficulty in reading it or understanding its connotations to some extent. It can be suggested that even if the reader were non-Creolophone, the punctuation and the repetition of words would at least partially convey the violent atmosphere created. Indeed, the lack of syntax and punctuation reflects the violence of their reaction, with spaces between some of the invectives. The alliteration of 't', 'p', and 'd' give the impression of drumming/pounding, as the four men pin down their sacrificial lamb. The dominance of the 'zom [homme]' is opposed to the 'mwatye fam [phonetic spelling of moitié femme]' who cannot defend herself and the pathos of this scene reaches its climax as the men are about to reveal what they want from her 'ziska to dir [until you say]'. This is immediately followed by what could be interpreted as an anticlimax 'Ayo mama', save for the fact that it is a child who is calling for her mother. The assonance 'a' 'a...a...a' reflects the pain caused to the child. Even if the reader were to only comprehend half of the Creole spat at

³⁷ 'we'll fuck you you'll see you cripple you won't be able to escape where will you go You can only crawl like a snail, like a grass snake don't shout if you shout we'll crush your mouth, we'll break your teeth no one will come no one wants to help you who wants to save an animal now you will know you will know what it means too see this seen this before seen a man before know what a man is felt him there ya go take it take it see what a man is you are a half woman there look look there ya go now we won't stop until you plead until you say Oh mother.'

Noëlla, the poignancy of the last line is tangible. Thus, I suggest that here Creole is used to transmit the true feelings of the inhabitants of Soupir to the reader as they are perpetrating a crime. The narrator shifts the perspective and gives voice to the rapists and their feelings come out in the only language they speak. The reader is forced to read the Creole text to know what happens since the text is not translated. This seems to indicate that in this text, Devi attempts to bring the francophone reader closer to the characters, rather than the usual opening of the text to the wider francophone readership through translation.

Secondly, by contrast, Creole acquires the place of an affective or 'Home' language in certain novels. Creole becomes a language that is deemed to be one of intimacy, used either to alleviate concerns, or ironically, to bend the will of characters. For example Creole is employed as an affective language to convince the main character, Anjali, in *Le Voile de Draupadi*, to perform a traditional sacrificial rite she does not adhere to. In this novel, the language demonstrates the fact that Anjali is imprisoned in what she sees as her two identities: a Mauritian born and brought up on an island and a woman of Indian origin. This is instantiated through a language that is enriched with 'indianismes', 'mantras' (VD: 151) and Creole words. This is then

ironically reversed by Vasanti's superstitious detractors. Vasanti who defies the laws of patriarchal Hindu society is vilified through Creole words instead of Hindu /Sanskritic lore: 'éna diab dan li' (VD: 88); that is, she is possessed by the devil. The fact that the villagers are not completely 'Hindu' even in their hatred and incomprehension towards Vasanti is quite ironic.

Moreover, the priest who tries to convince Anjali of the path of sacrifice that will lead to Wynn, her son's salvation, also uses Creole and the term 'Bon dié' instead of Bhagwan or Devta, to coax her into relinquishing her steadfast non-belief in firewalking as a ritual. The use of Creole is fundamental here as 'diab' is opposed to 'Bon dié' in the vernacular, which the Hindu priest uses instead of Hindi/Bhojpuri. These are essentially Christian terms that are being used instead of the Hindu ones. Creole becomes an affective or 'Home' language insofar as it involves a 'Bon dié', 'Bon Dieu' in French, who will help her son. Since the Hindi/Bhojpuri terms would not have held much significance to Anjali who does not understand Sanskrit, the priest has to use the common Creole terms, and thus Catholicism, to convey his message, thus undermining his own religion. The priest murmurs "'mo tifi" [Daughter], votre enfant est en danger. Il faut croire en Dieu et sa mansuétude. [...] Bon dié ène grand kike çose ça mo zenfant [God is a

great thing my child]' (VD: 132). Creole words are embedded in this conversation in order to sway the protagonist because Creole is the language of intimacy, as opposed to Hindi or Sanskrit, his ritual language. Indeed, he speaks a 'créole aux étranges modulations' (VD: 132), as observes Anjali, and Hindi would not carry the same weight since the young woman had lost faith in her religion. Instead of playing the role of the confidant and being supportive, the priest shows his allegiance to the patriarchal family seeking to bend Anjali's will.

Similarly in *Eve de ses Décombres*, the Headmistress's plea to Eve exemplifies the way Creole becomes a tool as a language of intimacy, taking the place of the ancestral languages as the 'home' language: 'La directrice du collège m'a dit: Vous vous devez de réussir. Puis elle a ajouté en anglais : *You owe it to yourself*. Et enfin, en créole : *Pa gaspiy u lavi*. En trois langues elle m'a dit la même chose.' (E: 78) In fact the Creole sentence says far more than the French and English versions: it tells her that she must not waste her life, a sentence that carries with it the burden of her future and the finality of life. The fact that the Head of the school says this to her in Creole highlights the fact that in the language of intimacy, she can reach further into Eve's conscience by exposing the danger of what she is doing to herself through prostitution. The order in which these languages appear is

fundamental to our understanding of the new dimension given to Creole in this context. French, which is the language spoken in formal circumstances on a daily basis is used first and literally translated into English, making the two European, colonial languages interchangeable in this conversation. This underlines their equal status, while conveying the meaning of duty, which we have seen in Joséphin's Creole folk song, a notion of officialness, which comes with the status of the languages as those of administration, institutions and the Arts on the island. Although Creole comes third in line and is as such, in this hierarchy, underprivileged, its use is indubitably different. Eve says all three languages give the same message, which is not true as Creole is seen to amplify the feeling of despair and finality that come with Eve's actions. Creole then becomes a coercive language in as it is used as a tool to alter the adolescent's frame of mind, much along the lines of the priest in *Le Voile de Draupadi*. The figure of authority is exploiting the affective power of Creole, thereby casting it as the real language of intimacy, in order to touch the protagonist where the ancestral language or the neutral languages will not. Creole is reversing the usual hierarchy of languages in this sense: that is, contrary to Mauritian reality where English and French are the prestigious languages and Creole just a vernacular (Ramharai 1993: 31), it becomes obvious through these episodes in Devi's narratives that Creole is acquiring a

new status, subverting the normal linguistic hierarchy to assert its new position as the language of Mauritians, while transgressing the boundaries between the private and the public. For, indeed, figures representing institutions (the public) have recourse to a privately spoken language in order to influence the individual.

Interestingly, Creole, as with Creole societies of the Caribbean, was born out of the plantations and thus became a way of resisting the dominant French language in that society (see Chamoiseau and Confiant 1999: 56-7; Bongie 1997: 170). The question in the case of Devi's texts is whether it would be legitimate to say that Creole acquires the same status within her texts. Daya-Pagli's resistance in *Pagli* is effectively carried out in Creole in the marriage scene quoted earlier. Thus, in her refusal of the Indian marriage as a form of enslavement and drudgery, Daya uses the language that is most appropriate to undermine the vows that she is asked to take: Creole becomes the language of resistance against traditions. Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo observes that :

Là où la littérature antillaise tendrait à succomber à un mythe d'un langage romanesque qui serait le signe de sa légitimité et de sa force identitaires, la littérature mauricienne traduirait plutôt la mise en marche d'une déconstruction de ses cloisonnements identitaires par la timide mais tenace avancée qu'y fait le créole (2004 : 149).

It is therefore evident that the inclusion of Creole in Francophone Mauritian texts is leading to the emergence of a new conception of identity and culture that shifts away from the traditional segregation of languages and communities.

Creolization is increasingly part of the contemporary world, as Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant elaborated (1989) and in many ways Glissant instigated and developed (1981, 1990, 1997), it is the transgressive voice of Clélio, the Creole reprobate of *Eve de ses Décombres*, the immediate suspect of Savita's murder, who uses Creole as a means of resisting dominant authorities. His Creole songs are evocative of his feelings of stigmatization and marginalization within Troumaron where, even among the lowest, he is the least respected because of his origins. Clélio composes his own Segas, which were originally songs sung on sugar plantations during colonial times. The figure of Clélio is reminiscent of the Caribbean storyteller whose role it was to subvert through covert stories, the nègre-marron of the plantation (Burton 1997). Here Clélio represents the frustration of a segment of the Mauritian population whose status remains precarious within the hierarchical society. His Creole songs demonstrate the extent of his despair and disillusionment

Ki to pe atann? Person. Ki lavi finn donn twa? Nayen. Komye dimunn inn fer twa promes? Zot tu. Komye dimunn inn gard zot parol ? Okenn. Dimunn pa gard zot parol, zot zis kass to leker, pa bizin per, fer kuma zot, kas zot leker, pas to simin, pa krwar nayen. Pas krwar nayen to pa pu sufer. Pa krwar nayen to pa pu sufer.

Je ne crois rien. Mais je souffre quand même (E : 71).³⁸

Here no translation is provided for the Creole Segá, save for the last sentence which reads as a reply to his own song. The fact that the main ideas that he enunciates remain obscure to a readership that is not Creolophone is important in that it gives Creole a significant position not only as a language that expresses the character's inner feelings but also as a means of resistance.

In Devi's writing, Creole evolves beyond the status of vernacular to become a poetic language. For instance, when Zil, in *Pagli*, remarks on what he would do with Daya's dead body, his language of love is Creole: '*Mo prefer twa vivan. Ki mo pu fer ek enn kadav?* [I would rather have you alive. What would I do with a dead body?]' (P: 71). Moreover, Creole attains a new dimension as the language of poetry in *Eve de ses Décombres* through the budding poet Sad. Discovering his own propensity for writing in class, Sad begins to copy snippets for Eve,

³⁸ What are you waiting for? No one. What has life brought you? Nothing. How many people have promised you things? Everyone. How many kept their word? None. People do not keep their promises, they just break your heart, don't be afraid, be like them, break their hearts, follow your own path. Do not believe anything. Do not believe anything and you will not suffer. Do not believe anything and you will not suffer.

then attempts to create his own verses in French, the language he uses to describe his love, then slowly moves to poetry in Creole (E:107). Here the text seems to suggest the potential for Creole to go beyond the fetters of the vernacular and reach new heights as a poetic language, allowing for boundaries to be transcended and hierarchies transgressed.

Moreover, the blending of French and Creole allows for a play on words and sounds that render Zil the safe harbour that Daya-Pagli is searching for: Zil the island becomes the 'asile', which in Creole is written 'lazil'. This play on the sound of Creole can also be seen in the Creole translations of the chapter headings. The anaphoric repetition of the first letters, 'la' in the Creole titles: 'lamur', 'laenn', 'lazil', 'lapli', 'lanwit', and 'labu' creates a soft flowing sound that stands in direct contrast to the word in French. Moreover, the chapter titles are always given in both French and Creole. Sometimes the French and the Creole is very similar to the French word, with the exception of the article which is always present in Creole, giving it a different sound. Sultan explains this process further: ' le sec monosyllabe « Nuit » en régime de déterminant zéro s'obscurcit en "Lanwit" que l'article antéposé « la » rend plus concret, plus sensible' (Sultan 2001).

However, while Creole is very much present in the texts, English has a specific role to play within the narratives: that of a neutral

language. Devi's novels do not contain much English despite the fact that it is the official language of the island, but English does appear in some cases, for example in *Le Voile de Draupadi* :

Pradhan renchérit en anglais, peut-être pour mieux dissimuler ses émotions, l'expression avunculaire, comme d'habitude.

- *You see, my dear, he'll have much better care in the clinic, we can do the necessary tests immediately and put him on the drip. If it is meningitis, it is probably quite benign, of course...(VD: 27)*

The choice of English in this case is symptomatic of a need for neutrality that is translated through a diplomatic use of language. As Anjali observes above, the only way the doctor can distance himself emotionally from the patient and his parents is by using the official language that is used only in formal circumstances. Similarly, English is used in cases where a character needs to distance himself or herself from the interlocutor or the event they are speaking about. One of *Eve's* narrators, Clelio observes the lawyer who is representing him: 'mais ils seront indulgents, surtout si vous êtes un *juvenile*, dit-elle en employant le mot anglais comme pour masquer un tremblement dans sa voix' (E:136). The lawyer, who has herself been able to escape from the cul-de-sac that is Troumaron, is too emotionally close to the case to handle it without investing too much in it.

The lack of emotion associated with English is equally seen in *Eve de ses Décombres* in an episode where Sad tries to link his feelings for the eponymous character with a song he hears in the club. The recurring fragment that he repeats over and over again is the lewd 'Baby won't you give it to me, give it to me, you know I want it' (E: 34). As Sad masturbates to this song, thinking of Eve and Savita dancing together in the club, it becomes an incantation, but provides no outlet for his emotional turmoil. His emotions only come out when he switches to French:

Non après tout, je préfère retourner vers Rimbaud: *Les filles vont à l'église, contentes de s'entendre appeler garces par les garçons.*

Garce, garce, garce.

C'est un beau mot'. (E: 37)

Sad's quoting of a mainstream pop song (Kiss, 'Mainline') and comparing it to a piece of Rimbaud's poetry is in itself a ludicrous juxtaposition. The English lyrics' crude, explicit flaunting of repressed sexuality — Eve effectively will not 'give it' to Sad, though she will to anyone else — is a theme that is echoed in the poem 'Les Premières communions' (1871), from which this quote is adapted. The verses belong to the sixth stanza: 'Les jeunes filles vont toujours à l'église, contentes / De s'entendre appeler garce par les garçons'. Intertextuality here evokes Sad's hybrid education and the influences of two different

western cultures on Mauritian youth. This is even more important for the novel's context since Sad is equating Eve's rejection by society as a prostitute to Biblical Eve's rejection by Christianity which is articulated in Rimbaud's poem.³⁹ Sad essentially valorises Eve's lack of hypocrisy. She never hides who she is, while religion and social institutions lay the burden of guilt on her shoulders.

Furthermore, in these novels where languages are explored and given new dimensions, it is important to note that translation plays a significant role in blending languages and making them dialogue with one another. The methods vary from text to text, at times with literal translations, '*Non, monn senti toi monn anv'i vom'i! Je t'ai senti et j'ai eu envie de vomir!*' (P: 17); at others using the method of replying in French to the questions the character has posed in Creole, thus making the reader work out the Creole, for example: '*To la! Zonn les twa sorti! Les mo get twa, mo tifi! Oui je suis là et ils m'ont laissée sortir.*' (P: 18). Thus, in *Pagli*, according to Patrick Sultan, French and Creole are

³⁹ There are incidentally many parallels that can be pointed out here. First of all, Sad and Rimbaud are at the same age (17) when they start evoking society's hypocrisy and the guilt of women as expounded by the Church. 'Les Premières communions' was written at an anti-Christian phase in Rimbaud's short lived poet life, as are Sad's sections of *Eve* and the poetry he writes for the eponymous character. In Troumaron, poverty and squalor is the single unifying element for all the youth who will not have a future beyond the 'trou du monde' where they live. Already desperate at 17, Sad's vision of the world is already dark, much like Rimbaud's own. Like Rimbaud who stops writing at 19, there is an inkling that Sad will also cease penning down verses. For more information on Rimbaud's 'Les Premières communions' see Antoine Fongaro (1994).

parallel and although they work in their varying styles, there is a subtle unification of languages in the text:

Le créole prolonge et infléchit insensiblement, en y ajoutant ses harmoniques, la signification exprimée par la langue française... l'effet stylistique majeur pourrait, de manière plus profonde, permettre de « rémunérer le défaut » de la langue française, en la donnant à entendre d'une autre manière, en l'arrachant à son abstraction, à sa froideur (Sultan 2002)

The translation of Creole for example in the wedding vows scene quoted above is very important in this respect:

J'aurai toujours le courage de dire non. Je garderai en mémoire le souvenir de ma douleur. Je regarderai cet homme droit dans les yeux avec la certitude de ma haine. Je ne rejoindrai pas le chemin tracé de femme d'épouse de mère de belle-mère. Je ne deviendrai pas une mofine qui n'a plus qu'un seul but : détruire les espoirs des autres. Aucun enfant ne naîtra de mon ventre qui n'y aura été mis par amour. (*Pagli* : 75)

A literal translation of the Creole would have underlined the fact that this is effectively is a prayer that Daya is chanting. It would have been 'Je prie pour que...pour que...pour que...Je prie', thereby giving the reader a sense of the narrator's despair. 'Mo priyer...pu...pu..pu...mo priyer' is an anaphoric chant that conveys a feeling of fervour and the will to resist with the help of faith, which is absent in the French translation given by Devi. While it may be argued that the translation is superfluous as the Creole text is intelligible to a Francophone readership, I suggest that in including a translation in French Devi

encourages the reader to compare the two languages and realise that the two texts do not relay exactly the same message. Even if the non-Creolophone reader were to only see part of the differences highlighted above, Devi would have ensured the reader has come into contact with the Mauritian language, suggesting that Creole would give a better idea of what the character is experiencing. Creole then acquires a depth of meaning in Devi's texts, which French cannot render. To understand the full import of Daya's words, the reader would in reality have to understand the intricacies of the Creole language. This process is taken even further in *Eve* where Clélio's Creole Segá is not translated at all, thus giving Creole a new status as language of resistance; against the hegemony of English, which administrative authorities (the lawyer, the judge) use to interrogate or address Clélio, as well as that of French, which is the language of the Arts. This novel, as in Devi's other texts that include Creole and elements of everyday Mauritian life, betrays the need for the 'other', Francophone, but not Mauritian, audience to enter the realm of Mauritian Creole and its own rhythm.

Interestingly, it is sometimes an element as simple as a name and its translation that can highlight this. In *Eve de ses Décombres*, Sad's name underscores hybridity: 'Je suis Sadiq. Tout le monde m'appelle Sad. Entre tristesse et cruauté, la ligne est mince' (E: 13). Sadiq is an

Arabic name, yet the character translates the meanings of his name in two Western languages: 'tristesse' for the English 'sad', as he is called, and 'cruauté' for 'sadique', the French word. The French and English have different meanings, yet in his mind, they are equal, which reveals once again the interchangeable status of these languages in some of the texts. However, there is a meaning that Sad effectively occludes from his explanation of his name: that of the Urdu/Arabic, which means 'friend'. In this novel which exemplifies the unification of people through their shared poverty and lack of scope for the future, the obliteration of Sad's ancestral identity is very significant. Although Sad is a friend to Eve throughout the novel, it is his life on the island as a hybrid, but marginalized individual that is privileged.

Devi's Hybrid text: Towards a dynamic form

Language reflects the complex identity of Mauritians in Devi's novels. This notion is corroborated by Lise Gauvin who remarks that emergent Francophone literatures foreground a reflection on the notion of language and its rapport with literature in their interrogation of identity. It is in this respect that, for her, 'Ecrire devient alors un véritable acte de langage' (Gauvin 2001: 153). According to Gauvin,

francophone writers use language in specific ways in order to convey their unique social and linguistic reality. She finds that reading a Francophone text for its language as revealing about the society as an analysis of the content because of what she calls the author's 'surconscience linguistique' (2001: 153), as regards their use of language. For her, Bakhtin's theories pertaining to the novel are very relevant to a reading of Francophone texts as 'un phénomène pluristylistique, plurilingual, plurivocal' (Bakhtin 1978: 87).

Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination* (1981) analyses the properties of the hybrid text, highlighting the essential roles played by polyphony and heteroglossia:

The actively literary linguistic consciousness at all times and everywhere (that is, in all epochs of literature historically available to us) comes upon 'languages,' and not language. Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a 'language' (Bakhtin 1981: 295)

Bakhtin's theory is that within each author's consciousness is a set of different languages that comingle and dialogue with each other while still forming a whole. The writer's work is to single out one of these voices and use it as his/her language. However, even within the

linguistic unity of texts, there is still a system of different languages that are operating. Each time a novel changes register or form—for example poetry, or a comic scene—a new ‘language’ is introduced within this system. An example of a polyphonic narrative can be found in *La Vie de Joséphin le fou*, where Joséphin’s voice blends in with his mother’s. The novel at times hybridizes the two narratorial voices to the point of blurring them: ‘j’étais un gaga, un retardé, c’est tout ce que j’ai pu enfanter, un gaga’ (JF: 35), the move from one ‘je’ to the other is done without any preamble so that the voices mingle and reflect each other seamlessly. This is reinforced by changes of register, from the colloquial ‘tu fous’, to poetic prose (JF: 45-46). This polyphonic quality complexifies the narration and renders it difficult to follow, which could be a reflection of the subject’s inability to negotiate identity as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Polyphony is also a quality found in novels such as *Pagli*. At times it is difficult to differentiate between the narrator’s ‘je’, Zil’s narratorial voice and the person who is writing the pages of this novel: ‘l’écriture dense et dangereuse de ce livre’ (P: 29). There is indeed a blurring of boundaries between the narrative voices, which reinforces the notion of hybridity, of the hybrid subject, through heteroglossia. Bhabha, discussing agency in Bakhtin’s utterance, uses the notion of a

displaced author in order to describe the postcolonial context. For Bhabha, Bakhtin's allusion to 'another's utterance' within one narrative 'produces a dialogical turn, a moment of indeterminacy' (Bhabha 1994: 270) which is crucial in postcolonialism, according to Bhabha.

Furthermore, prose poetry for instance reflects the ability of language to adapt to the narratorial voices, from Mitsy's irate exclamations: *'Monn truv twa monn envi vom'* to Daya's beautiful poetry:

Zil. Je ne peux que t'écrire comme un poème sans rime et sans ponctuation parce que tu dépasses tout cela tu es mon miroir dans lequel je me vois belle alors que je ne le suis pas tu es cette douceur qui glisse des arbres le soir comme une couleuvre irisée et comme une nuit de passementerie et je t'ai vu dans une première heure [...] (*Pagli* : 83)

The hybrid form not only enables the switch from one aspect of the character (the lover) to the other (the defiant wife) but also becomes a means of conveying the different discourses present within the narrative texts.

In an interview with Patrick Sultan, Devi underlines the diversity of cultures and traditions she grew up with:

Mes sources d'inspiration sont multiples. Les premières histoires que j'ai entendues dès ma petite enfance ont été celles du Mahabharata, le fameux poème épique indien, racontées principalement par ma mère, et les contes de Grimm et de

Perrault lues par mon père en français et en anglais. [...] (Sultan 2001)

Indeed, Indian cultural references are manifold in Devi's corpus: the epic love story of Anarkali and Saleem is but one example of this. According to the Indian legend of Anarkali, the dancer poet is entombed alive because of her forbidden love for a Moghul Prince. This story undoubtedly bears a strong resemblance to *Pagli*, wherein the main protagonist is 'emmurée vivante' for having loved a Creole fisherman. Similarly, references to Western fairytales are present in a few novels, including *Le Voile de Draupadi*, where Dev is compared to 'l'ogre du Petit Poucet, ou le loup du Chaperon Rouge' (VD: 97).⁴⁰ This reinforces the idea that Devi's works are a wealth of cross-cultural references that illustrate the hybrid upbringing of Mauritians.

Moreover, in *Moi l'Interdite*, the formal circularity and punctual digressions which are characteristics of Indian mythologies are very much present. The narrator keeps jumping backwards and forwards, a device creating and maintaining suspense but also delaying the action because of the harshness of the story. As Mouna explains, 'il [the dog] m'a appris progressivement à interrompre ma mémoire' (ML: 94). Her ability to switch off her memory and digress comes from her

⁴⁰ In *Eve de ses Décombres* Sad compares Eve to the 'Petit Poucet' himself, '*Tu es mon petit Poucet au chemin ensanglanté*' (E: 43), signalling the lack of direction the adolescents are experiencing in their village, and ultimately their loss of identity.

loss of human nature during her time spent as a hybrid. The Indian epic poem is a series of little stories that make up a whole through digressions — *Pagli* is written in this format, *Moi L'Interdite* is structured with a *mise-en-abyme*, and *l'Arbre fouet* is constructed through the artifice of mirroring.

Furthermore, Devi suggests the circularity of certain novels comes from the influences of the Mahabharata (Sultan 2002). However, circularity is also a characteristic of some postmodern writing and of feminist writing, both of which seek to undermine the traditional linear plot. It is useful within the context of this chapter to examine to what extent these influences are present in Devi's narratives. Firstly, since the novels denounce patriarchal systems and the corrosive nature of such societies, it is perfectly plausible that the novels are breaking away from tradition by using fragmented narratives or 'le genre éclaté' in the words of Jeannine Paque (2001: 355). Secondly, Devi admits that Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, widely recognised as a postmodern text, was a source of inspiration (Indes Réunionnaises 2003). Consequently, there is a constant reference to different canons in the novel.

Carpanin Marimoutou, analysing the presence of myths in Devi's novels, suggests that Devi's text changes the perspective from which mythological sagas were written by refocusing on the Mauritian

space. The reappropriation of myth consists of playing with different myths and attributing other functions to them. For example, he argues that Devi

Synthétise les deux grandes figures féminines du Ramayana et du Mahabharata, Sita et Draupadi. Ce qui était nettement séparé ailleurs se construit ici dans la rencontre et contribue à construire un imaginaire et un mythe nouveaux, propres à l'espace mauricien et partageables par toute la communauté.' (Marimoutou 2001:14)

Indeed, Devi's reinvention of mythical figures in *Le Voile de Draupadi* is very relevant in this respect as two feminine mythological figures Draupadi (Mahabharata) and Sita (Ramayana) who never meet in the sacred scriptures are cousins in the novel. Indeed, the burning Vasanti is essentially taking Sita's test of chastity, but there is no Maya to save her; and the firewalking Anjali is paralleled to Draupadi whose veil is said to appear to the firewalkers. Sita and Draupadi equally become the subject of internal philosophical cogitations on the traditional role of women in the novel:

Je pense à Sita qui, tout en ayant été fidèle à Ram, était passée par l'épreuve du feu ; et à Draupadi elle-même, dont le voile est un voile de chasteté qui protège les marcheurs de la brûlure. A quoi auront servi toutes ces fidélités ? L'homme a-t-il jamais vraiment compris leur intensité et leur pouvoir ? (VD: 150)

Both become one single figure of redemption at the end of the novel as they are united in the character of Anjali who reconciles the two opposing parts of herself, as explored further in Chapter Two.

Indeed, the coexistence of two selves is mirrored in the texts by the coexistence of cultural references and the notion of harmony. Hybridity in this case is seen as a form of harmony between different parts whose contours blur and leads to the transcending of barriers. For instance, on a tombstone that carries the inscription, in English, of Devika's life and death stories in *l'Arbre fouet*, the Hindu notions of karma and reincarnation are evoked as part of the landscape of Mauritian life. Devika's wish that 'she should find herself again, without guilt' (AF: 43), becomes the trigger to Aeena's uncovering of the past and her ability to break down the shackles of karma and circularity by felling the tree. It is also within this narrative of broken women that Suresh, the warden, speaks of the destiny of chaste widows, 'Sati' (AF: 46) in India, as something that could happen to Aeena in Mauritius.⁴¹ The woman who chooses her own destiny: 'je m'étais affublé le nom de Gungi, la muette' (AF: 9), is herself a devotee of a 'guru blond', Jérôme, the hybrid priest, the Frenchman who takes up Hinduism and builds 'ashrams' on the island.⁴² The word 'ashram' itself is integrated into the narration, with no sign that it is a noun that

⁴¹ Sati refers to the Indian ritual of widows' self-immolation (sometimes forced) on their husband's pyre because they could not hope for an honourable life after the latter's death. This practice was officially outlawed in the early nineteenth century, although cases have been recorded in the rural areas of India even up until the latter half of the twentieth century.

⁴² Traditionally ashrams are Hindu hermitages, nowadays frequently headed by religious leaders or mystics who wish to promote certain traditions and a particular lifestyle.

belongs to another language. Jérôme's references to the 'versets du Gîta', the familiar appellation of the Bhagavad Gita or the celestial song of the Hindu God Krishna, and his constant portrayal as an avatar demarcates him as the incarnation of the Hindu gods. He preaches in French, his mother tongue, about Hinduism. Here, hybridity is effected through his teachings that are themselves in a hybridized form through the integration of philosophical Sanskrit words into the French prose: 'la loi du karma [...] l'idée fondamentale du karma et du dharma...' (AF: 29). Similar hybrid themes and cultural references can be seen in other texts such as *Pagli* where Magali Compan indicates Daya-Pagli's position and description when she lies engulfed in the mud as similar to the Gorgon Medusa, with hair spread out like serpents (Compan 2007 : 49). Moreover, dressed as a bride in red and reciting her litany, the protagonist is reminiscent of another figure of Hindu mythology, Durga/Kali, whose bloodlust and revenge leads to her killing her own husband.

The ability of the novel as a genre to incorporate multifarious forms is equally important here as Devi multiplies cultural markers, styles, intertexts as well as paratextual references.⁴³ For example, this

⁴³ This is also reminiscent of Barthes's famous quote 'Tout texte est un intertexte d'autres textes sont présents en lui, à des niveaux variables' (*Oeuvres Complètes II*, 1984: 1686), except that intertextuality here is used as a device that reinforces the hybrid nature of Devi's novels through the presence of different cultures.

latter device is used in *l'Arbre fouet* where T.S.Eliot's poetry frames the narration which deals with existentialism, magic realism and 'other' realities, with ghosts haunting houses and death a rampant reality. The citations from 'Four Quartets' ('Little Gidding, 'Burnt Norton'), 'The Wasteland' ('What the Thunder Said', 'The Burial of the Dead', 'Death by Water'), and 'Gerontion' reflect the chapters' content, for example, 'Death by Water' refers both to the death of Aeena's father and that of Devika's father, which are both caused by the daughters who leave them to drown. Although T.S Eliot's poems have very little to do with the novel's concerns, the verses that Devi chooses to include uncannily provide a synopsis (*mise en abyme* even) or a working title to each chapter, weaving the poem into the novel, even as it singles it out as a paratext.⁴⁴ Thus, it is through her text that Devi gives full rein to her own cultural hybridity as a Mauritian.

However, cultural hybridity is not always perceived in a positive manner in Devi's texts. Novels like *Le Voile de Draupadi* denounce the so-called cultural hybridity of those who choose freedom for themselves while imprisoning others, like Faisal. In a room full of people wearing Cardin, Dior, and Cartier at the dinner party given by Faisal, a corrupt Muslim criminal, echoes of cultural hypocrisy are

⁴⁴ Danielle Tranquille discusses further the function of T.S Eliot's poems in the paratext of this novel with particular focus on the notion of intertextuality (2004).

heard. Faisal sings a Hindi song for Anjali, his lawyer, and Dev's wife: 'Tere Honth Ganga ki sahil' (VD: 54), immediately translated for the reader as 'tes lèvres sont comme les rives du Gange'. Faisal is after all a hypocrite, trying to pander to Anjali's femininity, perhaps hoping to have an affair with her when his own daughter and cousin are cloistered deep within the household. While he takes advantage of his cultural hybridity to negative ends, he oppresses the women who have to abide by ancestral patriarchal rules.

Nevertheless, there are certain texts that demonstrate that cultural hybridity is empowering. This is the case of *L'Arbre fouet*, wherein opening up to 'other' cultures is a means of eschewing the shackles of orthodox Hinduism. Thus, Aena finds her redemption in Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, which Jérôme offers her as a way out of her past, into a culture that does not give importance to Hindu laws: 'je me suis mise à lire le livre, et je sus qu'il m'avait déjà donné une porte de sortie' (AF: 86). Even as a child the narrator sought salvation in other households with different religions and myths; stories are related to her by her surrogate father the Catholic Ton Charlie, who fills her mind with werewolves, fairies and other Western fantastical beings. This novel explores the notion of cultural hybridity as the little girl grows up influenced by members of different communities.

The blending of cultures and traditions discussed in this section is in keeping with Issur's view that 'la diversité des origines des auteurs [...] n'empêche pas la convergence de leur sensibilité ; l'intertextualité qu'on retrouve dans leurs œuvres s'articule autour du multilinguisme et de l'interculturalité' (Issur 2002 :353). Devi might be of Indian origin, but her novels reflect the cultural hybridity that is very much part of Mauritian society.

Conclusion

Devi's novels reflect an ongoing experimentation with linguistic, formal and cultural hybridity. They contain a plethora of spaces that congregate together within the space of the narrative, creating a web of cultural signifiers, languages and hybrid forms that are perpetually in a state of mutation. Devi's novels are a hybrid space, comparable to that propounded by theorists of hybridity like Bhabha, Rosaldo or Anzaldúa, who advocate the interstitial and 'border' spaces. However, this hybrid space is also different insofar as the linguistic and formal hybridity do not correspond to the divisions present in Mauritian society. In Devi's texts in which multiple voices from the past (Indian,

African, European), meet with the present to dialogue and create a new model of hybridity, but 'dans le bon sens du terme' in Devi's own words. The texts thus seem to exemplify the 'braiding of traditions' that Lionnet has observed in the postcolonial subject. Devi's writing demonstrates a constant layering of elements of different traditions and cultures (both content and structure) that is concomitant with a necessity to put all those in relation to one another, much like Glissant's concept of 'Relation' which he expounds in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990). Glissant writes of the experience of living in a creolised world as similar to the aerial roots of a rhizomatic tree wherein there is not one root but myriad little roots intricately related to one another to form a whole. Devi's texts thus weave together the different cultures and traditions at its disposal.

Moreover, according to Devi herself, the question of language is linked with identity insofar as the manipulation of language is 'une exploration des possibilités d'être' (Keynote speech, Barcelona 2009). Language, just as identity, cannot be monolithic. Bakhtin expresses the dynamic nature of language and its relationship with identity thus:

Language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderlines between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his (sic) own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. (Bakhtin 1981: 293-4)

The tension between the two functions of Creole, one as a marker of identity and the other as a marker of hybridity, in Mauritius, which Prabhu highlights (2007), is somewhat defused in Devi's texts. Creole may not have the same political status as in the Caribbean, but Devi's novels are testament to its growing importance as the 'Mauritian' language, the language of 'Home', emblematic of the island's rich cultural heritage, the single unifying element in the society. With the different values that Devi attributes to it, it becomes a mode of expressing identity as fluid, just as language is fluid in Devi's texts.

This fluidity is then transferred to the form of the text reflecting the cultural hybridity of the characters, which can be described in the image of the mosaic. As Elleke Boehmer puts it,

Given their stress on the multiplicity of difference, a crucial feature of postcolonial women's writing is its mosaic or composite quality: the intermingling of forms derived from indigenous, nationalist and European literary traditions. [...] writers emphasize the need for a lively heterogeneity of styles and speaking positions in their work. (Boehmer 1995: 227)

The concept of a whole made up of different parts that are interlinked is one that befits the writing style of Devi. The novels become a means of conveying the multiplicity of cultural traditions, lores and languages whilst maintaining an effective structure. In this system, the various parts blend together, are juxtaposed or dialogue with each other

without the loss of cohesion. However, whether this notion can be applied to the concept of identity formation, which I suggested earlier is Mauritian society's notion of 'hybrid' 'dans le mauvais sens du terme' is another question, which the next chapter seeks to explore.

Chapter Two

Interrogating 'Hybrid' Identities: Doubling, Fragmentation and Schizoids in Devi's novels.

Introduction

'One thinks of identity when one is not sure of where one belongs [...] "Identity" is the name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty', writes Zygmunt Bauman (1996: 19). According to Bauman, 'if the *modern* "problem of identity" was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* "problem of identity" is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open' (1996: 18). Douglas Kellner, whose article Bauman uses as a point of departure analyses the psychological dislocation that changing identities entail: 'when one radically shifts identity at will, one might lose control' (in Bauman 1996: 31). In the postmodern conception of identity

that Kellner describes, and which is shared by postcolonial theory, the notion of changing one's identity in order to adapt to different situations causes psychological dislocations and conditions that are akin to real-life psychological illnesses. While in the previous chapter I discussed the positive aspects of hybridity, in the sense that Devi's texts demonstrate that as a writer she can use the different languages, traditions and cultures available to her as a Mauritian, this chapter focuses on the notion of hybrid identities in Devi's novels. I attempt to look at what I suggest Devi means by her implicit 'hybridité dans le mauvais sens du terme'. In this way, I propose to look at Indo-Mauritian and Creole characters in the novels in order to discuss their perceived or actual madness as related to the concept of hybridity in the post-colonial society depicted by Devi.

Interestingly, the so-called 'madness' of colonized peoples served as the rationale for colonialism and the Empires' incursions into new lands inhabited by native tribes. As Delvecchio Good et al point out: 'the pathologies of native cultures were routinely cited as evidence of the inferiority of the colonized and as a mandate for colonization' (2008: 11).⁴⁵ Colonial psychiatry was established in order to study the way in which the colonized, inferior peoples' minds worked. The West posited itself as the seat of Reason, and held the belief that the colonized were their polar opposite, Unreason. However, Fanon undermines this idea of the madness of the

⁴⁵ Flora Veit-Wild remarks that colonial psychiatry which was developed in the twentieth century was a means for the white settlers to keep 'threatening the 'savages' [to keep them] under control' (2006: 12), while Butchart goes further to say 'the African unconscious became a site to manage the African body through the African mind' (1998: 119).

colonised prior to contact with the West, by underlining the fact that psychological dislocation was a consequence of colonialism: 'la vérité est que la colonisation, dans son essence, se présentait déjà comme une grande pourvoyeuse des hôpitaux psychiatriques' (2002: 239).

One of the founding texts of postcolonialism, *Peau noire masques blancs* (1952) was written by Frantz Fanon, a colonial psychiatrist, who was himself from a colonised country. Henry Louis Gates Jr. underlines the indebtedness of postcolonial theory to Fanon, while underscoring the fact that Fanon was 'a battlefield in himself' (1991: 457, 470). Fanon's title *Peau noire masques blancs* is itself emblematic of the multiplicity engendered by colonialism in the colonised. As Richard Keller has remarked, Fanon was in an in-between position, an 'uncomfortable' position between the 'coloniser and colonised' in that he was educated in the French system and was assimilated, but was black (2007: 167). According to Bhabha, Fanon found identity somewhere between his black body and the white education (1994: 88), like those who are 'almost the same but not quite' (1994: 86). Indeed, just as to be anglicised is precisely not to be English, to be 'francisé' is not to be French. Faced with a dehumanizing experience in France, Fanon's reaction is to interrogate black people's subjectivity. Fanon suggests that 'seule une interprétation psychanalytique du problème noir peut révéler les anomalies affectives responsables de l'édifice complexe' (1952 : 7-8).

Fanon's writings have inspired such prominent theorists as Edouard Glissant and Homi Bhabha in their conceptualization of identity in the

postcolonial world. Glissant perceives madness as a possible solution to Fanon's problem in *Le Discours Antillais*, where the notion of the 'délire verbal' can take a few forms, for example: it can be a '*délire de communication*' with invectives, aggressive language, and the autodestruction of language. It is marked by 'la vision de soi [qui] souffre de l'absence d'une mémoire collective' (1981 : 374). In Glissant's theory of verbal delirium, the verbal madness described is not negative, it is 'coutumier' : 'les formes de déviances ne sont traditionnellement pas ressenties comme telles (...) le délire verbal n'est pas considéré comme une entrave au fonctionnement social (ibid : 369). The European gauge of sanity thus would not be appropriate in this situation and thus it allows for an interrogation of what is normal.. As Celia Britton states, Glissant's notion foregrounds the impossibility of 'total identification with the white Other' (Britton 1999: 93). This is similar to Fanon's dislocating experience of in-betweenness, which is recurrent in his images of 'fissures' and 'ruptures', which pervade *Peau noire masques blancs*. It is the concept of split identification that Bhabha later stresses.

Bhabha's indebtedness to Fanon is evident in his own writings, in 'Remembering Fanon' (1987) the introduction to *Black Skin White Masks*, as well as in *Location of Culture* (1994) which frequently refers to *Peau noire masques blancs*. For Bhabha, the 'collaborations of political and psychic violence *within* civic virtue, alienation within identity, drive Fanon to describe the splitting of the colonial space of consciousness and society as marked by a "'Manichean delirium'" (1987: 119). Bhabha sees in Fanon's analysis the

problem of the Other within the Self which problematizes identity. It is the 'Otherness of the Self' (1987: 119) that brings forth this tension in postcolonial subjects who see their images as split, where the boundaries between Self and Other are displaced and at times effaced. It is with the help of the Other within the Self that it is possible, according to Bhabha, to 'cross, even to shift, the Manichean boundaries' (ibid: 122). However, Bhabha does criticise Fanon for his quickness to describe the Other as the white man. For Bhabha, the Other is also the Self, the white-masked black man whose split identity is empowering because it is 'incalculable, quite literally, difficult to place' (ibid: 122). Fanon is this subject who occupies not two but three places at once: colonised, coloniser and coloniser's representative in another colonised space. For Bhabha, it is 'at the edge' between these identifications that 'a strategy of subversion emerges' (ibid: 122), as discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

Bhabha's stance is that hybridity enables the hidden to come to light. Bhabha interprets Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in terms of hybridity, the 'in-between', the threshold between the inside and the outside, madness and colonialism (Bhabha 1994: 22). In Morrison's postmodern, postcolonial novel, issues of madness, colonialism and the impossibility of constructing identity reveal the intersecting space between personal history and the collective history of slavery through the Freudian *Unheimlich*, the uncanny presence of a ghost whose appearance problematizes the threshold between past and present. The quest for identity and an insistence on being named are notions central to many postcolonial narratives, including Devi's. For Bhabha,

'shifting the frame of identity from the field of vision [perception which has been at the core of the trauma of colonialism and madness] to the space of writing interrogates the third dimension that gives profundity to the representation of the Self and Other' (1994: 68). The discursive space then allows for a reconstruction of identity through the questioning of the opposition of what is same and what is not, for writing itself is subjective. Beloved thus finds herself not in Sethe, herself or Denver, but in the 'join', the space that links them all together.

Bhabha articulates the idea that by unfixing notions of identity, by finding it in the liminal or interstitial space, 'the postcolonial' subject is empowered, for signs can constantly be 'read anew' in such a space (1994: 55). According to him, identity will always be shifting and pinning it down is a difficult process, just as Fanon, although colonised, was in an empowering position 'in-between' several identities. However, this raises several questions, including how postcolonial subjects maintain coherence through a concept that is never stable. As Eagleton points out there is nothing 'retrograde' with the idea of roots and belonging (2003: 21), and the 'margins can be unspeakably painful places to be' (2003: 13).. If identity is always becoming, never fully realised, how do we not 'lose control' to use Kellner's words which I cited at the beginning of this introduction? Postcolonial identity is akin to the postmodern conception of identity in that it favours openness, but is repeatedly shifting. This unstable process of identification is in fact very similar to psychological dislocations commonly associated with various

mental illnesses like dissociative identity disorder, schizophrenia or hysteria. Indeed, as Anthony Easthope writes, 'what is recommended is only too like the state of psychosis. The sad old man muttering to himself on the top of the bus has fallen into the gaps coherent identity would conceal – he indeed inhabits an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications"' (1998: 345). It is with this idea in mind that I propose an analysis of psychological dislocations (doubling, fragmentation and schizoism) in Devi's novels in relation to writing and postcolonialism. I argue that while indeed the notion of plural identities are recurrent in the novels, the 'unfixedness' of identity, which according to Bhabha's theories, might be enabling and empowering is not a positive experience in Devi's characters' case. As Radhakrishnan has argued, all hybridities are not equal. More often than not in postcolonial societies, hybrid identities are a source of 'extreme pain and agonizing dislocations' (1993: 753): the postcolonial subject is made to choose not only between two identities, but between 'two narratives' (1993: 758), between pre-colonial times and post colonialism. In fact, the plural identities generated by postcolonialism and the contact of cultures within the insular space causes psychological dislocations in Devi's characters because of this lack of fixity.

Moreover, when Bhabha analyses *Beloved* he does not take into account the gendered aspects of the novel despite the main characters all being women. This chapter then attempts to read Devi's novels with Bhabha's hybrid identities and other types of splits (Fanon and Glissant) in mind in order to gauge whether the notion of hybridity is applicable to her novels,

which foreground both female and male characters. Here, contrary to the first chapter, it is the negative aspect of hybridity that is analysed, that is hybridity 'dans le mauvais sens du terme'. In so doing it focuses in particular on the psychological dislocations that are ubiquitous in the narratives from *Rue la Poudrière* to *Indian Tango*.

Two distinct groups of narratives will be examined in this chapter: the narratives of the Indian diaspora, which will be termed 'Indo-Mauritian' and the novels with Creole protagonists, which will be referred to as 'Creole'. The differences lie in the choice of maintaining ties to the country of origin, which and Glissant (1981) remarks is a reaction to the lack of roots, of stability experienced by exiled people who seek to reinforce their links to the motherland so that they do not lose themselves in the host country. However, despite the fact that Indians lost their caste and their home when they embarked upon their journey, many reaffirmed their links to India, and did not allow for creolisation to take place. This phenomenon is Glissant's 'racine unique' (1990), or the desire for a single origin, the 'Un' which opposes the 'Divers' or multiplicity (1981). The effects of this aggrandizement of India on the female protagonists of Devi's Indo-Mauritian novels are examined in the first section of this chapter. Conversely, in the Creoles' case, slavery and the French administration with its homogenising principle left little of the African heritage (Prabhu 2007), creating a sense of fragmentation in the protagonists as the second section of this analysis demonstrates.

Moreover, a few of these novels foreground the process of writing and the notion of schizoism will be discussed from this point of view in the third section. Foucault argues that 'la folie justement est condition d'impossibilité de la pensée' (1972: 57) and by default means 'l'absence d'oeuvre' at a time when Reason was prevalent in the seventeenth century. However, Derrida argues that it is the very language of fiction that can describe madness 'tout sujet parlant [...] devant évoquer la folie à l'intérieur de la pensée [...] ne peut le faire que dans la dimension de la *possibilité* et dans le langage de la fiction ou dans la fiction du langage' (1967: 84). Felman whose theoretical framework includes both Foucault and Derrida writes in her Preface to the translated version of her *La Folie et la chose littéraire, Writing Madness*: 'literature becomes the only recourse for the Self-expression and the Self-representation of the mad. It alone restores to madness its robbed subjectivity' (2003: 4). Since madness is marginalised and fiction seems to be the only space where madness can be inscribed, it is not surprising that postcolonial women take advantage of their liminal position as the colonial Other's Other to write. Indeed, madness 'is the place from which their discourse emerges' (Mudimbe Boyi 1996: 138). The blank pages become the empty space from which the silence of repression and trauma can finally be voiced and inscribed in the case of postcolonial women, as will be discussed in Devi's novels. The chapter thus explores different types of psychological disorders through a range of narrative voices and devices to highlight the differences between the Indo-Mauritian and the Creole novels and the reasons behind such a difference.

Ultimately, through an analysis of Devi's novels, it questions whether Bhabha's 'hybrid identity' can be applied to all postcolonial narratives.

'L'Inde me scinde' (K.Thorabully): Doubling in Le Voile de Draupadi and l'Arbre fouet.

In her first two Indo-Mauritian novels, *Le Voile de Draupadi* (1993) and *L'Arbre fouet* (1997), Devi employs the motif of the doubling to explore the psychological dislocation of her female protagonists. Both novels deal with similar themes: the suffering of Indo-Mauritian women at the hands of priest fathers, and the notion of memory, and specifically the agonising effects of their inability to reconcile the Indian past with the Mauritian present. According to Radhakrishnan in his critique of hybridity, 'the dilemma then is not between two pure identities (western or indigenous) but between two different narratives and their intended teleologies. The dilemma is: in which narrative should the postcolonial subject be launched on its way to identity?' (1993: 758). Both novels foreground feminine psychological dislocation, which complicates their negotiation of identity in a postcolonial environment, since female ancestors experienced a double colonisation at the hands of the British and under patriarchy. Moreover, both novels represent the uncanny presence of the past in ways that can be interpreted in terms of Freud's *Unheimlich*,

which Bhabha also uses to discuss hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994). My focus here is on doubling caused by the tension created by the inability to reconcile Indian values promulgated and reinforced after indentured labourers' arrival in Mauritius and the creolisation that has necessarily operated over the decades of living on the island.

The son of the narrator in *Le Voile de Draupadi* is dying of meningitis and her family is pressuring her to accomplish the firewalking ceremony as a propitiating ritual to the gods so that they spare the boy. Anjali, the protagonist, is torn between her family and her own loss of faith after her cousin, Vasanti, died in the flames after performing the same sacrifice during her childhood. While Anjali is experiencing this tension, her memories of Vasanti resurface and through a quest for her identity, she makes a choice: giving in to the pressure of the in-laws to firewalk, but then leaving her husband after Wynn, her son, dies, to live with Fatmah, a female Muslim victim of persecution. Indeed, Anjali follows in her mother's footsteps, becoming the docile wife, the 'ombre' of her husband (VD: 106). However, the unfolding narration when Anjali is driven to the edge of sanity by her son's illness, reveals a different aspect of her: 'un cri de *révolte* éperdu jaillit de ma gorge [...]' (VD: 7).⁴⁶ All of a sudden, the shadow becomes the woman who revolts against her husband. From the beginning, while Anjali is describing her *parcours* until the illness of her son, as a dutiful daughter and wife, the image that the 'je' gives of herself is sometimes the opposite. This opposition

⁴⁶ My italics.

is perceived by the protagonist herself through the questions she asks herself: 'd'où me vient ce courage de combattant?' (VD: 7). While Anjali is trying to come to terms with her son's illness, it is her double responsibility towards her family and to the class of 'bon petits colonisés' (ibid: 55) that becomes problematic for her. Wynn, her son, is the only thing that keeps her together and while his life is ebbing away, her prior dutiful Self is shattering.

While Anjali internalises the tension between a traditional background and a western education, her husband responds differently. When Western medicine fails to cure Wynn, Dev automatically has recourse to Hindu tradition: the mother must sacrifice herself for her son to live (Ravi 2006), for 'une mère qui refuse de faire une offrande pour son fils n'est pas une mère' (VD: 24). Like Fanon (1952) before him, he finds himself caught between two cultures. In his status as an assimilated man, he is in a dislocating position. However, instead of this posing a veritable problem for him he transfers the responsibility to Anjali. The latter recognises that she is being burdened with her husband's own contradictory position: 'j'ai compris qu'il déversait sur moi toute la charge de la maladie de l'enfant. Cela lui permettait de moins souffrir, de se délester d'un fardeau de honte qu'il trouvait insupportable' (VD: 9).

Anjali's inner turmoil is represented through the emergence of the 'autre moi' that she recognizes as the product of 'une ancienne révolte que je n'ai pas vraiment comprise' (VD: 23). In Radhakrishnan's words, which I quoted in the introduction to this section, Anjali is asked to choose between two cultures, 'two identities', 'two narratives' (Radhakrishnan 1993 : 758).

Furthermore, Bhabha, analysing Fanon's work remarks that the otherness within the self is empowering since it enables the strategic shifting of fixed, primordial identities. Fanon's 'Manichean Delirium' is thus positive for Bhabha because splits and fractures are necessary for the collapse of Unitarian identities (1987: 118). In *Le Voile de Draupadi*, there is the emergence of a new Self in Anjali. This emergence of a new Self is demonstrated through her uncharacteristic behaviour at parties and in front of her in-laws. Her howling against the wind, on a drive out to the sea with her husband, is emblematic of her emerging strength but Dev takes it as a sign that she is mad: 'je me suis mise à hurler [...] il m'a crue hystérique, il m'a crue folle' (VD : 82-83). The aspect that is now resurfacing is her real Self: 'je n'ai plus envie d'être moi. Ou plutôt, je voudrais retrouver, dans ce fouillis de pensées, d'instincts et d'actes, ce fatras d'humanité que je suis' (Ibid: 83). Anjali's 'voyage intérieur' is aimed at finding 'un "moi", quelque part, qui est véritable et qui mérite peut-être de vivre' (VD: 106). However, this other Self, in this instance is not a postcolonial Self in the way that Bhabha read it in Fanon's work. Here, the Other within the Self represents the ultimate realisation that the protagonist's own immediate past is far more important than the collective history, traditions and cultures that have been imposed on her. It is in this that I suggest the notion of the *Unheimlich* is very much present in the text.

Freud, reading Schelling, defines the *Unheimlich* as that which was familiar/homely and which has been repressed (1919). According to Cassin, what Freud does not recognise is that the *Unheimlich* described by Schelling is

a 'nemesis', it is something that must perforce come back to the surface (Cassin 2004: 548). According to Freud, 'the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and familiar' (1919) and in itself the *Unheimlich* can be both familiar and secret. In analysing Hoffman's Sand-Man story, in his chapter on the *Unheimlich*, Freud examines the concept of the double 'which appears in every shape and in every degree' (1919), as part of the *Unheimlich*, for what is more uncanny than to meet one's own image? There is a second element of the *Unheimlich* that is very important in this novel: the figure of Vasanti which haunts Anjali's memories and who is associated with madness in the text. This novel is as much the story of Anjali's quest for identity as it is about the return of the repressed memories of Vasanti. 'Vasanti est la cousine que nous avons tous délibérément bannie de nos mémoires' (VD: 21). As Anjali interrogates her own life and choices, fragmentary memories of Vasanti surge forth. Vasanti was the 'herbe folle' (VD: 43), the 'demie folle' (VD: 35) and even her games while she played with Shyam and Anjali were 'de plus en plus fous' (ibid: 43). Her eyes when she was about to set herself on fire are described as 'fous' (ibid: 139). Everything marked Vasanti as mad to Anjali and it can be argued that Anjali's fear of Vasanti and her strength led her to repress her own 'ancienne révolte'.

In her analysis of Nerval's *Les Filles du feu*, Felman asserts an internal split is 'concrétisée par l'hallucination du double' (1978: 69) and the narrator's psychological dislocation is instantiated by this double. I argue that Anjali's schism unearths memories of a woman who was strong, a woman with whom

she identifies: Vasanti. Thus the newly embodied Vasanti of her memories becomes her double. For Felman, in the discussion of Nerval's text, 'cette image ressemblante dramatise l'impossible, incarne le signe de l'interdit' (1978: 69). However, Vasanti was the opposite of Anjali in that she was outspoken and an extrovert, she was everything Anjali wanted to be, that is until she died. Her death, however, enables Anjali to choose a path away from religion: 'Elle n'avait pas d'autre choix que de suivre sa voie. Et moi, je me disais, tant que j'aurai le choix, tant que cela dépendra de moi, je dirai "non" ...' (VD : 25). Anjali's own refusal brings her closer to Vasanti, her revolt being deemed to be madness according to the patriarchal values of her family. Anjali is locked inside her own house when she becomes hysterical: 'au lieu de pleurer, je me suis mise à rire. Il était plus dur de rire que de pleurer [...] mais ils n'ont pas compris, ils m'ont crue hystérique, ils ont parlé de calmants et de piqûres' (VD: 171).

Dev's family's demands on her force her to retract into herself so that she can find a way out of her suffering through a recuperation of her own identity: 'j'ai besoin [...] de revenir à l'intérieur de moi-même et d'y chercher la clé de ma nouvelle moralité' (VD: 135). Her refusal to eat symbolises a deeper resistance. As Githire argues: 'Eating and related functions [...] provide the novel's characters the means to confront the troubled interface between Self and the outer world, a world that is intricately embedded in a complex traditional/religious/postcolonial cultural helix' (2009: 89). Her fasting to the point of anorexia brings her to the border between life and

death, to Vasanti in the 'eaux du souvenir' (Bragard 2000). The ghostly Vasanti is the part of her that resists patriarchal society just as the real Vasanti did, and in the 'in-between' space between life and death, Vasanti and Anjali meet so that the latter may fight against her destiny. Her firewalking enables her to cross over to 'l'autre rive' (VD: 168), which I suggest is her leaving her repressive Indian identity behind, for indeed, after this episode and Wynn's death, she leaves her family and duties and moves in with Fatmah, her Muslim friend.

According to Galibert, 'l'exil est devenu un voyage intérieur, à la fois paysage mental et condition d'écriture' (Galibert 2008: 82). Through Anjali's inner journey, her 'exil intérieur,' she has been able to transcend the barriers between herself and the island: 'le chant de l'océan est en moi, et j'ai bien l'impression d'appartenir à mon île au point de devenir un peu elle. Nous sommes soudés en un insolite mariage' (VD: 174). In the introduction to this chapter, I discussed Bhabha's notion of 'in-between' identities, which he considers to be enabling and empowering. Here, I suggest that the attachment to the Indian past is a burden which oppresses Anjali too much. In fact there are no two identities between which she can move as it would seem that Indian communities in Mauritius only accept their own ancestral identity in Devi's texts (as seen in *Pagli*, *l'Arbre fouet* as well), so that comingling is perceived as betrayal. Bhabha's hybrid identity is therefore impossible for Anjali, who then has to create a new identity for herself outside of the Indian

Hindu diasporic community, which she does through her friendship with Fatmah and a physical separation from Dev and the rest of her family.

The notion of collective memory, central to the diaspora's conception of identity, is also significant in *L'Arbre fouet*, especially as an obstacle to individual identity. In the diaspora, identity is more often than not negotiated as a community and the individual voice is lost for the greater good of the collective (Kalra and Hutnyk 2005, Brah 1996). *L'Arbre fouet* is also a first-person narrative which tells the story of Aeena one of the narrators, who was rejected by her priest father since she was born under the star of those who killed their father in a past life. Reduced to silence by Jérôme's abandonment, she is interned in an asylum from which she emerges years later to take up her father's property, which is 'haunted' by Dévika, the second narrator. The latter is a young immigrant Hindu who defied her father and slept with an untouchable, causing her father to beat her and attempt an honour killing. Instead, he dies when she pushes him into the lake. In the course of the text, Aeena and Dévika's narrative 'I's blur to reveal the similarities in the stories of the two girls so that reincarnation and karma become central themes of this novel. 'L'Arbre fouet' where Dévika was beaten, and slaves tortured before her, is felled under Aeena's orders.

In *L'Arbre fouet*, two first-person narratives serve as a critique of such an enterprise as their strangely similar situations illustrate the over-attachment of Indians to their traditions, so much so that the trajectory of Aeena, born decades after Dévika arrived in Mauritius, mirrors the latter's

(whose name literally means 'mirror'). Aena cannot reconcile her role as a Brahmin Hindu with that of a Mauritian girl who is in contact with other cultures. Trapped in a cycle of karma and reincarnation she seeks salvation in her love for Jérôme. Unable to cope with the burden of her past she is reduced to silence, becoming the 'Gungi (dumb)' (AF: 9). She is interned in a mental institution for many years, so that 'moi qui suis demeurée si longtemps silencieuse [...] j'en ai perdu le sens des mots' (AF: 9). The narration starts after she is released from the institution and moves to her property, where she remembers her story while discovering Dévika's.

According to Aena, she was so lost after being rejected by the man she loved, Jérôme, that she closed herself to the world. The psychiatrist who was called to attend to her 'devant [s]es yeux noirs et éteints, dont le regard révolté était ébloui par le soleil intérieur, [l]'a fait transporter à l'hôpital des fous, cet entre-monde, cette frontière de l'ultime étape entre vie et mort' (AF: 165). It is in this 'in-between' space that she finds the courage to resurface after many years of quiet contemplation, finally adopting a 'normal' pattern of behaviour, which qualifies her for freedom and a place in society again. However, the reader is aware that the protagonist is still feeling dislocated in the world she has reintegrated. Dominique, the Creole gardener-fisherman's daughter, is Aena's sole companion, but even she calls Aena 'la lunaire' (AF: 18). Aena's 'absence' is the result of her will to forget her past: 'je m'étais tournée face à un mur pour ne pas entendre le bruit de ma mémoire' (AF: 9) and every time the trauma of this past resurfaces, she is very quick to stop

herself: 'non. Pas ce souvenir-là. [...] Assez. Assez! Je dois oublier! Me taire surtout, me taire...' (ibid: 94) The rhythm is broken, the sentences short, the repetitions and the exclamations convey Aeena's frenzied state of mind as she does not want to fall prey to her memories again. Yet, it is Aeena herself who says 'le souvenir ne tue pas [...] l'oubli par contre est une demie mort' (ibid: 33); for to forget her life until then would be tantamount to forgetting who she is.

Aeena feels an uncanny 'présence vieillie' in the house she inherits from her father (AF: 15). Sensing the presence of an Other, Aeena experiences a form of dislocation, which she believes she can only counter by looking deep inside herself: 'je dois me replier sur moi-même' (AF: 34). According to Bragard, in Devi's novels 'des femmes sont transformées en îles secouées par des vagues de mémoire, des souvenirs traumatisants, voire aliénants, qui les emportent à la recherche d'elles-mêmes [...]' (2000: 66). For Frank Lestringant, the contemporary signification of the island is the 'repli sur soi' which signals a 'voyage intérieur' (Lestringant 2002 : 36). It is in this 'repli' that Aeena, like Anjali with Vasanti before her, finds her other Self in Dévika. This other Self representing the dislocated sense of identity is developed in various ways: through reincarnation, the concept of the ghost as well as the other Self within her.

Aeena's staccato rhythm marks her intimate conviction that she carries the burden of the past through Dévika's presence in her: 'c'est elle qui attend. Sa soeur. Son autre moi qui la découvrira et l'absoudra de sa culpabilité' (AF :

43). Aeena realises that her path has been predetermined, but the horror of knowing that she is carrying two guilts plays on her mind and is seen through the repetition of 'double' and 'deux': 'j'étais double. Ma culpabilité était double. Il y avait deux meurtres imprimés sur mes mains, scellés par le feu et le soufre. Je me séparais de moi-même, voyant deux visages suspendus dans leur lit de nénuphars, deux accusations, deux vengeances' (AF : 55). Aeena's first-person narrative is interrupted by Dévika and a dialogue between the two ensues:

“Qui es-tu? D'où viens-tu?

- Ne me reconnais-tu pas ? répondit une voix, chavirant de folie.

- Je ne sais pas... (la première voix craintive était celle de l'adolescente)

- C'est moi, Dévika. Me reconnais-tu à présent ?

- Je ne vous reconnais pas. (AF: 55)

Dévika goes on not only to evoke the drowning of both fathers, but also her own suffering at the hands of her father, 'crucifiée' against the 'arbre fouet' (Ibid: 56).

The notion of madness is highlighted as Dévika has a 'rire de folie' (AF: 55) which is perceived as ominous by Aeena who is afraid of the insight of the former. Aeena is only too aware of the close links between the two of them. There is a progression from 'de vie en vie, Dévika s'est incrustée en moi' (AF: 56) to 'et voilà Dévika qui se réveille en Aeena' (AF: 97), which underscores the almost normal character of reincarnation. As Aeena reveals

her state of mind, her doubleness becomes more evident: She remarks 'je suis à la fois moi et l'Autre' (AF: 128). The two 'je's' thus become interchangeable. Aena recognizes this effacing of boundaries between them: 'nous sommes soeurs, plus que soeurs. Identiques' (AF: 75). This threat of the loss of selfhood leads Aena to the verge of suicide, which only disappears with the felling of the tree where Dévika was beaten like the slaves before her. I suggest this symbolises the woman's liberation from that karma, but also indirectly Dominique's, the descendant of slaves' liberation, in this way linking the destiny of the two communities.

Bhabha discusses the notion of the double in his article 'Interrogating Identity' (1987). For him, 'it is only by understanding the ambivalence and the antagonism of the "desire of the Other" that we can avoid the increasingly facile option of the notion of the homogenised "Other"' (1987: 7). Furthermore, 'identity is articulated in those iterative instances which simultaneously mark the possibility and impossibility of identity, its presence through absence' (ibid: 7). His notion is that it is the rapprochement of the Self and the Other that enables the negotiation of identity. The subject only materialises insofar as there is someone who will recognize him in this form, but neither position (observer/observed, subject/object) is sufficient in itself, they are interdependent for recognition and existence. In *L'Arbre fouet* the double is a 'semblable' within the text but this Other and the Self are not mutually dependent. Dévika had her life and Aena hers, but it is in their suffering and their crime that they are related. Aena and Dévika do not need

each Other for recognition but to exemplify the notion of repeating histories (reincarnation) which must be stopped if individual identity is to be constructed. Thus it is not when they 'meet' that identity is forged but when together they have the tree felled so that patriarchal society and traditions do not influence the formation of their subjectivity anymore. It is only then that they can transcend reincarnation: 'je ne reviendrai plus' (AF: 172). Here I suggest the 'je' refers to both Aeena and Dévika since it is evident at the beginning of this section that it is Aeena who is looking at the gardener, but at the same time, it is Dévika who came back for vengeance. Thus, the two 'je's' became one at the end perhaps a reminder that Aeena represents all the women who have sought to fight against subservience regardless of their origin.

The occurrence of the *Unheimlich* in the ghost from the past trying to make her voice heard parallels *Beloved* and Bhabha's analysis of the novel in terms of finding identity in the 'join'. Indeed, in *Beloved* as I discussed in the introduction, Bhabha sees the negotiation of identity in the space in-between the characters: the constitution of identity in the intersection of collective history symbolised by Beloved and her stories of the middle passage and that of Beloved, Sethe's daughter, Denver's sister, and the ghost of the murdered little girl. In Devi's two novels my contention is that there is no intersecting space between the collective history and personal negotiation of identity. In *L'Arbre fouet* both Aeena and Dévika are individuals who attempt to construct their own identity while fighting against the diaspora's need for a collective

identity linking them to India. For Kalra et al, 'diasporic contexts provide fertile, oft fraught sites from which to resist practices that oppress women' (Kalra et al 2005: 58). Wishing to find themselves, the two women clash against the community symbolised by their fathers who are both priests and oppress them. In Aeena and Dévika's cases, this is complicated by the fact that to assert themselves as women, they must defy patriarchal Hindu society and its enduring values.

Bhabha's idea of identity 'in the join', as analysed in *Beloved* (1994), I suggest, is thus impossible in Indo-Mauritian novels because the female characters cannot reconcile the 'Indo' aspect, which invariably oppresses women in the novels, with the fact that as Mauritians they should have a rich and hybrid identity. They reject a unitary 'Indo' identity, but also are unable to negotiate a hybrid Indo-Mauritian identity. In so doing, they choose a 'Mauritian' identity. In the texts I have just analysed, this Mauritianness is not perceived as unstable and plural, it is a form of non-being the same 'lack' that frightens Indians as they arrived on the island. Being Mauritian in reality is to be an aggregate of different identities at the crossroads of civilisation, but also an 'absence' of identity in that there is not one identity. Anjali and Aeena decide to reject their ethnic community and so move on to being just 'Mauritian' women by living with people of other ancestral origins, as opposed to staying within their communities.

In rejecting their Indianness Aeena and Anjali do not exemplify Bhabha's concept of moving in-between identities. Moreover, while *Beloved's*

ghost is a catalyst for finding identity in the 'join', Dévika's ghost, as with the ghostly memory of Vasanti in *Le Voile de Draupadi*, is a catalyst for 'moving on' and beyond the demonised concepts of religion, karma and reincarnation and above all Hindu patriarchy. The first-person perspective in both novels enables a rapprochement with the female protagonists and a firsthand experience of their doubling, which is more evident in the actualization of Dévika the ghost in *L'Arbre fouet* and her dialogues with Aeena. While Vasanti is essentially the ghost from memories and Anjali's narrative reflects on Vasanti's actions and in her breakdown confronts this ghost, Dévika materialises and becomes Aeena. In the thresholds of time, space and memory where Aeena and Dévika's memories, voices and bodies converge, Aeena finds the strength to resist her karma and asks the guardian figure to fell 'l'arbre mâle', 'l'arbre fouet' (AF: 42). The destruction of the tree leads to the transcending of both colonisations, male and colonialism itself: 'votre temps est à present écroulé. Votre règne est terminé. [...] Je suis restée à la fenêtre, et je n'ai pas bougé tant qu'il (le jardinier-pêcheur) n'avait pas fini d'abattre l'arbre fouet. [...] Il le fallait, c'était le prix de ma liberté' (AF : 172).

The two texts then demonstrate the schism of the main protagonists who are caught between two different ways of conceptualising identity, which divides them in two. Perceived as mad by others because they do not conform to Indo-Mauritian society's edicts, they eventually develop another Self, the construction of which is explored in various ways by Devi: reincarnation, *Unheimlich*, the Other within the Self, so as to illustrate the psychological

dislocation of Indo-Mauritian women whose choice, in both cases is to forget this past so they can escape the notion of a fixed identity.

'Je ne sais pas qui nous sommes': Fragmentation in Devi's Creole narratives.

This section examines three Creole novels by Devi: *Rue la Poudrière*, *Soupir* and *La Vie de Joséphin le Fou*. The first is predominantly a first-person narrative which sometimes takes the form of a dialogue with a 'vous' and at other times assumes a third-person narrative voice judging the main protagonist's actions, akin to an alter ego. *Soupir* enables us to cross over to the small island of Rodrigues and a small community. In this text, a polyphonic narrative recounts the despair and lack of bearings of people living in an unyielding land. The final novel treated in this section is the stream-of-conscious narrative of Joséphin, someone who was rejected by society and his own mother. This section thus focuses on the theme of madness as presented by Devi using different types of narrative voices. I propose to demonstrate how the lack of history of characters can lead to individual as well as collective madness and the ways in which Devi portrays this madness. As with the first part of this chapter, the aim is to show that Bhabha's model of 'hybrid identities' is not applicable, this time because there is no pre-colonial

identity, for how can hybrid identities be formed if there is no enduring pre-colonial identity?

Indeed, in her analysis of the theme of hybridity in Mauritian narratives, Anjali Prabhu highlights the fact that African discourses are absent in Mauritius. According to Prabhu, there is evidence of 'the inability of Mauritian society to come to terms with the issue of slavery and with its historical ties to the African continent and Madagascar' (Prabhu 2007: 52). Her contention is that given the fact that language plays a significant role in the construction of identity in Mauritian society, as discussed in Chapter One, 'language [becomes] an ethnic marker that disallows a legitimate configuration of Africanness and blackness, resulting in an eternal elision of this "part" of the Mauritian "mosaic"' (Prabhu 2007: 52). In his introduction to Francophone Indian Ocean literature and cultures, Hawkins, on the other hand, has demonstrated that there are elements of African culture still present in the Creole population through the Segga and the instruments that are used (Hawkins 2007:33). For Hawkins, these are signs that there is an enduring African identity.

According to Miles, Creoles are 'arguably the only "true Mauritians" of the island' (Miles 2000: 212). While for a long time references to slavery and Africa were somewhat taboo in the society, Miles indicates that there is a nascent willingness to embrace this identity. For the Creoles, Miles writes, they are the only genuine Mauritians because of their irrevocable attachment

to the land of birth. The question raised is to what extent this is true in Devi's novels.

Rue la Poudrière, is the story of Paule, a prostitute, who was given the feminised version of a male name because her parents wanted a boy. Paule grows up unloved by her mother Marie, a longaniste (the practitioner of a form of black magic originating from Madagascar, one of the countries from which slaves arrived to Mauritius) sorceress and by her father, the alcoholic Edouard. Marie is the one who holds the purse in the house and terrorises both her husband and her daughter. Edouard not having money for a drink sells Paule to Mallacre, a pimp, for a shot of rum. At no point does Marie come and rescue her from the pimp's den and Paule joins the living hell of Rue la Poudrière which caters for the sexual appetites of sailors and locals. Paule thirsts for love from friends as well as Mallacre. She wishes to have a child but is horrified on discovering that her last client was her father. Convinced she is pregnant, she runs to her mother's lair where she ingests poison and flees to her former house to await death as demolition trucks edge their way towards the old building. The narration is written in stream-of-consciousness style and is marked by digressions as Paule switches from her current predicament to the past, trying to piece together her story. The narrative form is that of Paule writing her story to an immediate reader, a 'vous' that is the reader who is invited into the mind of the narrator to experience first-hand her trauma: 'on en saura davantage [...] reconnaissez-moi, dans l'ombre fugitive que vous entrevoyez au coin de la rue [...] ne cherchez plus à concevoir dans votre

esprit ma forme charnelle' (RLP: 2-4). This 'vous' is doubled by another 'vous' standing for her parents 'vous, vous qui avez accompli, avec peine, avec feu, avec tourment, ma déchéance' (RLP : 4). The reader is posited as within the text, 'suivant ma pensée', and Paule asks the reader directly whether she is not going 'trop vite' for them to follow (ibid: 5). This has the effect of making the reader feel the sense of loss and incoherence directly since s/he follows Paule as she runs through the streets away from her guilt and even as she repeatedly reveals her 'déraison' (ibid: 1), her 'chères folies' (ibid: 2), the fact that she moves 'd'une folie à l'autre' (ibid: 3) and that thoughts are 'entrechoquées dans [s]a tête, bousculant, basculant [s]a raison'(ibid: 5).

The proliferation of terms pertaining to the vocabulary of madness does not cast doubt on the character so much as spur the reader forward to learn more about her story. Paule's assertion at the end of the novel, 'j'ai volontairement oblitéré ma pensée, dérangé ma raison, secoué ma cervelle, délibérément pris cette attitude de démence' (RLP: 185) might cast doubt on the veracity of her story, yet there is a sense where we as readers must look elsewhere to find madness. Thus, images of splits and doubles recur in this narrative where the mother herself is double: Marie the longaniste and baby killer and Marie the Virgin who protects her son. In the name Marie there is thus a double signifier. This is passed on to Paule who is conscious of being in-between a boy and a girl, as Paule is the feminised version of Paul, the son Marie and Edouard did not beget. The image of incarceration used is powerful as Paule states 'on m'a emprisonnée dans un nom de garçon (RLP: 7), so much

so that 'j'ai grandi comme une liane folle' (ibid: 7), that is without the anchorage of a community. Constantly dislocated between her ambiguous name and her body which is feminine, Paule feels lost in the world, more so because Marie refused to transmit her history to her. Indeed, Marie never passed on her knowledge of longanisme nor its traditions and culture. Paule thus compares herself to a 'cellule subitement éclatée par l'absence de ses prisonniers' when she starts questioning her identity and her previous notion of who she is disappears (ibid : 81), as well as a 'soi-même déjà un peu en lambeaux' (ibid : 116) because from the beginning she does not know her history. Images of the body as a prison and of fragmentation abound as Paule cannot reconcile herself with her absent past. Marie is described as 'l'incréée' (RLP: 95), suggesting that she has no ancestors, no filiation and in a society where origins determine identity, Paule's lack of history means she does not have an identity.⁴⁷ Paule's own rejection of her parents casts her as a double for her mother for she claims 'je suis le seul être qui puisse finalement dire qu'il n'a eu ni père ni mère' (ibid: 95).

Yet, there is still tension within Paule as she wishes to belong. According to her, her physical appearance precludes her belonging to a specific community: 'de par mon apparence je n'avais pas d'appartenance. Je n'existais pas. Je ne pouvais m'enliser dans quelque rite expiatoire où j'oublierais ma révolte et ferais partie d'un nombre, d'une communauté'

⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of Kursheed's conversation with Samia in Shenaz Patel's *Portrait Chamarel* on the need to belong to a community so as to have a support in order to anchor oneself 'profondément dans une histoire, une tradition' (Patel 2003: 126).

(RLP : 170). Any community's compassion and support would be positive for her, that of Muslims and their beautiful mosques or the Catholic Cathedral with its Virgin Mary. Marie's profession as a longaniste marginalises Paule who does not belong to the traditional Roman Catholic Church like most other Creoles.

Thus, the novel is a confession and a study of a form of madness engendered by a lack of history. While Paule's parents are largely to blame for her madness and her subsequent way of life, it is evident that Paule does not lay the blame on them as unnatural parents but on how they refused to give her an identity. Being part of a community that would support her, as seen above, is far more important to Paule than receiving love from Marie. Since identity, in the society she describes, is defined according to the religion and therefore community to which the individual belongs, I suggest that Paule, from the outset, is doomed to be 'une liane folle', without roots, in her own words (ibid: 7). In *La Jeune née*, Cixous states 'je vois l'hystérique comme disant "je veux tout"' (Cixous & Clément 1975: 284), and Paule indeed covets everything all the other communities enjoy and she cannot have: religion, tradition, culture, love and a family. However, she is conscious of the fact that she made the wrong choices and her dissociation from herself as an outside observer is evident in the use of the third person which further intensifies the feeling that she is collapsing internally: 'elle a coulé [...] elle a laissé [...] Il restait Paule à Paule' (RLP : 81). Lionnet remarks :

[...] Ananda Devi [utilise] le roman à la première personne pour analyser la subjectivité féminine, son éclatement et sa dispersion dans le jeu de miroirs d'un récit qui sert à déconstruire toute identité stable, soulignant le pluralisme culturel et racial de l'île. [...] (Lionnet 1994: 88)

However, it can be argued that Paule's fragmentation is emblematic of her lack of anchorage. Lionnet's argument does not take account of the instances where the third person enters the narrative and disrupts the reader's focus as it seems it is someone else talking about Paule when it is in fact Paule herself speaking. Similarly, when Patrick Corcoran states 'Paule's life is portrayed as a descent into ever more extreme forms of marginalised existence that are increasingly equated with madness' (Corcoran 2007: 115) it is because Paule is distancing herself from her own 'I' speaking as an outsider weighing her own actions and deferring to a 'vous' who is to judge the actions of the main protagonist in her hysteria. Placing herself as 'une autre Paule' (RLP: 115) enables her to realize her mistakes.

As opposed to Anjali and Aena as discussed in the previous section, where doubling was a way of identifying the scission of Indo-Mauritian characters, in Paule's case fragmentation is perceived as a way of making sense of her multiple lives (as a young girl, as Marie's daughter, as Edouard's daughter, as Mallacre's lover, as a prostitute, as a friend). In her own words, 'je devrais m'écarteler afin de pouvoir m'arracher à la volonté de cette maison; je devrais briser mon esprit en petits morceaux' (RLP: 85). She believes she would then piece together all the fragments and be able to

become a coherent whole as long as this house collapses with her. She wishes for dissolution so that she may reconstruct herself. The futility of clinging to the past and setting past wrongs right is underlined in her statement 'je me suis retournée démente, insensée au lieu de fuir tout droit' (RLP: 88). It is in madness that she finds the reason behind her lack of cohesion, the multiplicity she experiences. This state of madness becomes both a bane and a refuge for her 'je vis dans une espace de folie qui me manipule et où je me cloisonne volontairement pour me protéger' (ibid : 117). As Mudimbe-Boyi has remarked, 'madness is the place from which their (postcolonial women's) discourse emerges' (Mudimbe-Boyi 1996: 137). It is thus through the process of writing her madness that Paule is able to voice her trauma. However, this madness is not celebrated because it ultimately leads to Paule's suicide.

The question this raises is how does a postcolonial subject who knows only his/her present identity as a Creole in Mauritian society move between identities as Bhabha has proposed? In the case of *Rue la Poudrière* Paule's identity cannot be hybrid if it is only made up of an unfathomable present and no past to enlighten her on her present circumstances. The lack of precolonial identity then leads her to a state where death is deemed to be a better prospect than living after her incidental incest.

In *Rue la Poudrière*, Paule's confession highlights her fractured 'moi' which is underscored by the first-person narrative. In *Soupir*, there are two types of narrative voices: the first-person narrative of Patrice l'Eclairé as well as the third-person narrative, which I argue is that of Patrice as a Creole

conteur recounting the community's events and their end. As with the previous novel, *Soupir* highlights the loss of history, especially of collective history. Creoles in Mauritius thus fight for their share of Mauritian nationality because of the politicised role of language in identity construction as discussed in the previous chapter. In Rodrigues, where *Soupir* is set, the whole population is Creole, yet there is an equal lack of identity because the trauma of slavery was forgotten. Therefore, Paule's story is that of a woman with a lack of history and a destructive immediate past, *Soupir's* inhabitants are suffering from a collective lack of history and a traumatic immediate past. Paule feels marginalised because the rest of Port-Louis seem to have their niche, even the Creoles who have a community in Catholicism. In *Soupir* the little community marginalise themselves because they are caught in a web of guilt and do not want to look towards the future, unlike most of the young people who refused to follow them. In *Soupir*, I suggest that it is both the lack of pre-colonial identity that precludes the existence of a hybrid identity, but also an obsession with their personal pasts which is disempowering. Indeed, Bhabha's notion of 'hybrid identity' (Bhabha 1994: 208) rests on the idea that cultures are never totalitarian. For him, all post-colonial peoples have a 'hybrid identity', because they are 'caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation' (ibid). However, this is 'translation and negotiation' between one's own culture and the other's culture does not happen in Devi's *Soupir*, first of all because it is a homogeneous Creole population and secondly because the inhabitants have forgotten their slavery past through the generations. In fact, all the protagonists of *Soupir* are

obsessed with their recent past and how it affects their individual lives and ultimately them as a community. The burden of the recent past is then exacerbated by the secret of their colonial past which Ferblanc reveals to them, leading to their madness. In this novel I distinguish different types of psychological dislocations: gendered madness with both Constance and Corinne, the psychological vulnerability of the *compères* and the madness of the narrator. Ultimately, this section demonstrates how the novel interrogates the very notion of madness and norm.

Soupir features a range of characters who all share a common feature: despair. They all have an immediate past that they wish to hide and some of them become mad because of their lack of identity. The main narrator is Patrice L'Eclairé, Noëlla's father. However, Patrice never openly acknowledges his rape of Marivonne, Noëlla's mother. Marivonne's sister, Corinne, runs a brothel, and was rejected by her husband Louis Bienvenue. Louis, Ferblanc, the deranged character, Bertrand Laborieux and Patrice are the *compères* in the novel. Constance is the only character whose 'madness' is claimed through her very name: 'Constance la folle' (S: 16). The enigmatic Royal Palm, who was rejected by his mother's family lives with his adoptive mother on the edge of the village. *Soupir* is the story of remembering and forgetting the past, and ends on the rape of Noëlla by the *compères* and the latter's demise, while Royal Palm lives on.

The difference between the treatment of Ferblanc and Constance is gendered. Indeed, Constance is persistently called 'la folle' without reason,

when Ferblanc actually speaks with ghosts and has unreasonable ideas like growing marijuana on the arid slopes of Soupir. This is reinforced by the fact that while the community rejects as 'folle' Constance for her slavery songs and stories, 'loin des consciences qu'elle ne pouvait plus remuer' (S: 77), they embrace Ferblanc despite his madness. Ferblanc becomes mad because of his vitiligo, but Constance's so-called 'madness' is never exemplified. Ferblanc, despite being used by Constance as a channel to tell the story of the twenty abandoned slaves who vowed to haunt their master from one generation to the other and whose name are those of the compères, is not rejected by the latter. In fact, what Patrice l'Eclairé states is affectionate: 'fous que nous étions n'avions pour lui que de l'amour' (S: 167). The only difference between Ferblanc and Constance is the fact that she is a woman and that her word does not hold much value,⁴⁸ whereas Ferblanc despite the fact that 'il n'avait plus toute sa tête' (S: 20) remains close to them and they forgive him for reminding them of their curse. Patrice l'Eclairé, in statements marked by emphatic tricolon, remarks: 'c'était sa croyance. C'était son illusion. C'était sa bêtise' (S: 111), when he realises that Ferblanc is speaking to Constance. Indeed, Ferblanc seems to be telling them about their ancestral past, but this knowledge could only have come from the dead Constance who was the only person who knew

⁴⁸ This is reminiscent of the differences between male and female madness in Western societies: for example Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* demonstrated that because women were considered to be weaker people with different preoccupations, their psychological illnesses necessarily differed from the men's during the Victorian period. More recently Phyllis Chessler examined the cases of women imprisoned in asylum because of so-called madness and remarks that most of them were not in fact mad (1972, 2005).

about the slavery days on the island. Thus, reality and the unreal are blurred when a ghost leaves them their legacy through their mad friend.

In addition, Corinne's crime of passion serves as a point of comparison to the compère's madness in raping and killing Noëlla. Corinne's madness is seen first when she attempts suicide and hears a voice 'à l'intérieur d'elle' repeating 'tue-la, tue-la, tue-la' (S: 53), the imperative signalling her inner voice as empowered while the weak side of her cannot go through with suicide. Patrice states: 'elle ne raisonnait plus depuis longtemps' (S: 57). She is like Medea the woman who deviates from the norm by murdering those she is supposed to love and honour. Indeed according to Jones, Medea and the woman who can be called her 'daughter' is :

The woman who kills, in particular the woman who kills a member of her own family [...] Medea's daughters are those who did not put others first, whether husbands, parents or children. They violated the primal patriarchal condition of femininity: Self-sacrifice (Jones 2003: ix, 100)

Corinne is thus set up as an unnatural wife and lover, and therefore a villain. Moreover, Patrice's reaction to Corinne's appearance in front of his hut is evocative of gendered madness: 'elle était devenue complètement folle' (S: 61). Indeed, at no point does Patrice question Louis Bienvenue's behaviour. It seems that it is Corinne, the woman, who is the culprit. Thus, Louis states bluntly: 'les femmes sont folles' (S: 63). Corinne's crime of passion when she kills Louis's new woman is seen as something horrible, abnormal which marginalises Corinne: 'on n'a pas *pardonné* à Corinne son accès meurtrier' (S:

72, *my italics*). Yet, Patrice seeks for the reader's *pardon* after he rapes and murders his own daughter.

Corinne's story and the murder she perpetrates are told in twenty pages (S: 53-73) whereas Noëlla's rape and murder is recounted in four pages (S: 213-6). This discrepancy is significant as it encourages the reader to question the narrator's choice of according so little space to Noëlla's murder when he gave such importance to Corinne's crime. It is important to note that from early on in the novel the murder had been perpetrated. Indeed, only a third through his narration, Patrice declares: 'et le corps? / - Il faudra l'enterrer. [...] *Ayo Mama*, Oh ma mère [...] C'est à ce moment là que l'ampleur de ce que nous avons fait m'a frappé' (S: 80). '*Ayo mama*' are Noëlla's last words at the end of the novel, when the four men have raped and are in the process of killing her. Thus, I believe that Patrice's entire narrative can be read as a justification of Noëlla's murder, comparing it to other types of madness: Constance's, Ferblanc's, the horror of Corinne's act which he portrays as worse than Noëlla's murder given the number of pages he accords it. Yet, there is a sense that he realises that he is only making excuses for an *acte irréparable*. During the narrative he states 'il se peut que je cherche des excuses' (S: 39).

In this context, the epigraph 'je ne sais pas qui nous sommes' which is in the middle of this short chapter recounting Noëlla's murder, reveals a

questioning not of identity, but of humanity.⁴⁹ How can he have raped and murdered a defenceless being, however much envious of her relationship with Marivonne Patrice was? Who is mad in this text, Corinne, Constance, Ferblanc or Patrice for having done this to his own daughter? The novel thus interrogates the very meaning of madness, especially when in the middle of the chapter recounting the rape, Patrice seeks the sympathy of the reader: 'elle me l'avait demandé, je vous le jure. Vous devez me croire' (S: 214). His raping and killing of his own daughter is worse than Corinne's crime or Ferblanc's lunacy. According to Felman, 'le terme folie est emprunté au langage des autres, dans lequel il désigne un jugement et une condamnation' (Felman 1978: 171). Patrice uses the term to qualify his companions, at no point does he say 'je suis fou'. He is one of the 'autres' who qualify others as 'mad'. He puts himself in the collective 'nous' in 'le vent nous rendait un peu fou' (S: 23) when he describes the place where they live, but I suggest, only insofar as it would disculpate him from his crime.

The novel seems to give voice to different characters at first, as each chapter focuses on one protagonist with a third-person narrator, however, when it is Patrice l'Eclairé's turn, it is in first-person. I suggest that it is Patrice who tells the others' stories and in using a third-person narrative style he empowers himself and neutralises his presence while describing the others and giving them voice. He introduces what Blanchot calls the 'neutre', the other within the text who constructs the narration by avoiding a central voice

⁴⁹ This quotation is one of the epigraphs of the novel, underlining the self-reflexivity of the text and its concerns with the notion of identity (See J. Waters 2008)

in the 'je', in this case that of Patrice l'Eclairé: 'le "il" narratif marque ainsi l'intrusion de l'autre - entendu au neutre - dans son étrangeté irréductible' (Blanchot 1969: 563). Thus, when the multiple characters are given voice, the reader is led to believe that an omniscient narrator is weaving the story into a coherent whole, while in fact it is Patrice who is manipulating the events. This becomes obvious when he describes what Marivonne is doing when he is with the dead Noëlla and his friends: 'elle a frissonné d'un avertissement, qu'elle s'est arrêtée de faire ce qu'elle faisait [...]' (S: 81).

Moreover, death is seen as the natural consequence for the four compères, while Royal Palm must live on because he is not held back by a destructive past. Indeed, the compères are in a state of frenzy akin to the 'délire verbal' that Glissant describes in his *Discours Antillais*, as discussed in the introduction to this Chapter. The '*délire de communication*' with invectives, aggressive language, and the autodestruction of language is triggered by 'la vision de soi [qui] souffre de l'absence d'une mémoire collective' (1981 : 374). Having only inherited a tiny part of their ancestral history through Ferblanc's revelation and not knowing where they belong and what their future entails, the four men give in to the voice that incites their anger. Their '*délire de communication*' is evident in the rape scene which precedes their death. As quoted in the previous chapter,⁵⁰ the Creole they use is violent, full of insults and expletives and broken. However, they destroy also themselves after the rape and death of Noëlla because they are not redeemable. Contrary to

⁵⁰ See intra p.57

Glissant's 'délire verbal', which is 'coutumier' (Glissant 1981 : 369), that is part of daily life and is not 'une entrave au fonctionnement social' (ibid), the men's madness is seen as destructive both to others and themselves in Devi's narrative.

On the other hand, Royal Palm is a survivor. His aim is to find himself, for he is the real amnesiac character in the novel as he loses memory after every epileptic fit. Thus, when Pitié reveals the story of his birth to him he is not tainted by it because he is unconscious at that moment. Still pure and devoid of a past, immediate and ancestral, his memory is a 'lieu blanc' (S: 223), symbol of purity, and 'il vit dans le présent, il vit le présent comme s'il découvrait la vie à chaque instant' (S: 221). Like the other youth who refused to come to Soupir, he chooses hope and 'il ne s'arrêtera pas' (S: 224). Once again, Bhabha's notion of two cultures that dialogue together to give rise to a hybrid culture, a hybrid identity (1994), is not applicable here, where Royal Palm does not know his ancestral history, nor his immediate history. Unlike the other characters who seek to question their identity through the past and only obtain one answer: *nous ne savons pas qui nous sommes*, Royal Palm lives in a present which is constantly recreating itself, thus enabling him to evade existential questions and to live each moment completely. Perhaps therein lies the solution to the problem of identity in *Soupir*: living in the present as opposed to attempting to find out one's identity through either the ancestral or the immediate past.

Madness and death mark the next novel, *La Vie de Joséphin le fou*. Like Paule and the inhabitants of Soupir, Joséphin is also psychologically dislocated by his lack of past and his lack of belonging. Just as Paule was rejected by her mother, Joséphin is repeatedly beaten and traumatised by his mother and her multiple lovers. As in *Pagli*, madness is inscribed in the very title, except that in this case it is in French right away. The stream-of-consciousness style of narrative of Joséphin begins in medias res focusing on the day he kidnaps two teenagers Solange and Marlène and turning into a retrospective narrative as the protagonist remembers his life with his mother on the margins of the Creole community of Case Noyale. The narrator's psychological dislocation stemming from his mother depriving him of humanity and history (personal and collective) is explored in this section. I will thus analyse the text in terms of sexual psychology and narrative voice. In so doing I will examine the way Joséphin is used as the means of revenge on men through a process of colonisation by his mother. I also suggest a link Joséphin's mental instability to the Creole community's malaise.

Joséphin has no father and his mother rejects him so that he seeks refuge in the arms of the sea, the surrogate mother, in a play on the words 'mer-mère'. Corcoran argues that Joséphin is 'beyond community' because he is 'excluded from culture by the destruction of his childhood and deprived of reason by the isolation he endured' (Corcoran 2007: 116). In fact, Joséphin's mother denied him any humanity: 'je jouais avec les vers de terre, je me disputais avec les poules du village' (JF: 18). Joséphin's body becomes the

book where his mother inscribes her personal history. He is reduced to an object:

Elle venait inspecter mon corps et ma tête, toucher mon oreille qu'elle avait mordue un jour qu'un tonton l'avait quittée, retrouver un cercle de brûlure bleue qui marquait le jour où il était revenu, et comme ça elle explorait sa douleur sur mon corps, elle se rappelait sa propre existence inutile dans mes plaies, celles qui suppuraient étaient plus vieilles, celles où le sang était rouge étaient les plus neuves, chaque plaie lui racontait ses déboires, elle pleurait dedans sans pleurer pour moi, c'était ses blessures de vie qui la faisaient pleurer. (JF: 21-2)

Like Corinne, the mother is another of Medea's daughters, for instead of sacrificing herself for her son, she uses his body as an archive to inscribe her pain. In an attempt at misdirected revenge, she deprives him of his own history and the history of his ancestors. She never tells him stories only 'des bribes sans suite' (JF: 12), and instead of letting him live his own life, she 'writes' her story on his body, turning him into an extension of herself. Thus, the day the sea heals his wounds, 'c'est comme si elle avait perdu la mémoire [...] et elle se cherchait bêtement sur mon corps' (JF: 22). As with *Rue la Poudrière* and *Soupir*, the notion of collective memory is important because it is what brings communities together in the society described by Devi. Despite his antagonism towards the community, Joséphin still wishes to belong. Thus, since he is devoid of history and has discovered the sea as a haven, Joséphin desires to acquire the memory of eels which can find their way to their parents' home without even having been there before, and hopes to belong with them as the 'zom-zangui', the eel man.

For Joséphin all women in the Creole community suffer the same fate: 'La vie se chargera d'engloutir leurs espoirs et leur beauté, cette noyade-là sera terrible parce que lente, elle prendra des années et des années et elles auront l'impression d'étouffer' (JF: 42). Nevertheless, he hopes to save Solange and Marlène from this: 'je vous empêcherai de disparaître comme l'autre, commencée jolie, puis de tonton en tonton devenue laide, devenue pâle' (JF: 45).

However, Joséphin does not understand that some are educated and may have better chances than his mother who only knew how to dance and have fun. Indeed, Solange and Marlène are still innocent at fifteen, the age at which Joséphin's mother gave birth to him. They believe in fairy tales and their western role play signals them as being in a different world from that of his mother: they speak of 'diadèmes de pierre blanches', 'gants de soies' (JF: 42) waiting for their knights 'gabriel et jonathan' and their white horses, as opposed to his mother whose idol is the highly sexualised Marilyn Monroe. Moreover, while his mother is a prostitute, the two adolescents are scared of Joséphin and his nudity: 'j'ai vu leurs yeux qui se fixaient sur, posés sur, [...] mais elles, elles n'avaient pas l'habitude, couvertes qu'elles étaient tout le temps, [...] ça faisait peur, un grand homme tout nu' (JF: 57-8). Joséphin realises that these girls do not understand the fact that it is natural for him to be naked.. The sexualised black male body reduced to sex and seen as a threat to the white male was explored by Fanon in his *Peau noire masques blancs* (1952). Here the fear inspired by such a body in the two girls demonstrate the

extent to which the body of someone from their own community is so foreign to them. This is reinforced by the fact that they find him 'vilain', that is ugly, which becomes an obsession for Joséphin who does not understand how they cannot tell the difference between physical beauty and moral beauty (JF: 63).

Sexual psychology is thus very important in the analysis of subject formation in Joséphin's case. Since he left his mother as a young teenager, his mind has stopped growing beyond this point. This is why he thinks of Solange and Marlène as surrogate mothers: 'leur enfant à toutes les deux' (JF: 9) even as he recognises his physical growth and calls them 'mes petites' twice in the first page of the novel (JF: 9). For him he is 'qu'un enfant, un petit garçon, je voudrais faire la ronde avec elles et jouer avec elles' (JF: 84), because an adolescent is libidinous and would perhaps want to experiment with the girls sexually. Instead, he wants to play traditional games which he could not play even when he lived in Case Noyale because everyone avoided him. Moreover, the fact that he is sexually alert but represses himself is very important. As a child, Joséphin's mother would not bathe him because she would see his penis and that would disgust her: 'Marlyn qui voulait pas voir ça sur moi [...] fallait pas me voir, surtout, me regarder, me toucher' (JF: 60). Unlike Solange and Marlène who are scared of his nudity, his mother is merely reminded that he is a male every time she sees his genitals and punishes him for being a boy.

Moreover, while Rochman speaks of the 'fixation oedipienne sur la mère' in the novel (2008: 169), it can be argued that Joséphin overcomes this

fixation because while the oedipal son seeks to kill his father to lie with his mother, Joséphin not only kills the man 'qui lui faisait je ne sais pas trop quoi' (JF: 82), but his own mother as well: 'lorsqu'il est tombé j'ai continué sur elle' (JF: 82). There is no regret, just two sentences that recount his murder of his own mother as if it were natural. Prior to this, Joséphin had expressed his annoyance at not being freed from his anger even away from his mother: 'ce qui me suit, ce qui me poursuit c'est ma colère, c'est ma rage, c'est ma folie, je suis le pêcheur nu le pêcheur fou' (JF: 81). In killing his mother, Joséphin reclaims his freedom to live his life as he wants, even as he recognises the anger that is deep inside him. In fact, this crime is so natural for him that it is cited as an example of what he can do when he is angry.

Derrida, summing up Foucault's argument states, the 'crise' of the subject represents a choice between two possible routes: 'la voie du sens et celle du non-sens; l'être et du non-être. Partage à partir duquel, après lequel, le logos, dans la violence nécessaire de son irruption, se sépare de soi comme folie' (Derrida 1967: 97). Joséphin in the moment of anger chooses the path of madness which was imposed on him for it is others that called him 'fou' without any reason save for the fact that he lost the ability to speak and he would run naked and play pranks on them. Joséphin's crisis triggers mental collapse, and unfortunately he does not realise his double personality. There are two dreams in this novel: the first is the beautiful dream of an island where all the children who have nowhere to go would be happy and not alone (JF: 72), which the innocent Joséphin hopes he can create by protecting

Solange and Marlène, and the second one is the dream he has in his cave from which he wakes up to find both girls raped, mauled and dead (JF: 78-84). These represent the two sides of Joséphin, his psychological dislocation taking the form of a state akin to schizophrenia, a moment of absence through a crisis, where he remembers the events as a dream but does not realise that he is the perpetrator of the crime. His discovery of the crime scene is all the more poignant since he at no point realises he is the one who killed them: 'j'ai rien su, rien entendu. J'ai pas su les protéger. Je les méritais pas' (JF: 86). No one else could have entered that underground cave, no one else knew of its existence and yet Joséphin cannot face the fact that he has murdered them.

For Dorrit Cohn, 'interior monologue is, by definition, a discourse addressed to no one, a gratuitous verbal agitation without communicative aim' (Cohn 1978: 225). Yet, in this novel, there are several instances where Joséphin is clearly addressing readers, who at times are his allies and sometimes are posited as hostile. Thus, even as he kidnaps girls to protect them, he knows that what he has done is not ethically correct: 'qui peut me l'interdire? Pas vous, tout de même, pas vous. Car vous le partagez bien un peu avec moi, en ce moment précis, ce bonheur-là non? Sinon vous ne seriez pas là' (JF: 41). The direct address to the reader intermittently brings the reader back to the events and the fact that Joséphin is a narrator in a book: 'vous raconter maintenant? Oui, peut-être. [...] Ou plutôt non, pas maintenant. Plus tard' (JF: 15). Like Paule in *Rue la Poudrière*, he makes sure the reader is included in his story through direct questioning: 'vous avez déjà

fait ça' (JF: 15), wants to know whether we understand his train of thought 'vous voyez' (JF: 16), includes the readers in his experiences of aquatic life: 'vous êtes plus rien, qu'un poisson [...] vous avez plus qu'à vous laisser guider vous aussi' (JF: 21). The reader suddenly becomes closer, when the pronoun switches from 'vous' to 'tu': 'si tu manges une anguille, c'est comme si tu devenais un peu comme elle' (Ibid: 24). His rationale is for someone to finally understand him, because the girls 'elles ont rien compris du tout'.

Thus, it can be argued that all three Creole novels in this section are confessions of sins and crimes: incest, rape and murder. While Paule's narration is a way for her to detail the events in her life that have left her internally fragmented, Patrice is the manipulator of events who tries to justify his demeanour by focusing on what is sinful in others. The lucid reader cannot fail to see his own madness even while he is a mastermind who in the end also fragments. In Joséphin's case, it is impossible not to feel compassion for the mentally and physically abused child he remains even as he recounts the events that lead up to his death. The fact that he does not realise that he is the kidnapper, rapist and killer of Solange and Marlène, when he ironically wished to protect them is what brings out the poignancy of his situation. All three principal protagonists are suffering from a lack of ancestral past that is either imposed or chosen, for indeed, in *Soupir*, the slavery past is voluntarily expunged because of the trauma it represents. Instead of displaying multiple or hybrid identities as discussed in Glissant's and Bhabha's works, these protagonists are defeated by the lack of identity, the lack of a collective past

that cripples them. Madness is a result of this want of belonging to a community in all cases, but this madness serves to unveil the inner workings of the minds of those without ancestral history. I suggest this is Devi's questioning of identity formation in the society she depicts, wherein identity is strongly dependent on belonging to a community. Thus, in trying to move towards the past in order to recuperate it, instead of towards the future, all the protagonists die violently. In dying their voices reach the reader, even if the other characters cannot be reached. All three Creole novels discussed then have an implied audience in mind, which brings us to the final part of this chapter which focuses on madness and writing.

Writing the Schizoid and Schizophrenia

In the first two sections of this chapter, doubling and fragmentation in two of Devi's Indo-Mauritian novels and three Creole novels were examined. This section focuses on two novels, *Pagli* (2001) and *Indian Tango* (2007) which foreground the schizoid/schizophrenic and writing. *Pagli* is a first-person and later polyphonic narrative depicting a Hindu woman whose life is altered by two experiences: her traumatic rape at thirteen, and her discovery of love after her encounter with a Creole fisherman, Zil. Imprisoned in a chicken coop for having transgressed the implicit rules of Indo-Mauritian society by loving a Creole man, she dies after being forgotten in the coop during a flood while the

community erupts in riots. Although Daya-Pagli may be seen to demonstrate Bhabha's notion of identity as multiple and enabling, to some extent resonating with Bhabha and Glissant's models, the character who was perceived as mad for her defiance of norms, collapses mentally, allowing for an interrogation of such notions of identity construction in Mauritian society.

Pagli means the mad woman in Hindi/Bhojpuri. This madness is perceived by the others, the 'ils' present in the very first page; 'une *pagli*, une folle, oui, pourquoi pas? Ils m'ont donné ce nom et je le prends, puisque je le suis' (P: 13). Daya seeks to appropriate this madness as Waters remarks: 'Daya defiantly assumes the label of madwoman and by reversing the negativity traditionally associated with it, defiantly claims her new identity' (Waters 2004: 48). As discussed earlier with *Rue la Poudrière*, in Felman's analysis of *Mémoires d'un fou*, "'je suis fou" est déjà logiquement une contradiction dans les termes: ou bien on est "fou" et alors ce qu'on dit (thème) est un non-sens; ou bien on énonce quelque chose de sensé et alors on n'est pas "fou" (du moins au moment où l'on parle)' (Felman 1978: 180). For Felman, in such texts where a narrator asserts his/her madness, the questions this raises are who is talking, who is thinking and does the narrator ever doubt his/her madness? Indeed, Felman's conclusion is 'c'est donc précisément la "folie" du héros qu'il appartient au lecteur de mettre – rigoureusement – en doute' (Felman 1978; 181). It can be argued that by beginning the narration in this manner and distinguishing between those who call her mad and the 'tu' she loves and is

loved by, the narrator causes the reader to doubt her madness and read the story as she wishes it to be read: as a thwarted love story.

The epigraph of the novel, 'tout roman est un acte d'amour', sets it up as a love story, but I propose to read it as the process of writing about madness. In that sense, Daya-Pagli's sole act of deviancy is to have loved the wrong man and tried to prove that the borders between communities are porous. Daya vehemently decries the fact that so many reprehensible events are happening around the island while all people can focus on is her forbidden love:

De maison en maison. On oublie les autres choses. Qu'untel frappe sa femme tous les soirs en rentrant de la buvette abruti de violence. Qu'un père viole sa fille depuis qu'elle a cinq ans. Qu'un enfant est martyrisé sous les yeux de sa mère [...] Non une seule chose compte: La Pagli et Zil. L'entrave. La transgression. La petite faille qui risque de grandir. [...] Le mauvais exemple. Il faut l'arrêter. (P: 106)

Daya repeatedly describes the precarious harmony that is present on the island but fractures the moment accepted rules are flouted. As discussed in the introduction and in the first chapter, barriers between communities are very rigid. Here '[une] barrière tangible et cruelle' (P: 128) is erected as the threat of miscegenation is a cause for much worry: 'tu (Zil) portes la menace dans ta semence' (P: 109). Indeed as the *mofines*, guardians of traditions and chastity threaten, the child born of Daya and Zil's union would be 'an être brumeux et sans substance, qui ne saura jamais qui il est. Nous avons besoin du passé pour savoir qui nous sommes' (P: 43). Daya-Pagli is both labelled as mad and internalises and adopts this label in defiance. For the *mofines* she is

touched by 'la pire des folies' (P: 44), while for her, her love transcends everything, and 'la folie de l'amour' is worth all the risks.

Moreover, for Vijay Mishra, 'diasporas refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport. Diasporas are people who would want to explore the meaning of the hyphen, but perhaps not press the hyphen too far for fear that this would lead to massive communal schizophrenia' (Mishra 2007: 1). Mishra begins his analysis with a very interesting definition of diaspora which reveals the problematic construction of identity in terms of mental illness, thus applying the language of psychiatry to identity formation. As I have shown in the first part of this chapter, many Indo-Mauritians are not satisfied with being 'Mauritian' because they do not want to forget India. Being just 'Mauritian' means that they are experiencing a lack, which is what the Creoles undergo in the second part of this analysis. In this third part, with *Pagli*, what becomes evident is that the Indian diaspora, which is part of the 'old' diaspora – that is those who have come through indenture as opposed to those who have moved in the age of globalisation – live in the fear of being completely dislocated from the rest of their host community. While revolt flares up whenever there is a threat to collective identity, this quickly dies down because Mauritians of every community still want to belong to the 'Mauritian' banner. This is why the riots of 1999, following Creole singer, Kaya's death, only lasted a week and the violence gradually abated. Similarly in *Pagli*, the moment the floods became dangerous, everyone reverts to their usual

behaviour and Terre Rouge becomes united in its will to survive the natural calamity.

So far I have demonstrated how representations of identity in Devi's novels cannot be mapped onto Bhabha's and on occasion, Glissant's models, but I wish to explore another aspect of identity that I touched upon in the introduction to this chapter: that of psychological dislocations that are akin to real mental illnesses. Indeed, as discussed, Easthope emphasises the fact that Bhabha's 'in-between' or hybrid identities are too similar to real-life mental conditions (1998) which is the case in Devi's novels. I argue that in *Pagli*, Daya is aware of her multiple selves and wishes to seize all those 'moi disséminées dans le temps [...] tout cela en même temps' (P: 57). However, ultimately, she cannot 'se rassembler et redevenir entière et une' (P: 153). Collapsing under the multiple 'moi' inside (schizophrenia) and outside (dissociative identity disorder with Zil and Mitsy), Daya literally becomes the madwoman.

Patrick Sultan remarks that her appropriation of the name 'Pagli' and her recuperation of her name Daya, lead to 'une plus parfaite acceptation de soi' (Sultan 2002). Sultan sees this doubleness of the protagonist as being cured by love. I argue that in *Pagli*, the character's 'divided self', to borrow R.D Laing's expression,⁵¹ is caused by a traumatic experience which leads to her seeing herself as torn between love and hatred. Laing distinguishes

⁵¹ Laing was one of the proponents of the movement of antipsychiatry in the 1960s, whose belief was that the patient should be seen as a human being with a story to be heard and that the patient should be the focus of psychoanalysis. His *Divided Self* focuses on the concepts of schizoid and schizophrenia and the Self's relationship with the world.

between two types: the schizoid and the schizophrenic, which are the sane and the psychotic stage respectively. The schizoid is:

An individual the totality of whose experience is split in two main ways: in the first place, there is a rent in his relation with his world, and in the second, there is a disruption of his relation with himself. Such a person is not able to experience himself 'together with' others or 'at home in' the world, but, on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation; moreover, he does not experience himself as a complete person, but rather as 'split' in various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves, and so on. (Laing 1999: 15)

When the schizoid gets to a stage where she comes to hate herself or wishes to destroy part of herself, then the schizoid becomes psychotic, turning into the self-destructive schizophrenic who collapses completely. Laing's definition of the schizoid bears a resemblance to Daya-Pagli's mental state, her division, her isolation and her constant opposition to the world and herself as Other. However, I argue that as the narrative unfolds, the protagonist gets closer to a schizophrenic state.

In Daya-Pagli, these 'deux moi dissociées (sic)' (P: 31) may appear completely separate, but it can be argued that Daya's hatred taints her love until the very end. Love may have enabled her to experience exquisite feelings, but it does not redeem her, for she knows 'le noir véritable' and as she states herself, 'j'y suis entrée une fois et je n'en suis plus sortie' (P: 51). This is highlighted by Issur who remarks that 'le déchirement schizophrénique que connaît la victime (Daya) est en réalité une parade trouvée à sa douleur (Issur 2005: 205). Daya's Self-professed 'mauvaise folie'

(P: 50) is caused by rape and this madness is 'sans issue' as she states (ibid). It can thus be argued that the love story and, perhaps the relationship with Mitsy itself, are a figment of the protagonist's imagination. Indeed, the novel is circular, starting in the chicken coop and ending there, which in itself is problematic since Daya doubts she ever got out of her prison. She states 'c'est peut-être moi qui t'ai (Zil) créé de toutes pièces par la force de mon imagination et par l'intensité de mon désir' (P: 83). Her unfulfilled desire for love could have created the fisherman Zil, an idea which is reiterated later: 'je ne sais plus si je t'ai rêvé' (P: 126). Zil stands for both the island and the forbidden Creole man who is *métissé*. Loving Zil is as forbidden as loving the island ('Zil' is Creole for l'île) for Daya who, as the *mofines* have demonstrated, has the burden of her Indian ancestors' will to bear (P: 42), and must therefore always remember the collective past.

Moreover, when Zil speaks to Daya in the novel, breaking Daya's monologue, as Cingal has observed, Zil speaks like Daya. According to Cingal:

Zil est une pure projection d'un récit monologique, clos puisque voué à la claustration. Zil, île promise est l'appel au large, de l'extérieur, du Dehors, mais il n'est saisi par le texte qu'au mépris de sa particularité. Toutes les tentatives pour le 'dire' (et même pour le faire parler) sont confinées au système intériorisé de la narratrice. (Cingal 2001)

Cingal goes on to describe the novel as an 'affabulation' produced by an 'affolement (sic)' (ibid). Cingal thus reads the novel as a complete invention by the mad narrator. Along these lines, according to Feder:

Literary representations of madness often go further in their depictions of the processes of restitution, revealing ways in which the mad distort reality in accordance with their unique psychic deprivations and requirements, yet, in so doing, create an emotional environment for the reconstruction of a Self image. (Feder 1983: 27)

In creating Zil, Daya arguably has tried to reconstitute her own loving and nurturing side, which she lost after the rape. It can equally be argued that it is not only Zil but also Mitsy who becomes another side of Daya. When Daya meets the real Mitsy, she is struck by the latter's marginal position, which is what she seeks. She learns about Mitsy putting on a red dress for her lover the same day. Daya recreates Mitsy as a friend and model for her story with Zil. The real Mitsy, 'se moquait bien de [s]es peines' (P: 17), and has a gesture that could be read as an 'avertissement' (P: 17). Furthermore, Daya herself states; 'Mitsy vit déjà dans mes rêves' from the beginning of her life in Terre Rouge (P: 23). Just like Laing's schizoid, Daya further indicates that 'la moitié de ma vie se passe en dehors de moi' (P: 27), casting doubt on her narration. This is reinforced by the fact that she doubts the night she helped Mitsy with her abortion ever happened (indeed she was in her cage and could not have heard Mitsy's voice). Her retrospective remark is : 'je ne sais plus où est la vérité. Si ce soir a existé ou si ma mémoire l'a créé de toutes pièces' (P: 95). With the creation of possible other selves in Mitsy and Zil, Daya-Pagli becomes psychotic as she is self-destructive, which is akin to Laing's schizophrenic's behaviour. Daya-Pagli's death could be understood as a consequence of her schizophrenia. As with Zil, the reader cannot trust Daya's words anymore as

if she could indeed walk out of the chicken coop the whole narration is implausible.

Moreover, two explicit references are made to writing in this novel: 'l'écriture dense et dangereuse de ce livre' (P: 29) and 'on n'entendrait qu'un petit cri mince sortant de ces pages' (P: 53) following the silenced rape scene. The notion of novel writing emerges here and it can be suggested that the writer is as one who gives voice to the subaltern (Spivak 1988), narrating the story from a first-person perspective and giving the reader a first-hand account of the psychological suffering of women oppressed by traditions.

According to Spivak, it is not possible for the subaltern woman to speak because she has for long been silenced.⁵² Tracing the history of the Sati (widow sacrifice) laws in India, Spivak demonstrates how the voices that were heard were of the British, 'a case of "White men saving brown women from brown men"' and the Indian nativists (male) who insisted that the women "actually wanted to die" (Spivak 1988: 298). As Spivak expresses, 'one never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness' (ibid). It is then the task of the 'postcolonial woman intellectual' (ibid), to ask the right questions and inscribe the subaltern woman's silenced voice. Spivak's conclusion in the essay is: 'the subaltern cannot speak [...] Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has a circumscribed task which she

⁵² According to Spivak, the subaltern itself is necessarily outside the thinking machine as it is constructed in opposition to the elite. By definition the subaltern is marginalised. The Subaltern Studies group headed by intellectuals like R. Guha study the peasant uprisings that have marked Indian politics during the British Raj. However, Spivak goes further by specifically talking about the subaltern woman who was doubly marginalised through her subaltern position and her gender.

must not disown with a flourish' (Spivak 1988: 309). As the figure of the writer is hinted at in this novel, I suggest that this writer is Devi herself who is giving voice to subalterns like Daya. Daya is not an intellectual and she has spent her adolescence waiting to be married off. Her story is one of many women's who suffer in silence in patriarchal Hindu society.

Spivak's notion of a 'postcolonial woman intellectual' coming close to his/her character to write the latter's story is taken to another level in *Indian Tango*. The narrative is about writing itself, as the main protagonist recounts her gradual possession by creative madness which is triggered by her encounter with the Indian woman Subhadra/Subha/Bimala Misra. While Subhadra has married into middle-class family, she is outside 'the thinking machine' in Spivak's words. She is expected to do her chores and prepare food for the family. Her opinions are not necessary in the household and her voice is silenced. Her role in the family is exactly the same as that of peasant women. Turning fifty, she is expected to go on a journey to renounce her femininity at the beginning of the novel.

Two first-person narrators recount the story of their meeting in the novel: the first 'je' is Subhadra, who has followed the path set for her throughout her life, and the second, the more important one for this analysis, is the Mauritian writer who comes to India in search of her roots and for inspiration. In a journey similar to Condé's *En Attendant le bonheur* (1976), the nameless author character is an expatriate who lives in France and undertakes the journey to change her life. However, while Véronica is still young in

Condé's novel, Devi's protagonist is just a little younger than Subhadra and instead of trying to find a man who will enable her to experience Africanness and a sense of history, Devi's author character wishes for an event that will enable her to transcend her writer's block. The chapters in the novel alternate between Subhadra and the author, the novel starting with Subhadra and ending with the author protagonist's final words. Their encounter changes their individual lives in various ways: Subhadra finding the 'autre' within herself and altering her relationship with members of her family, finally leaving her husband. The author character's meeting with Subhadra serves as a catalyst for the writing of new material, and triggers the assertion of a new sexual identity, signalling the concept of exchange, reciprocity as a model.

The Mauritian author experiences a schism that is similar to Aeena and Anjali's in *L'Arbre fouet* and *Le Voile de Draupadi*. While the first two protagonists need the *Unheimlich* to move beyond the community's barriers, here the author character needs Subhadra as a mediator to construct her identity:

Je sais que j'ai besoin d'elle pour nous délivrer, elle et moi, pour ensemble parfaire ce qu'il reste d'incomplet, pour réunir nos corps comme deux paumes plaquées l'une contre l'autre, pour faire de l'écrivain un être humain et de la femme éteinte un noyau de brûlure. Sans cette réunification, sans la destruction de ce mur qui me divise depuis tant d'années en deux parts ennemies, je ne parviendrai pas à me résoudre. (IT: 80)

Like Daya-Pagli, the author character experiences a divided self. She is caught between what she believes are two irreconcilable parts of herself as a Hindu and as a Mauritian as evidenced by 'mur'. While Aeena and Anjali reject the

burden of being a Hindu, Daya-Pagli is consumed by hatred for her husband and Hindu community's role in her plight. While Daya-Pagli gives in to a destructive madness, the author character in *Indian Tango* develops a creative madness that is empowering and allows for a new conception of identity through writing. It is through this creative madness that this perceived wall crumbles. The author protagonist is different from Devi's other characters since she is an expatriate, residing in Paris, and therefore can distance herself from her predicament and channel it into something that is productive. While the Other within the Self is taking shape, references to splits (inner/outer, mind/body, conscious/unconscious) and unreason abound: 'comment pourrais-je d'ailleurs livrer de moi ce visage que personne ne connaît? [...] c'est ça, c'est bien ça que je veux : une partenaire à ma folie' (IT : 42-8).

In earlier narratives, Devi described the sorority of women who suffer and transcend this pain through each other's help (*Le Voile de Draupadi, l'Arbre fouet, Moi l'interdite, Pagli*). However, I suggest that here the encounter is primarily sexual and a catalyst for the negotiation of a hybrid identity. Like in *Pagli*, the sexual relationship is transgressive, perhaps more so because it is between two women, but in this novel, instead of a sustained relationship, a single meeting triggers changes in both characters' lives. The author character's words are significant in this respect: 'peut-être que seules deux femmes pourraient parvenir à se décrypter' (IT : 61). The woman is set up as a mysterious being that can only be understood and supported by others like her.

It is through a lesbian sexual encounter that Devi's protagonist accomplishes what Spivak sees as the postcolonial intellectual woman's task of giving a voice to the subaltern. Her schizoid Self gives the subaltern a space to write her own suffering, so that Subhadra inscribes her own story and weaves in her narrative. For Spivak, 'if in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow' (Spivak 1988: 288). In *Indian Tango*, Devi shows that the subaltern – insofar as Subhadra is constantly repressed and kept outside the 'thinking machine' – and the intellectual have a mutual dependence. However, in this case it is Subhadra, the subaltern who is the author character's saviour:

Je ne reconnais rien en moi. Quand je me regarde, je ne sais pas du tout qui est cette personne. Il y a trop de 'moi' accumulés sous les sédiments de cette peau jaunâtre [...] J'ai été tant de personnages différents que je me perds de vue. Peut-être que Bimala me tirera-t-elle hors de cette foule qui veut m'ensevelir [...]. (IT: 142)

This creative madness is powerful insofar as it can blur reality and fiction for the author who is in the threshold between reason and unreason. Nevertheless, in this in-between space, where she acknowledges her 'hybrid identity' (Bhabha 1994), she realises that 'l'écriture tout ce temps n'était qu'un moyen de pallier la fadeur de ma vie' (IT: 165). Indeed, this 'hybrid identity' is not lived positively. It is once again the hybridity 'dans le mauvais sens du terme' that I suggest Devi implied in her interview quoted in the Introduction to this thesis. This 'hybridity' is lived as a multiple identity instead of as one identity that comprises several aspects. The author-character, contrary to

Daya-Pagli, finds her liberation from the psychological dislocation through writing. Writing about Nina Bouraoui's autobiographical oeuvre, Vassallo explains: 'writing and love represent the same fulfilment – and the same self-dissipation – for the author/narrator' (Vassallo 2009: 47). In *Indian Tango*, the author character concludes that in the future her writing will not be dark (her characters having been deformed or suffering agony until death) as it has been so far, because 'Bimala elle n'est pas sortie de ces ténèbres-là' (IT: 175). Fulfilment in love is equated to fulfilment in writing so that her novels will now be positive. As she says, 'l'agenouillement ne parlait pas d'humiliation mais de renouveau' (IT: 175). The brief 'encounter' with Subhadra/Bimala was enough for her to find 'l'ange noir' (IT: 194) of creation once again, her inner Self, her creative madness. The text suggests she is entombed alive in the realm of her own creativity 'ma porte a été scellée' (IT: 196), but there is no inkling of there being death awaiting her. In fact, she will write about the subalterns whose voices need to be heard.

Moreover, this novel on various occasions evokes *Pagli* through intertextuality: 'je les cherche, elles, et moi en même temps. Même chose autrefois indivise, puis scissionnée, condamnée à errer en quête d'un impossible rassemblement' (IT : 67), 'ne comprends-tu pas qu'il est un lieu où tu peux être entièrement chez toi' (IT : 82). These two sentences, for example, echo a specific paragraph in *Pagli* where the protagonist speaks to Zil, describing him as a 'lieu' where she could 'se rassembler' and be at one with herself: '[...] une femme seule qui cherchait un lieu où elle aurait pu se

rassembler et redevenir entière et une. Ce lieu c'était toi' (P : 153). Here the instances of writing I highlighted in *Pagli* become more and more visible as the author character admits she has written about 'les êtres ailés (*mofines*)' (IT: 24). *Indian Tango* can be read as a response to *Pagli* in that the main protagonist does not meet her end here and does not seek for resolution beyond her life and that of her love. Here, in creative madness, writing and madness coincide and are not tainted. Writing becomes a space for the negotiation of hybrid identity as the author incarnates her characters in each novel without ultimately losing herself. If the diasporic Self finds it impossible to break the walls within herself, then she may well choose writing as a new space of belonging.

Rethinking Identity.

In the course of this chapter I have examined seven of Devi's novels in terms of a range of psychological splits and fragmentation caused by interrogations of identity. In the first section, Aena and Anjali reject their religious and communal belonging because of the burden of karma which was oppressive. In leaving behind this belonging, they embraced a spiritual non-being which for them was satisfactory as it did not lead to a schism. However, this means that they have indeed lost a part of themselves. In the second section, the Creole protagonists do not have a past which would anchor them in society, unlike the Hindus who have India and their customs and traditions.

Their psychological dislocation leads them all to commit a crime that is beyond redemption, and thus the lack of identity leads to a physical non-being, through death and corporeal fragmentation in Devi's Creole protagonists. The third section explored the case of Daya-Pagli who experiences a complete mental collapse as she is overwhelmed by a destructive madness leading to both a spiritual and a physical non-being, as not only does she become mad, she rejects Hindu society and she dies at the end of the novel. With the author character in *Indian Tango*, madness is translated into an empowering ability to write that allows the narrator to experience a multiplicity that is enabling.

Ways of negotiating or refusing to negotiate identity abound in these novels because the characters experience identity as problematic. As Maalouf has argued, 'la conception "tribale" de l'identité [est] à l'heure actuelle, celle qui prévaut encore dans le monde entier' (1998 : 43). This notion of tribal belonging is detrimental in that it impedes a conception of identity which is more suitable to the postcolonial world. Indeed, according to Maalouf, 'à l'ère de la mondialisation, avec ce brassage accéléré qui nous enveloppe tous, une nouvelle conception de l'identité s'impose' (1998 : 44). For him, we should stop conceptualising identity as a choice between '[la] négation de soi-même et la négation de l'autre' (1998 : 44). The migrant is the first person to suffer from this, as '[il] se trouve scindé, écartelé, condamné à trahir soit sa patrie d'origine soit sa patrie d'accueil, trahison qu'il vivra inévitablement avec amertume, avec rage' (1998 : 48). Taking up the metaphor of writing, Maalouf

stresses: 'le pays d'accueil n'est ni une page blanche, ni une page achevée, c'est une page en train de s'écrire' (1998 : 50). Through her novels Devi also constantly explores different models of identity as we have seen, showing that indeed her conception of identity in Mauritius is 'en train de s'écrire' with every novel she produces. Maalouf is himself a writer of Lebanese origin living in France for over thirty years. His mother tongue is Arabic, he writes in French. Like Devi, he is at the crossroads of countries, cultures and languages. It is no wonder that he comes up with a conception of identity that is empowering and enabling as it eschews the problems of dissipation, of psychological dislocations. For indeed, Maalouf defines identity as one:

L'identité ne se compartimente pas, elle ne se répartit ni par moitiés, ni par tiers, ni par pages cloisonnées. Je n'ai pas plusieurs identités, j'en ai une seule, faite de tous les éléments qui l'ont façonnée, selon un 'dosage' particulier qui n'est jamais le même d'une personne à l'autre. (1998: 8)

For Bhabha identities are multiple, Maalouf asserts that it is the belongings, 'appartenances' that are diverse while identity is unique (1998: 34). For him, each person has different degrees of belonging to one community or the other, to one culture or the other, of speaking one language or the other and so on. In Maalouf's model, it is not necessary to choose one side or the other.

This indeed may be the mode of identity that is desired in Devi's writing, implicit in most novels and explicit in *Indian Tango*. The earlier novels demonstrated that the characters were oppressed by an ongoing notion of tribal belonging. It is thus that the main protagonists were contained by a 'négation de soi-même' whether internally, for example when Aena and

Anjali break away from a part of themselves so that they feel liberated, or externally, when external elements destroy them for example in Daya-Pagli, Paule and Joséphin's cases. The 'négation de l'autre' is illustrated with characters like the *mofines* who oppress the main protagonist and define their own existence by negating the Other. In *Indian Tango* Devi portrays a character that is not bound by this notion of tribal belonging and thus can survive an encounter with the Other within her, in the form of Subhadra, without falling apart. Indeed, the Mauritian expatriate has distanced herself enough from Mauritian society so as not to be weighed down by its rules. Her conception of identity is thus more Maaloufian than the earlier novels which are set in Mauritius and caught in its web of allegiances and enmities. However, Royal Palm, whose memory is un 'lieu blanc' is the only character, who without physical distance, is able to constantly negotiate his identity without the restrictions imposed by a community. This 'lieu blanc' is the space from which Mauritian identity should be constructed, the space where 'Mauritian' is the centre and 'Sino' (Chinese), 'Indo', 'Afro' and 'Franco' are the possible belongings and not vice-versa. This 'lieu blanc' is not an actual effacement of roots or the idea of identity. It is not an actual physical space. Rather, it is simply accepting that in a country like Mauritius, people might come from different backgrounds, but are Mauritians before being of different ancestral origins. Mauritius, where they were born, is the starting point and not India, China, Africa or Europe. From this 'lieu blanc' represented by Mauritius where there are no indigeneous peoples, identity can become a process and not something reified and fixed.

Chapter Three

Hybrid Bodies: Reading Hybridity through the Grotesque in Devi's narratives

Introduction

In Chapter Two of this thesis, identity was discussed as a problematic issue that leads to psychological dislocations in many characters' cases in Devi's novels. Identity issues are internalised to the extent of protagonists displaying symptoms of actual psychological afflictions. These identity issues often begin outside the psyche: they often begin with the body. The Self's boundary with the world remains the body. The 'I' does not exist without a 'You' to validate it, as theorists of selfhood like Freud, and Lacan have pointed out. The notion of difference is founded on the recognition that the Self is not the Other and that 'I' am not only different from 'You', but 'You' and 'I' look different, while being 'Same' in our humanity. The first level of interaction and recognition begins at the point of recognition of the Other as similar but not the same. This chapter will examine a series of cases in which Devi represents the ways in which protagonists perceive themselves and are perceived by others as different.

Mauritian society is thus made up of individuals who live together and interact with each other but recognise the difference between them. The particular range of cultural and ethnic difference is a product of the colonial history of Mauritius: Creoles are a mix of African and people of other descent, but they will have distinctive features. Indo-Mauritians will also be recognisable, as are Sino-Mauritians and Franco-Mauritians. Be it features or skin colour, difference in Mauritian society begins with the body. Acceptance in the Mauritian society depicted by Devi also begins with the body and rejection is experienced by protagonists who are physically different (Mouna, Joséphin, Royal Palm at the beginning) or are likely to produce physically un-categorisable offspring (Daya). Some characters are misogynist to the point of turning women into un-categorisable entities (Dokter-Dieu). Acceptance by others into the community is crucial to individuals' well-being and when they are rejected, they are placed in a liminal position that is agonising. Yet, it is also empowering as it enables them to look at society from an outsider-insider perspective.

In this chapter I discuss the 'Other' bodies that Devi portrays in her novels. By 'Other' I mean bodies that are considered to be abnormal or different according to the rest of society. Some of these bodies have been marked as 'different' since birth; others become so through time and circumstances and yet others choose to become 'Other'. In keeping with the theme of this thesis, I suggest that these bodies can be read through the lens of

hybridity. In the Introduction to this thesis, I outlined my notion of 'hybrid bodies' as being those that belong to two or more species or categories simultaneously. For example, in Devi's texts, there are several examples of human-animal bodies. There are bodies that Devi herself portrays as hybrid and others whose ambivalence lends itself to an interpretation of them as hybrid.

In this Chapter I analyse *Moi l'Interdite*, *Soupir*, *La Vie de Joséphin le fou* and *Le Sari vert* with particular focus on the characters' bodies as hybrid. In so doing, I demonstrate that these characters' bodies enable a critique of the Mauritian society depicted by Devi, and especially its categorisation of individuals. Devi's reference to the state of being 'hybride dans le mauvais sens du terme' will be explored from a different perspective from the previous chapters, with the body foregrounded.

Before proceeding to the analysis of Devi's novels, we must recall that hybridity initially referred to the mixing of species of plants and was then transferred to the products of intercourse between white individuals and Other /Native peoples during Colonial times. Thus hybridity is a racially charged term because it was the embodiment of miscegenation, the proof that inter-racial intercourse had produced a physically different offspring (Young 1995). The mixed race hybrid body was a problematic figure for a long time and made categorisation so difficult that in due course it became a category of its own under the appellation *mulatto*, *métis* or *mestizaje* in colonies.

The obsession with the 'Other' body was evident in the colonial period when such female bodies as the Hottentot Venus's were exhibited in public (Gilman 1985). 'Other' bodies' physical 'abnormalities' were publicly discussed and debated in order to highlight the superiority of European. The Hottentot Venus was not only objectified but also constantly compared to an ape, thus indicating the process of dehumanisation associated with racial stereotyping/classification. However, these 'Other' bodies also enabled a comparison between other races and 'Other' bodies within the society itself. In Rabelaisian times 'Other' bodies were displayed prominently during Carnival. Bakhtin's study of Rabelais's world (1984) focuses on the grotesque represented by bodies that do not conform to the norm, and very often hybrid bodies played an important role.

Thus far, Bakhtin's theories have been used in the linguistic context in Chapter One, through the notion of dialogism and heteroglossia, in order to discuss linguistic hybridity. Bhabha uses Bakhtin's notion of utterance and authorial voice in the conception of the 'Third Space' and the articulation of hybrid identities, which have been discussed in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, I explore Devi's 'Other' bodies through the notion of hybridity in order to gauge whether these bodies are differently revealing from the other instances of hybridity I have analysed. What do Devi's representations of the hybrid, or in-between body add to our analysis of her own engagement with notions of hybridity? In order better to appreciate the specificity of Devi's representations of the body, I first discuss the different theories of hybrid

bodies that I suggest are pertinent to my analysis before applying them to Devi's texts and finally examining Devi's notion of the 'hybride' as being 'bon' and negative in the light of this.

The hybrid form has long been associated with the grotesque, particularly in reference to art. As Kim Alton Robertson (1996) and George Harpham both observe, the origins of the grotesque in grottesche art was a mixture 'not only of floral or vegetal forms but also of men, beasts, genii, buildings, etc' (Harpham 1982: 110). 'These murals generally exhibit a central representation, which is then framed by an ornamental fringe, itself consisting of an intricate symmetry of graceful fantasies, anatomical impossibilities, extraordinary excrescences, human heads and torsos, all delicately intertwined and convoluted with indeterminate vegetation', writes Robertson (1996: 10). According to Harpham, the word grotesque refers to a 'non-thing, especially the strong forms of the ambivalent and the anomalous. The mind does not long tolerate such affronts to its classificatory systems, as the grotesque forms present' (Harpham 1982: 7). The grotesque mixes members of different categories with others to form a new entity that is hybrid. As will be seen, Devi's representations of the hybrid, or in-between body pose a similar challenge to essentialising classificatory systems.

For Bakhtin, one of the main proponents of the grotesque,

In the grotesque world of becoming, the limits between objects and phenomena are drawn quite differently than in the static world of art and literature [...] the object transgresses its own confines, ceases to be itself. The limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other. (Bakhtin 1984: 308, 310)

The notion of the 'fusion of the one with the other' is one of the first characteristics associated with hybridity. The body that is not bound to a specific shape and form and transcends itself to join another is hybrid. The grotesque body, in other words, is a hybrid body. In Bakhtin's grotesque body, there are no limits between the Self and the world. Since Carnival was a time when hierarchies and categories were undermined, Bakhtin conceived of Rabelais's world as one where the bodies that were displayed also transcended the notion of selfhood as fixed or self-contained. Discussing Bakhtin's grotesque, Mary Russo observes the 'grotesque body is opposed to the Classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek [...]. The grotesque body is connected to the world' (Russo 1994: 63). For her, Bakhtin's notion of the bodily grotesque 'presupposes the body as *process* and *semiosis* – a grotesque that moves' (Russo 1994: 27), an idea that has been the driving force behind the unsettling of preconceived ideas about the body, thereby refocusing philosophical questions on the body, when Western philosophy's core was the mind. Russo remarks that 'the grotesque is only recognisable in relation to a norm and that exceeding the norm involves serious risk' (Russo 1994: 10). Russo's use of Bakhtin's grotesque is significant in terms of the representation of the female body, which is seen as undermining the patriarchal values of closedness and perfection.

Another critic who uses Bakhtin's grotesque to further her analysis is Claudia Benthien. She states:

in the grotesque body, the boundaries between body and world and those between individual bodies are much less differentiated and more open than they are in the new body canon: the very boundary of the grotesque body reveals the intermingling with the world in that protruding body parts (the nose or stomach for example) are understood as projecting into the world, and the inside of the body comes out and mingles with the world. (Benthien 2002: 38)

The grotesque body is 'three-dimensional' (Benthien 2002: 39), as opposed to the two-dimensional 'linear boundary surface' (ibid) perceived by 'collective imagination' (ibid), which is read in terms of race, physiognomy or disease. Benthien's study is useful in the first section of this chapter where I examine Ferblanc's changing skin colour through the concept of grotesque hybridity.

Moreover, Bakhtin emphasised another aspect of the grotesque hybrid body that is crucial to this analysis: that of the human-animal hybrid. Indeed, For Bakhtin, 'the grotesque character of the transformation of the human into an animal one; the combination of the human and the animal traits, is, as we know, one of the most ancient forms of the grotesque' (Bakhtin 1984: 316). The hybrid human and animal is a means of undermining man's claim of superiority over the animal, of negating the difference that separates them. Arthur Clayborough, in *The Grotesque in English Literature*, states: 'it is human nature to regard some things - physical deformity, for instance, or creatures which in some way suggest deformity like the ape or snake-as being more abidingly grotesque than others '(Clayborough 1965 : 109). Both Bakhtin and Clayborough insist on the grotesque aspect of the 'combination' of the animal and the human. I suggest that it is not simply a transformation that takes place in these particular grotesque bodies, it is a *hybridization*.

In his analysis of works of Kafka and others, Michel Surya puts forward the notion of 'humanimalité' which is also relevant to this analysis.

For Surya,

Kafka a appelé 'métamorphose' ce moment où l'homme ancien est devenu son propre reste, son propre rebut. Et c'est ce qui a résulté d'une telle métamorphose que j'appelle ici 'humanimalité'. [...] *C'est dans Kafka qu'est née cette figure défigurée. Hybride. Moitié homme, moitié bête. Moitié bête parce qu'il n'y a que les bêtes que l'homme extermine sans conséquence (et dès lors qu'on veut exterminer des hommes, il suffit sans doute d'en faire des bêtes, de les réduire à leur état (sic). (Surya 2004: 11-12, my italics)*

Kafka's Gregor Samsa serves as a starting point to what human-animal hybridity involves. The human being as a social animal is compared and contrasted with the animal that fights for survival. It is only when Samsa crosses the threshold that he enables an interrogation of 'l'espèce humaine' and society in general (Surya 2004: 57). Samsa is a 'créature bifide, homme et cafard, homme et vermine- qui n'est capable de recevoir de nom dans aucun des genres, humain ou animal' (Surya 2004: 66). Bakhtin and Clayborough's human-animal grotesque hybrid body and Surya's 'humanimal' will be discussed in Devi's narratives where there are occurrences of what can be called human-animal hybrids.

In this Chapter I thus examine what I suggest are 'hybrid' bodies and propose to read them as a means of criticising society and its unchanging values. Each chapter looks at different 'hybrid' bodies: the first section discusses Ferblanc as a hybrid White and Black man and evaluates Ferblanc's position in a Creole narrative. The second section illustrates the significance of name-calling and imagery in hybridising the human being and

the animal and the third section focuses on the very notion of the human-animal and its function in Devi's narratives. Ultimately this Chapter attempts to gauge the extent to which these 'hybrid' bodies have a specific function to play in Devi's novels.

'Almost white but not quite': Ferblanc's hybridity in Soupir.

In Chapter Two I discussed Fanon's predicament as a black body, 'peau noire', wearing 'white masks'. Fanon's title focused on the notion of skin and his ambivalent position was deemed to be constricting and agonising. Fanon's insistence on skin and its importance was very important during colonialism, when one's skin colour determined one's position in society and the treatment that one would get. Fanon's relatively privileged position exposed him to a particular kind of cultural unease and dislocation. Others less privileged suffered extremely agonising experiences because of the colour of their skin.

In her book *Skin: On the Cultural Borders between Self and the World* (1999, trans. 2002), Claudia Benthien devotes a section to the notion of 'different skin'. According to Benthien, 'the juxtaposition of "white" and "black", which historically is paradigmatic for all thinking about skin color' (2002: 145), is an important aspect of this study. Benthien's discussion

underlines the different developments in the notion of skin colour as a marker of identity, citing the contribution of François Bernier, the French naturalist who was the first to relocate the classification of human beings in terms of skin rather than geographical location and thus began the binary model of 'black' and 'white' in the early seventeenth century (Benthien 2002: 145). Georges-Louis Leclerc du Buffon, in *Dissertation physique à l'occasion du Nègre blanc* (1744) 'posits "white" as the basic anthropological colour and downgrades "black to a degeneration' (Benthien 2002: 145).

According to Didier Anzieu, 'la peau est tellement fondamentale, sa fonction va tellement de soi, que personne n'en remarque l'existence jusqu'au moment où elle est défailante' (Anzieu 1995: 63). Skin difference is the most visible sign of difference since skin is the largest organ of the human body and is on the outside. Skin is also very important because it represents the very boundary between the Self and the world and thus, 'I' begins with the skin, as Anzieu argues, while appropriating Freud's notion of the 'Body Ego' in *Le Moi-Peau* (1995). As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Benthien argues that the grotesque is an appropriate way of reading the body in that it undermines the notion of a boundary between inside and outside, between the Self and the world around it. For her, skin is the very boundary that is being transgressed as it contains the Self. Skin's legibility was and is very important in societies where difference is inscribed on the body because of skin colour.

The 'métis' is a figure that is hybrid, in-between two categories. He/she is white and black and even his/her skin colour is testament to this hybridity, thus challenging the binary of white and black. In *Soupir*, I suggest that Ferblanc's hybridity, as I hope to demonstrate, unsettles this binary, but in different ways from the 'métis'.

The notion of the 'métis' or mulatto is discussed by Srilata Ravi in the Mauritian context. Examining Mauritian author Loys Masson's *L'Etoile et la Clef* (1945), Ravi explores the dislocation of the hybrid 'métis' Coulombe in the novel, through the concept of the grotesque. For her, the 'métis was a misfit in both the European and Creole circles' (2007: 65) and his 'fundamental ambivalence can therefore be considered as an expression of the problematical nature of his existence caused primarily by his experiences of racial dislocation' (2007: 65). Ravi justifies her choice of theoretical framework thus: Bakhtin's 'parodic and performative concept of the grotesque body without boundaries is an empowering concept, which has been successfully applied to various fields of study [...] however, [...] Bakhtinian grotesque does not move towards the grotesque as pitiful' (ibid: 67). Ravi's adopts Philip Thomson's notion of the grotesque where the concept takes on the meaning of 'ambivalently abnormal', where 'it both *represents* and *generates* narrative tension and unresolvability' (ibid: 70). Ravi reads Coulombe, the white man with 'à peine de la nuance café au lait' (Masson 1945: 73), with a speech defect who finds his voice in the Indian lawyer who represents him, as a grotesque figure creating anxiety. She highlights the 'racial incompatibility of voice

(Indian) and body (métis)' as creating an 'ambivalently abnormal grotesque' (Ravi 2007: 70).

Ravi's use of the grotesque focuses on the hybrid aspect of mixing two or three races together. Coulombe becomes a grotesque figure insofar as his racialised 'métis' body is furthermore joined with the figure of the Indian. Voice is not racialised and thus I must assume that Ravi understands 'voice' as accent in this case and the fact that the 'métis' speaks with an Indian accent as grotesque. Coulombe's speech impediment is also read as part of this grotesque since he cannot express himself properly and is thus deprived of his agency. In colonial times, where this novel is set, hybridity is a bane. Nowadays, with so much mixing in Mauritian society, it seems to be accepted that Creoles are mixed race. However, skin colour is very important, insofar as the lighter the Creole individual is, the closer they can aspire at getting a position in society, as Marie-Thérèse Humbert also shows in *A l'autre bout de moi* (1979). Hybridity, in this case is considered positive in certain cases where lighter skin colour helps in social advancement as Prabhu has argued (2007).

However, in *Soupir*, Devi's Ferblanc is hybrid in ways that defy the norm of 'métissage' itself. Ferblanc is not the product of miscegenation. As all inhabitants of *Soupir*, he is a descendant of slaves and there is no known history of interracial intercourse in his lineage. He is born black and due to vitiligo becomes white. Essence and appearance are at the centre of this discussion, raising the question of the theoretical significance of skin colour in the text and ultimately confronting our reading of skin. Indeed, Diana Fuss

has argued that men and women 'are identified as such on the basis of transhistorical, eternal, immutable essences' (Fuss 1989: ix), which is true of skin stereotypes as well.

Vitiligo is a chronic disorder that leads to the gradual loss of pigmentation, starting from small patches and worsening with time so that the whole body might completely lose its pigmentation. The condition differs from albinism in that the latter is a congenital defect that causes babies to be born without any pigmentation. Albinism then implies that the patient is used to being different, or a 'nègre blanc',⁵³ as some call Africans who suffer from it. At the beginning of the narrative, Ferblanc's vitiligo has already reached the stage where he is completely white, a condition that he finds strangely relieving:

Le lent effacement de tout ce qu'il avait été, avec ce qu'il aurait pu être, et toujours cette conscience d'être devenu blanc sans le vouloir. Quand la décoloration s'est achevée, il a paru *soulagé*. Il était laid, mais d'une seule couleur. Le surnom de Ferblanc lui est resté.' (S: 14) [*my italics*]

It would seem that Ferblanc is one of Devi's characters who live their hybridity (here a black man with white skin) positively. Yet, Devi's narrative poses fundamental questions about the very notion of skin colour. Ferblanc belongs neither to the white category nor to the black. His nickname supersedes his real name which is never revealed to us. 'Ferblanc' refers to the metal but it could also be a play on words, with 'fer' meaning to do or to make. 'Ferblanc' could thus also mean 'faire le blanc', or simply, pass for

⁵³ This is not to be confused with the 'nègre blanc' whose parents are *métis* but look 'black' and yet give birth to a 'white' child. Boris Vian's *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* (1946) features such a character.

white. Yet his whiteness is only 'skin-deep': 'Sa peau est désormais translucide, feuille blanche et presque automnale accrochée à un arbre noir. (S: 14). The metaphor of the tree conveys the idea that despite his change of colour, for Patrice, Ferblanc is still 'un [arbre] noir' (ibid), a black man. However, it is women's altered perception of Ferblanc that overcomes the latter:

Ce changement physique était insupportable. [...] lui qui transformait toutes les femmes jeunes et vieilles, belles et laides, en choses légères [...] il n'a pas pu supporter ce dégoût soudain dans les regards. [...] plus jamais il n'inviterait personne à danser, même lorsqu'il serait devenu complètement blanc et que les femmes d'un certain âge lui demanderaient en riant, avec cette jolie lueur de curiosité dans les yeux, de danser avec elles. (S: 21)

Since he is not physically like them anymore and they cannot place him in a category, he is not an object of desire, rather of curiosity. His 'Otherness' is etched on his skin singling him out as 'white,' yet not white.

The issue that is raised is that of the symbolic significance of skin, for, the reason behind his rejection is both physical – they do not want proximity with someone who has a malady – and ideological, since Ferblanc cannot be categorized as 'white' or 'black,' being hybrid. Benthien's study of skin includes a discussion of Claude-Nicolas LeCat, who included a chapter entitled 'La métamorphose du Nègre en Blanc & du Blanc en Nègre' in his *Traité de la couleur de la peau humaine* (1765), thus underlining the interest in the changing patterns discerned in skin colours (Benthien 2002: 145-6). LeCat's study is pivotal in this sense as it focuses on the occurrence of albinism and

vitiligo among 'blacks' and 'whites' respectively.⁵⁴ The concern with people who belong to two categories simultaneously is thus not recent, and often resulted in the marginalisation of people who were deemed to be different because of their pigmentation. Ferblanc here represents the case of vitiligo among 'blacks', wherein his 'black' skin degenerates into white and the norm is 'black', thus reversing the paradigm of the European models.

Ferblanc's hybridity provides a means of discussing the very concept of essentialism. Unlike Ravi's analysis of Coulombe, the grotesque in Ferblanc's case is that of the white man with black features. To quote Bhabha discussing Fanon's case, Ferblanc is 'almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha 1994: 86). He is almost white but not quite. Unlike Mauritian society where there are Franco-Mauritians, Rodrigues does not have a white population. Only European tourists like Royal Palm's biological father are sometimes seen in the society depicted. Thus, the problem with Ferblanc's hybridity is perceived as that of non-belonging, of alterity. Bhabha read Fanon's in-betweenness as a positive aspect of hybridity because being white could be

⁵⁴ Andrew Curran argues that albinism, for eighteenth century theorists, served as a proof of the 'whiteness' of human beings from the origins. He analyses Maupertuis's idea of shared origins among humans (*monogenesis*), wherein every individual was initially white and blackness represented a form of degeneration. The albino was thus a 'racial throwback, a reversion to a primitive *whiteness*' (Curran 2009: 151). However, for Curran the 'nègre blanc' is a significant notion that allows for a reconceptualisation of the very notion of race, first of all because Maupertuis's study deconstructed the concept of racial difference from within by formulating the idea of 'tous ces peuples [...] sortis d'une même mère' (Maupertuis 1980 (1752): 138). Using the term 'variety' instead of a stipulative term like 'race', Maupertuis 'simply suggested a sub-group of humans related by morphology and colour' (Curran 2009: 158). Although Maupertuis might have been among the first willing to see the sameness in humanity despite the visible differences, albeit while still seeing 'blackness' as a form of degeneration of the white gene, it is nevertheless true that the notion of inferiority of blacks had currency and continued in this way for centuries.

advantageous to a certain extent, especially in terms of assimilation during colonial times. However, in *Soupir*, there are no white men and belonging to the community is natural, until Ferblanc's skin becomes white. As Anzieu remarks, skin becomes an issue only when it is different. No one in the community questioned Ferblanc's identity until he became 'ambivalently abnormal' to echo Ravi in her discussion of Thomson's grotesque with reference to Coulombe.

Indeed, bodies that defy norms and compel a questioning of categories in their hybridity belong to the grotesque. As Harpham has argued, '[grotesqueries (sic)] stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing the world, of dividing the continuum of experience into knowable particles' (Harpham 1982: 3). Ferblanc's hybridity places him in a position where he is at once in the society and outside of it, as exemplified by the reaction of the other characters: some accept him while others reject him, especially the women.

In his analysis of Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquaise* (1948), in *Peau noire masques blancs*, Fanon gives an example of a woman whose obsession with lactification leads to her rejection of black men, whose plight in feeling inferior is highlighted (Fanon 1952: 33-39). This type of lactification can be seen in some Mauritian novels like Marie-Thérèse Humbert's *A L'Autre bout de Moi* (1979), where 'il faut blanchir la race' (Fanon 1952: 38), becomes a leitmotiv and a modicum of 'white' in the family tree is conducive to feelings

of superiority. However, Fanon's white men are European Caucasian and are denoted by the term 'l'homme blanc'. The black man mutating into the white man is an unknown entity, he is a hybrid. He is not coveted for his precious genes; he is rejected for they are a sign of deficiency. He is worse than a black man in the schema of lactification. Sam Haigh remarked that Fanon, in *Peau noire masques blancs*, is unable 'to dissociate black women from the most extreme and literal, form that the lactification complex can take – miscegenation' (Haigh 1999: 144). There is thus no differentiation between real skin and its symbolism. In Ferblanc's case, the women who reject him neither want his children nor do they want to be associated with him in his 'whiteness'. It is both an actual and symbolic rejection of his hybridity.

Interestingly, the albino protagonist in Guinean author Williams Sassine's *Mémoire d'une peau* (1998) enjoys the attention of many women because of his position as a 'nègre blanc'. Ferblanc, on the other hand, does not live his 'whiteness' in the same way. Even though the older women are curious – Ferblanc sparks interest as an 'Other', his difference marks him as exotic, which is ironic since the seemingly 'white' man is now the object of the exoticising gaze – the younger women in general 'ont continué à l'éviter' (S: 14). Sassine's character was born 'white', was initially stigmatized and then accepted for what he was: different. Ferblanc's difference is a continuous process, inscribed every day over a period of time until he becomes something that they do not recognize as normal. Fanon's 'white mask' takes on a different meaning here in that it is a 'whiteness' that is neither chosen nor

imposed by acculturation. It is an actual bodily mutation that displaces Ferblanc to a no-man's land of identification and leads him to madness.

According to Benthien, 'skin is constantly reinterpreted, read, invested with or emptied of semantic meaning, recoded, neutralized and stylized' (Benthien 2002: 11). As discussed so far, Ferblanc's skin raises many questions as to the function of skin in questioning essentialist notions of identity formation. Ferblanc's skin has constantly been reinterpreted, read and given meaning or divested of meaning, insofar as characters like Marivonne do not accord importance to Ferblanc's skin and thus his skin ceases to be legible as a marker of identity. What remains is for Ferblanc's skin to be 'recoded, neutralized and stylized' (ibid). Thus Patrice displaces the 'whiteness' of Ferblanc into the realm of heavenliness, first of all as a messianic figure intent on redeeming the community of Soupir: 'c'est peut-être cela qu'il voulait, Ferblanc. Nous apporter cet oubli-là, cette absence-là, puisque rien d'autre ne marchait' (S: 50). His difference is thus 'recoded' into something that is positive for the community. Then, gradually he is elevated to the position of an angel when he leads them to the arid earth that is Soupir on blind faith: 'la foi blanche de Ferblanc [...] il est insupportable de voir sourire un ange' (S: 52), and then to the position of being the representative of good as opposed to the evil, unyielding time that threatens to annihilate Soupir and its inhabitants. On observing Ferblanc on the slopes of Soupir, Patrice notes that 'sa blancheur tranche sur la noirceur du temps' (S: 163). While his angelic status could be problematic, I argue that his 'whiteness' here

becomes synonymous with good, as opposed to the 'white' man's evil nature. In the previous chapter, I argued that it was because Ferblanc is a man that his madness was acceptable. Similarly, perhaps the fact that he is male leads to his ascension as an angel, while Noëlla becomes one of the 'ghost' witch-like figures. The angel Ferblanc's re-membering of the past leads to the 'compères'' final fall: 'chacune de ses paroles avait été mortelle. [...] il nous obligeait à regarder en arrière' (S: 167). Like an angel of doom, he burdens them with their past and their unkept promises as discussed in chapter two. Yet, no one treats him like a mad man at this point, everyone believes in his words, thus reinforcing the idea that he has been 'stylized', that is, re-categorised, as divine.

Ferblanc has undergone the different processes of reinterpretation and recoding outlined by Benthien and by the end has been 'accepted', and yet this angel is one of the men who rapes Noëlla at the end of the novel. The 'whiteness' of Ferblanc does not ensure any essentialized identification with goodness, as his involvement with the rape of Noëlla demonstrates. In *Soupir*, rape is perpetrated by both white and black individuals, thus unsettling the association of the black man with rape (Fanon 1952: 145). Moreover, Royal Palm's father is a European tourist who repeatedly rapes his mother, Pitié. The white man and the black man are both equally represented as capable of violence. This suggests that connotations associated with colour are not set and should not be taken as such. Any person of any race or creed is capable of violence.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, offers a further point of comparison to *Soupir*. The Invisible Man is a black man whose presence is repeatedly ignored or constantly effaced by white men's 'inner eyes' (1990 (1947): 3). However, in the course of the novel he has an accident where boiling white paint burns his whole body, causing his skin to flake off. Later involved in politics, he is criticised for not being 'black' enough to be the symbolic figure representing the community. Authenticity depends not only on colour but on the skin tone as well, which leads to the concept of blackening. To be considered black and thus a member '[of] the group of the socially discriminated', he must be pitch-black (Benthien 2002: 165). 'Blackening' oneself to appeal to a certain audience in politics and 'whitening' oneself to be recognised as a human being are two recurring motifs in the novel. In Ferblanc's case, 'whitening' is natural and is actually a form of degeneration of the skin,⁵⁵ and while there is no actual 'blackening', it can be suggested that it is when he becomes 'white' that Ferblanc unveils the slavery past and the promises made by their forefathers as black slaves. It is as a hybrid white/black man that Ferblanc reveals this secret: neither black nor white, I suggest his message is not as politically charged as if he were a black man or a white man speaking of this past. His hybridity and the resulting madness place him in the liminal position that enables him to talk about slavery without being ostracised.

⁵⁵ Interestingly this counters Maupertuis's idea that 'black' skin is the degeneration of white skin into something other. While his theories on the albino were accepted by some, in the case of vitiligo, the absence of skin colour is a malady. As Ralph Ellison's character asserts in conclusion, white 'is not a colour but the lack of one' (1990: 588).

Thus, the hybrid body, as I understand Ferblanc's predicament, demonstrates the way in which Devi uses the hybrid figure to question and problematize the links between skin colour and identity in a variety of ways and shows that these two concepts are not coterminous.

Hybridizing the human and the animal: Language and name-calling in Le Sari vert, La Vie de Joséphin le fou and Moi L'Interdite.

In the previous section, I studied the notion of hybridity in terms of skin colour and suggested that this particular bodily hybridity in Ferblanc's case leads to a questioning of the very notion of identity based on skin colour, its ambivalence evoking a range of responses and possible interpretations. In this section I examine the concept of name-calling and the role played by language in hybridizing the body. Indeed, it can be suggested that constant name-calling leads to the blurring of boundaries between human and animal. In section one, whiteness and blackness and categorisation begins with language. Language plays a crucial role in the dislocation of characters and in the marginalisation of individuals whose deviant bodies are not classifiable because they cannot be *called* white or black.

Characters who find themselves on the margin of the Mauritian society depicted in the novels are often likened to less than human beings.⁵⁶

According to Marilyn French,

Patriarchy is an ideology founded on the assumption that man is distinct from the animals and superior to [them]. The reason for this superiority is man's contact with a higher power/knowledge called god, reason or control. The reason for man's existence is to shed all animal residue and realize his 'divine' nature, the part that *seems* unlike any part owned by animals- mind, spirit or control. (French 1985: 314)

Man's alleged superiority over all other species is extended from the (pseudo-)generic to the gendered to imply a superiority of man over woman. Elizabeth Grosz, in *Volatile Bodies*, reminds us that in Western philosophy, the dichotomy of mind and body separates the two human genders, placing the man above the woman, for the woman is associated with the body, passion, pulsion and physical needs, while the man is above all a rational being (Grosz 1993). According to Elizabeth Spelman, this has led to the notion of *somatophobia*, a term she coined to denote the equation of women, children, animals and all manner of things 'natural', with one another (Spelman 1982: 120). In an extended analysis of the equation of animals and women through language, Joan Dunayer argues that:

So inveterate and universal is the false dichotomy of animal vs. human – and so powerfully evocative that symbolically associating women with 'animals' assists in their oppression. Applying images of denigrated nonhuman species to women labels women inferior and

⁵⁶ G. Agamben for example underlines the fact that the human being wholly differentiates himself from the animal: the human is an animal 'qui se reconnaît ne pas l'être' (Agamben 2002: 46). Without contradicting this idea, Michel Boccara insists that human beings are despite everything still anchored in the animal world through mythology and songs (Boccara 2002).

available for abuse: attaching images of the aggrandized human species to men designates them superior and entitles them to exploit. Language is a powerful agent in assigning the imagery of animals vs. human. Feminists have long objected to 'animal' pejoratives for women and the pseudogenerics *man* and *mankind*. (Dunayer 1995: 11)

Carol Adams's and Josephine Donovan's edited volume, *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, in which Dunayer published her analysis, explores the various ways in which animal imagery is used to denigrate women. Dunayer herself illustrates how patriarchal society places women in a domestic position, for example with the use of common farm animal images. She studies the extent to which human beings consider animals as inferior and unintellectual or serving certain purposes only, for 'these linguistic habits are rooted in speciesism, the assumption that other animals are inferior to humans and do not warrant equal consideration and respect' (Dunayer 1995: 11).

In *The Grotesque Interface* (1996), Robertson discusses the importance of language in the grotesque. According to him, 'the grotesque is closely related to problems of signification and intelligibility' (1996: 4). It is akin to what is called 'paradox' in linguistic terms, wherein two ideas that cannot be true together logically are present in the same sentence, for example 'il est interdit d'interdire', where prohibiting prohibition is itself a prohibition (ibid: 7). The conflict present within language is a characteristic of the grotesque for Robertson.

According to Terry Eagleton,

The hallmark of the 'linguistic revolution' of the twentieth century, from Saussure and Wittgenstein to contemporary literary theory, is the

recognition that meaning is not simply something 'expressed' or 'reflected' in language: it is actually *produced* by it. (1983: 60)

Thus a chair becomes a chair by virtue of being called a chair. In the case of the paradox, two meanings are logically impossible together but are valid at the same time. The 'paralysis of language' wherein there is no appropriate category or word to name an object is the grotesque (Harpham 1982: 6). This is significant for this section in the light of the extent to which human characters are called by animal names. For Robertson, the 'elimination of the boundaries between human and animal forms has always been characteristic of the grotesque' (1996: 122). I suggest that these names that are given to women in *Le Sari vert*, for instance, leads to a hybrid human and animal as not only does the doctor treat the women in his life as animals, but they also in a way become hybrids in the narrative.

This section of the chapter will explore the hybridity engendered by animal images, name-calling and branding in *Le Sari vert*, *Moi L'interdite* and *La Vie de Joséphin le fou*. The first narrative this analysis will centre on is Devi's last novel, *Le Sari vert* (SV). Published in September 2009, *Le Sari vert* is narrated by a dying doctor, 'Dokter-Dieu', as he refers to himself, or Bissam as his parents named him. The dying man lies on a bed in the musty town of Curepipe, looked after by his daughter Kaveri Rani, or Kitty as she is known. As the story unfolds, the narration jumps back to his early memories, his life as a newly married man, their baby son's demise, his wife's death, and forward to the present and the way he treats his daughter along with his grand-daughter Malika, whom Kitty calls to support her. The narrative is, up

until the last few pages, written from the doctor's point of view, while the last pages are told, after his death, in the voices of his dead wife's ghost, Kitty and Malika. The doctor's reminiscences unveil extreme misogyny, violence, incest as well as a tendency to treat women as culprits and less than human beings. In this section, I attempt to demonstrate that name-calling leads to a hybridization of human and animal through language, in the novels.

According to the *Trésor de la Langue Française*, a 'Vache (laitière) [est une] [f]emme ou fille de mœurs légères. Femme bien en chair, à forte poitrine. Personne sans courage, molle, avachie.' As a term for a woman, cow is, in anthropologist John Halverson's words, 'thoroughly derogatory' (1976: 515), characterizing the woman as fat and dull. 'Exploitation of the cow for her milk has created a gender-specific image. Kept perpetually pregnant and/or lactating, with swollen belly or swollen udder, the "dairy cow" is seen as fat [...] she is seen as passive and dull. [...] Like the laying hen, the dairy cow is exploited as female body', remarks Dunayer (1995: 13). According to Robert Baker, using domestic animal imagery 'reflect(s) a conception of women as mindless servants' (1975: 56). Dokter-Dieu uses bovine terms to refer to Kitty and Malika, as well as other women, at different times in the novel: 'la fille (Malika) mâchonne sa langue, plus bovine que jamais [...]' (SV: 17); 'ce regard bovin (Kitty)' (SV: 38). The women surrounding him are repeatedly denigrated as either fat, dull, unintelligent or as sexual objects. Marie-Rose is doubly victimized as she is not only perceived as fat but also as a Creole woman, her skin colour adding to the insult: 'ta (Malika) vache noire' (SV: 49).

Similarly, his wife is feeding his child with her 'lait de vache nourricière' (SV: 60). This association is reinforced when the doctor is called to help deliver both the household cow and the farmer's wife who is in labour.

The real cow's fortitude in suffering is contrasted with the human 'cow' that is crying and shouting when she is having no trouble giving birth: 'l'autre vache qui n'a eu, elle, aucun mal à faire sortir l'enfant' (SV: 90). According to Eagleton's definition of meaning as being produced by language, the woman is both a cow and a human being, because the word 'cow' refers to her. In Robertson's theory of the grotesque (1996), she is both an animal and a human by virtue of the paradox present in the name she is called. However, being a 'human cow' is worse than being a domestic animal because animals really know what suffering is. Interestingly, in Hinduism, the cow is a sacred animal as it represents the vehicle of Lord Shiva, the consort of Parvati, whose other name is also Bhavani, Kitty's name. In India, the cow is revered for its role during harvest seasons and it is never mistreated in any way. This is also the reason why Hindus never eat beef. However, Dokter-Dieu calling the women around him 'cow' is not a sign of respect or reverence. While the women in this text are hybridised, they never completely become animals who are worthy of admiration; they are less than animals.

Dokter-Dieu effectively sets up a new hierarchy in which human beings are inferior to animals. Summoned to help remove a bullet from a man's leg, he chooses to assuage a cow's pain by giving her all his morphine, while the man suffers extreme pain when he shatters his bones in order to

extricate the bullet. The question he poses is 'qui de l'homme ou l'animal, en avait le plus besoin? L'homme à une jambe fracassée, l'animal aux quatre pattes coupées?' (SV: 110). If, as in Western philosophy, the superiority of man over animal is argued, then the answer is simple, the man is to be saved. Deleuze writes:

Au lieu de correspondances formelles, ce que la peinture de Bacon constitue, c'est une zone d'indiscernabilité, d'indécidabilité entre l'homme et l'animal. L'homme devient animal, mais il ne le devient pas sans que l'animal en même temps ne devienne esprit, esprit de l'homme [...] Ce n'est jamais une combinaison de formes, c'est plutôt le fait commun: le fait commun de l'homme et de l'animal. (Deleuze 2002: 28)

The indiscernible, common zone between the human being and the animal is deemed to be the fact that both human beings and animals suffer and must die. The question this raises is whether this choice can be made. Fragile, wounded animals, recurring in the narrative become constant reminders of human beings' weakness and propensity to suffer, but also of the inhumanity of certain humans. For, this would not even be an issue if the fighters had not cut off the cow's legs nor shot the man. Thus Dokter-Dieu raises questions about the humanity of human beings and what separates human beings from the state of animality.

In fact, suffering is the main characteristic by which the doctor judges those around him. That his wife has not felt pain, unlike his mother, makes her an unnatural woman. Just as Noëlla is vilified and raped for not suffering like the others in *Soupir*, the nameless wife is beaten so that she may become a good wife through being treated worse than an animal. Similarly, Dokter-Dieu attempts to lower Kitty to the state of an animal through her name. Named

grandly as Kaveri Bhavani (Kaveri is a holy river in India, Bhavani is the name of one of the Goddesses), and alternately Kaveri Rani (queen) by her mother, her father reduces her to the status of a cat, kitty, so that in being animalised and thus hybridised, she knows her place. Likewise, Malika, whose name also means the queen/empress, becomes both a cow and '[le] gros cochon' (SV: 47),⁵⁷ because of her physical appearance. Name-calling becomes a means of demeaning women. Indeed, the only Creole words that he utters in the narrative are '*sorti la alle zaimo*' (SV: 156), words directed at his wife, bringing out the full force of his anger, for the harshness of the Creole language intensifies the already injurious 'get out you animal'.

Moreover, Dokter-Dieu's use of language remains essentially misogynistic. His daughter, for example, acquires several characteristics of the cat in the novel. 'Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, viens ma chatte, viens sur les genoux de Papa [...] Elle est comme ces chats qui vous regardent avec des yeux si froids que vous avez envie d'essuyer vos semelles sur leurs poils propres' (SV: 14), states Dokter-Dieu. The disdain and arrogance of the cat transferred to Kitty, who is alternately *a cat* ('chatte') and *like a cat* ('comme ces chats'), anger him to the point of violence, so much so that it reveals a feeling of inferiority in the doctor. In Dokter-Dieu's language, Kitty becomes an ambivalent human-animal hybrid who changes form on (her father's) whim.

⁵⁷ This can be contrasted with '*male chauvinist pig*', which, although is an insult to a man, is not as demeaning as calling a woman 'cochonne'. Indeed, Marie-Rose is branded as a 'cochonne' when Dokter-Dieu hallucinates and sees her arousing him with her mouth. This demonstrates how male and female animal imageries have different connotations and the male remains superior.

Kitty is described 'comme un animal de compagnie' (SV: 34) : 'J'ai besoin de Kitty comme de l'animal familier' (SV: 180). The daughter is not only given the name of 'chatte' with its overtly sexual connotations, she is, in line with Robertson's theory (1996), grotesquely transformed, through imagery into the feline companion of a man who has lost his wife. However, 'compagnie' takes on other connotations when he hints on several occasions that he forces her to enter a sexual relationship with him.⁵⁸ Kitty calls him 'l'homme de mes nuits', which is reminiscent of Mouna, in *Moi l'Interdite* when she recalls the man who physically abuses her every night in the asylum. To some extent he knows he is the villain: 'comme un petit chat maigre que je noierais, tu vois, avec son pelage tondu, le petit chat mignon qui ne meurt pas facilement mais qui mourra quand même parce qu'il ne peut rien contre cette main d'homme qui l'entoure, et qui l'enserme et qui le broie' (SV: 71). The reader is left to deduce whether he is unwittingly undermining himself or has an ulterior motive. When later on Kitty changes from a 'chat mignon' to a wily 'chatte' trying to capture a mouse: 'c'est là que la chatte avait plus de chance de trouver son rat' (SV: 138), it becomes clear that he plans to shift the blame to her.⁵⁹

Dokter-Dieu equally hybridises Kitty's nameless husband through the image of 'la bestialité de ce rat de bibliothèque' (SV: 144), because he threatens

⁵⁸ According to Robertson, incest is part of the grotesque insofar as it creates chaos in the order of the world. Collapsing family values, mores and norms add to the shock-effect created by the grotesque (Robertson 1996).

⁵⁹ And indeed, he blames Kitty for causing his wife's death even though she was only two at the time. He accuses her of thinking her mother was a witch and of lighting the match that killed the mother.

the doctor's masculinity. This is demonstrated by the corrosive repetition: 'le rat, le rat, j'assassine le rat et sa cohorte. / Le rat qui m'a tout pris et qui a même usurpé ma virilité' (SV: 145). The husband is both the rat that lives and attacks in a cohort and the 'rat' who took Kitty away from Dokter-Dieu. How can a man be a man without a woman to be controlled or possessed? However, while it could be said that there are times when men are also animalised within his narrative, what demarcates the husband from the doctor, in the latter's opinion, is his lack of masculinity: 'j'ai conclu que cet épanchement dans le sari, c'était la preuve qu'il avait ce problème masculin dont se plaignaient tant de mes patients' (SV: 145). The doctor is certain that Kitty's husband is impotent, and hence has no qualms about animalising him as well.

Language here foregrounds the grotesque as the signifier and the signified are at odds with each other and create a sense of confusion that is crucial to the grotesque according to Philip Thomson (1960). The women also become predators like wolves and carrion crows. For instance, from the beginning Kitty and Malika are referred to as 'les deux corbeaux femelles là-bas' (SV: 14). Similarly, like the 'louve' in Romus and Remulus's case, the two women are she-wolves who feed him and keep him alive, yet they are perceived as a danger to his well-being: 'les louves qui tournent autour de moi' (SV: 72). However, 'vous êtes des mollusques' (SV: 190) brings a strong contrast in the way he perceives the women, especially when he follows it with 'suis-je le loup ou est-ce elles?' (SV: 195). Seen from this point of view, the

victims are becoming the aggressors. In this way, there is a threshold that is crossed when good becomes bad as the victims are now becoming the *bourreau*, the hybrid human-animal, the monster.

Interestingly, there are certain instances where Dokter-Dieu places himself in the position of an animal as well. The doctor attributes animal characteristics to himself: 'je me mis à renifler chaque partie (du sari)' (SV: 143). While this may be construed as a slip on his part and an unconscious admission of his own animality, it is important to note that at no point does he describe himself as a domestic animal. In fact, even as an animal he is superior to the women: 'c'est une espèce de royauté naturelle comme celle du lion ou du tigre [...] Personne n'est venu se battre contre moi pour conquérir mes femmes' (SV: 146).

Nevertheless, he does not always remain superior. His frustration is evident when he uses the image of the eel to describe Kitty and Malika towards the end of the narrative: 'vous qui me fuyez comme des anguilles glissant hors de ma portée' (SV: 205). This underscores the fact that no matter how much he tries to, he cannot destroy them. However, the eel also invokes a phallic image and this gives them a degree of superiority over him, but he counters it immediately by calling them 'chattes siamoises' (SV: 205). As with the prior uses of the *cat* analogy, both women are denigrated for their femininity and their domesticity. Here the image of the conjoined cats is also reminiscent of Bakhtinian grotesque hybrid body (1984) in that these two bodies have no boundary. In this instance, I suggest Dokter-Dieu hybridises

Kitty and Mallika in order to deny them individuality. The repetition of 'comme toutes les bêtes' (SV: 206) lays emphasis on his will to see them only as inferior and belonging to a different, lower species, where individuality is absent. The irony Devi creates here is that he is the one who dies *comme une bête* at the end of the novel.

Devi's previous novels were mostly centred on female characters, some of whom are hybridised into half-animal half-human creatures through the language of other protagonists. The most prominent of these female characters is Mouna in *Moi l'interdite*. Her dehumanisation begins with the absence of a name that is recognizable as human: 'Mouna' means the female ape. Her appearance reinforces this human-animal hybridity, for Mouna has a 'bec-de-lièvre' (ML: 9), a harelip, a deformity that in both English and French, is given animal connotations. In *Le Sari vert*, none of the women were physically deformed in any way, yet I suggested that they were hybridised through language. Mouna, on the other hand, suffers both because she is a woman and because she has a facial deformity which leads to her becoming marginalised.

However, unlike the female characters of *Le Sari vert*, Mouna resists by reappropriating language. For example she criticises urbanisation and society, stating '[les] autobus et [les] voitures ressemblaient à des bêtes pondant leurs oeufs grassex' (ML: 43-44). While she demonstrates communion with the animal world, and a better understanding of nature, she still uses animal imagery to describe other people around her, including women. Thus, women

giving birth are depicted as '[en train de] mettre bas' (ML: 39), and in their excitement they are likened to 'des poules prêtes à pondre' (ML: 29). Mouna animalises the women because she is perceived by the latter as even less than them: she is the 'Other' of the 'Other' in a patriarchal society.

It can be tempting to see Joséphin as the exception. However, in keeping with my suggestion, Joséphin is also hybridised through language. When his grandmother and a priest come to fetch Joséphin, they mistake him for a dog: 'ils ont cru qu'il y avait un chien qui dormait là [...] ils avaient cru que c'était un chien qui dormait là, un chien, oui, vous pensez, moi Joséphin [...] (JF: 36-7). Joséphin's own incredulity is reinforced by his repetition and the question to the reader whom he takes as witness. His predicament exemplifies the notion of 'traiter quelqu'un comme un chien' so much so that he *is perceived as* a dog and sleeps in filth.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the image of the 'chien' associated with Joséphin and the image of the 'chienne' for the women in *Le Sari vert*. Thus, when Dokter-Dieu states 'visage de chienne (his wife)' (SV: 30), and that following intercourse she has 'une odeur de pelage mouillé' (SV: 31), his dog imagery has different connotations, which are definitely demeaning for women. After intercourse, he perceives her as an animal because she enjoys copulation, whereas his idea of a woman is one that is passive. In addition, he says of Kitty and Malika that they are 'comme des chiennes en manque' (SV: 80) thus exacerbating the negative sexual connotations in a cruel manner as Kitty has lost her husband a long time ago and Malika is actually in

a lesbian relationship. Thus, even as Joséphin is compared to a filthy dog, the animal imagery for the male is less sexualised than that of the female characters.

In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate the extent to which name-calling and branding can have an effect on the characters who feel both emotionally and physically dislocated. Belonging to both humanity and animal species through language, they hover in the space in-between categories. In her father's mind, Kitty is never his daughter, she is always an animal or the other. Dokter-Dieu's misogynistic treatment of the women in his family lead them to treating him as an animal in the end. Joséphin's mistreatment leads to him choosing the company of eels and rejecting humanity and life 'là-haut', on dry land. Mouna also believes she finds the place where she belongs with the dogs. However, all these narratives, I suggest, question the humanity of those who reject these characters. I suggest that human-animal hybridity enables a questioning of classifications and the role that language plays in establishing these categories. Characters that are in this in-between position are never at ease in their body since they internalise the language that is used to chastise them. Actual transformations can thus be interpreted as the next level in this internalisation, as I attempt to demonstrate in the next section.

The Human-Animal Hybrid Body: Towards an Ethics of Hybridity?

One of the most frequent ways for an artist to use the grotesque [...] is through the use of grotesque characters. And one of the most obvious ways to effect this alienation is through physical deformity.

(Harpham 1976: 465)

Similarly, for Clayborough, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the deformity of the human body that takes on animal traits is the most 'abidingly grotesque' (1965: 102). Bakhtin himself underlined the disturbing nature of the human-animal hybrid in the grotesque (1984). In this section I focus on the human-animal hybrid body in Devi's narratives. While the previous section underscored the paradox and the subsequent ambivalence of characters whose species changes in the language that people use to refer to them, in this section I attempt to demonstrate that some of these characters actually begin a process of transformation in keeping with being treated as animals. Thus, I focus on the transformation that is operated on Mouna and use other texts as a point of comparison to further my discussion of hybrid bodies.

In Devi's narratives, one character that stands out as grotesque in the sense of being born with a deformity is Mouna in *Moi l'Interdite*. Mouna, as mentioned above, has a harelip and when she was born, people thought of her

as an animal, a monster: 'une sorte de monstre. Une fille. Mais est-ce bien une fille? Grise cheveux hérissés, mains griffues – c'est une *mouna*! S'écrie-ton, c'est une *mouna*! Et puis, stupeur! Sa bouche n'est pas une bouche!' (ML: 30). In her village, her human-animal traits are regarded as a sign of Satan and 'ils n'appellent pas cela une difformité; ils l'appellent une malédiction' (ML: 9). 'l'enfant-monstre' (ML: 37) is 'une chose qui provoque l'horreur' (ML: 31). Mouna's narrative is replete with references to her alleged monstrosity: 'mes traits monstrueux' (ML: 13) 'les signes de monstruosités' (ML: 17). Her harelip causes her to lisp and express herself with a 'zozotement' (ibid: 38), which like Joséphin, sets her apart from the rest of her human family. Considered to be a portent of bad luck, Mouna is kept in a limekiln where her sole companions are the little insects that dwell in the kiln. Perpetually imprisoned, Mouna is treated as an animal who is fed and incarcerated as soon as visitors arrive. Her human-animal traits, emphasised by her name, are read as a sign that she is not human and thus can be the scapegoat of the family and ultimately the village itself. I suggest that her constant rejection by her family, and especially her own mother who treats her like a dog, as in Joséphin's story, leads to her thinking she is an animal and should seek animal companionship.

Indeed, Mouna's only companion is a dog who aids in her escape from the limekiln. Deciding to follow the dog and be part of his life, Mouna begins a transformation into a hybrid human-animal, half-human half-dog. Her mutation is described thus: she is 'transformée' (ML: 69) when the insects in the limekiln accept her, then '[elle] n'étai[t] plus humaine (ML: 72) when the

dog helps her out of the kiln and on becoming closer to the dog, '[elle] [s]e transformai[t] sous son (le chien) regard' (ML: 73). Growing hair and claws, Mouna becomes the 'loup-garou' (ML: 98), hybrid animal and human, neither one nor the other, through 'thériomorphisme' as Vicram Ramharai calls it (Ramharai 2001: 114).

Metamorphoses abound in the culture of the postcolonial world as illustrated by Bowers (2004), Zamora and Faris (1995) and Warner (2004), and Devi's novel is set in such a society. Mouna's bodily transformation suggests that it is possible to become half animal just by living with a dog. Magic realism, is a narrative mode that befits a literature that seeks to undermine the traditional classifications of what is real and what belongs to the realm of the imaginary. In magic realism, it is perfectly normal to find people transforming into animals, or ghosts speaking to human beings. There is as such no boundary between the real world and the supernatural, rather they exist on the same plane (Zamora and Farris 1996). However, in Mouna's case, she responds to her transformation with incredulousness and disgust.⁶⁰ Instead of accepting her transformation, Mouna questions it and chooses to stay human: 'j'ai vu dans la mare s'échapper le duvet brun, comme si une part de ma vie me quittait en une mue mystérieuse. Ainsi, il fallait que je reprenne mon apparence d'avant...' (ML: 102). Reason, humanity prevails as Mouna divests

⁶⁰ While Devi repeatedly quotes Alejo Carpentier, indicating that she wishes to 'atteindre l'universel dans les entrailles du local' in her interviews, she never refers to magic realism as a narrative mode in her novels (in Indereunion 2003). Carpentier's words are relevant to her insofar as she wishes to discuss universal topics even as she engages with the specificity of the society she is depicting.

herself of her part-animality. Yet, there is an extent to which the process of becoming animal has enabled her to reconnect with her humanity, for it is through fighting with the dogs attempting to kill a human family (ML: 90-3), that she realises her identity as a human.

According to Marson, 'la "*carnalité*" accroît la pensée et la vie dont le principe anime leur (Devi's characters) corps, leur sens moral, leur sensibilité. [...] l'esprit humain cède la place au souffle vital. L' "*humanimalité*" se lit alors comme l'apport d'un supplément d'humanité' (Marson 2006: 66). '*Carnalité*', in Marson's analysis of Devi's novels, refers to 'une chute dans la pulsion pure' (ibid). For Marson, then, Devi's characters become more than human through their descent into animality. It is through this necessary step back that they are able to recover or enhance their 'aptitude à ressentir' (ibid: 67). Marson's analysis of these novels is itself based on Surya's own notion of 'humanimalité'. Indeed, Surya focuses one of his chapters on Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' and especially on the character Gregor Samsa's monstrous humanity. For, Samsa is a giant insect, but that does not compel him to lose his humanity: 'Gregor Samsa ne cessait pas d'être un homme quoiqu'il fût ravalé à l'état de bête' (Surya 2004: 59). In fact, 'nul n'a plus que lui l'humanité en partage; nul n'est plus humain que lui, *quoiqu'il* mourra en vermine' (ibid: 89). Similarly, I suggest that Mouna's hybrid body enables her to become more and more lucid as to what is really monstrous, leads to her interrogation of the very concept of humanity and ultimately leads to her transforming from monster to angel.

This dichotomy between the monstrous and the divine is crucial to my reading of human-animal hybridity in Devi's narratives. At this point in the analysis, I wish to examine Dokter-Dieu as a point of comparison with Mouna. As Dokter-Dieu asserts, God may have given life to us, 'Mais la guérison et la vie, elles, venaient directement du Dokter. Quoi d'étonnant à ce qu'il se sente investi d'une sorte de puissance? [...] j'étais entouré d'une vénération' (SV: 35). The self-proclaimed Dokter-Dieu is in ascending order, 'un héros' (SV: 31), 'un demi-dieu' (SV: 38), 'Dieu' (SV: 95). These different comments come from various points of view: the first from those who think he refused to show he was not circumcised in order to demonstrate his lack of differentiation between Hindus and Muslims during the communal riots, the second, by the patients whom he is able to treat, and the third is his own claim on seeing his family's fear of his ire. These humans too in a way 'become' animals from his point of view: 'incurables et irrachetables, impossible rédemption des animaux égarés dans un corps humain auquel ils n'auraient pas dû avoir droit' (SV: 35). Despite being compared to God and a hero, Dokter-Dieu has no empathy, no compassion and is devoid of pity for humans. Thus, there is a fundamental difference between appearance and reality in this novel, which complexifies the very notion of 'Dieu' and its definition since it is closely linked to perception.

Moreover, Dokter-Dieu's misanthropy and misogyny are paradoxically complemented by his devotion as a Hindu. Indeed, ironically he also refers to 'Notre adoration de la déesse mère' (SV: 105), the pronoun 'nous'

reinforcing the fact that he too worships the Goddess mother, as well as to the sacred scriptures and 'cette ère de Kali, le Kali Yuga de toutes les déchéances' (SV: 51). This type of irony is recurrent in Devi's narratives as, many of the male characters in her novels, for instance, Mouna's father in *Moi l'Interdite*, Aeena's father in *Le Voile de Draupadi*, are purveyors of the Hindu religion and the concept of Shakti, the feminine form of divine power, and in spite of this, still discriminate against women.

Dokter Dieu's transformation is interesting in that his way of controlling the women's actions around him is through seeing himself as a lion in charge of a pride, or a tiger (SV: 146). In Hindu mythology, half-animal, half-human gods are part of the pantheon and represent the harmony between the two species. Contrary to the grotesque in Western culture, where the mixing of species creates a shock that unsettles the very notion of classification (Robertson 1996), in Hindu mythology, Gods like Narasimha are deemed to embody perfection. They represent the harmony of Reason and Impulse/Unreason. Vishnu, the God of preservation in popular Hindu mythology has so far been reincarnated nine times, the first four being animals, the last four human, while the fifth, Narasimha, was a hybrid human-animal, a lion man who was able to defeat a tyrant ruler whose power defied all humans and animals. Narasimha represented the blurring of boundaries between human and animal as a condition of defeat of evil.⁶¹

⁶¹ However, the reincarnations mostly invoked are Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, the human avatars who embody love, fidelity and devotion. The human-animal God

While Dokter-Dieu is not Narasimha who is half-man half-lion, through his own portrayal he is the lion and the tiger, symbols of strength and passion in both Western and Hindu mythology. However, the misogynist he is, is ironically reduced to the status of 'vehicle' of Hindu Goddesses Durga and Kali who are said to have tamed passion and impulse, represented by the lion and the tiger, on which they are portrayed as riding; an irony, which Dokter-Dieu, with his so-called superior intellectual abilities, fails to perceive.

'Sometimes, in our confusion, we have been known to turn the Other into a monster *and* a God,' writes Kearney (Kearney 2003: 5). Throughout the narrative, Dokter-Dieu prompts the reader to reconsider known definitions and boundaries between animal and human, monster and human, but also between the monster and the God. Dokter-Dieu reflects:

Celui qu'on appelle monstre est un découvreur de l'âme humaine, celui qu'on appelle monstre est le seul à assumer le courage de son exploration et à le montrer au monde, celui qu'on appelle monstre a la force de sa solitude et l'affranchissement de toute béquille morale, de tout prétexte à ses actes [...]. (SV: 181)

However, the question that this raises is whether by denying the morals associated with society, and therefore civilization, he is not reverting to primal, *animal* instincts. If the privilege of the human is to think and weigh the pros and cons of his actions, then the doctor is sometimes closer to the animal than to the human. An elaborate panegyric of monstrosity is given by the doctor, in whose opinion the monster is the highest form of the human being

inspires awe, but those who are human inspire faith because they resemble us, they are assimilated to the Self.

who has broken the fetters of decorum and is true to himself. A monster is outside of society because society believes that 'un monstre est un monstre, il ne ressent rien, il n'a pas d'émotions, il ne peut pas souffrir, c'est ainsi qu'on le voit' (SV: 182). The doctor paints a portrait of himself as a misunderstood individual living in a society where only white and black exist: the actions of someone whose character is so complex will always be misconstrued and while some may see him as a God, others will only perceive the monster. This is reinforced with the repetition of 'ce dit monstre', laying emphasis on the fact that he might not truly be a monster (SV: 182). The reader has witnessed enough of his verbal and physical violence throughout the novel to perhaps doubt his words. However, as he rhetorically questions: 'qu'ils m'appellent monstre ou dieu, cela a-t-il quelconque importance? Je l'ai dit plus tôt mon épitaphe m'indiffère' (SV: 183).

Dokter-Dieu's monstrosity is grotesque, in the sense of the uncanny grotesque as theorized by Mary Russo: 'the category of the uncanny grotesque is associated with the life of the psyche and with the particular "experience" of the "strange" and "criminal" variety' (Russo 1994: 8), while the carnival grotesque is more physical as demonstrated in the introduction. The doctor may not be physically monstrous, but his mind certainly is. He crosses the line into evil on a number of occasions with his violent behaviour and violent thoughts. Christine Rousseau calls him 'un monstre ordinaire' (Rousseau 2009b), that is a monster that we can find in everyday life. Mouna's

monstrosity remains on the level of perception, wherein her body is seen as monstrous, until her transformation takes it to another level.

In his discussion of the grotesque, Michael Steig describes the function of the grotesque thus: 'In the true grotesque we are kept aware of the connections between the alien world and our own' (Steig 1970: 253). Steig's reader is aware of the discrepancy between the norm and the phenomenon occurring. In *Moi L'Interdite*, what is significant is Mouna's own self-awareness and her own reactions to her physical aberrance:

J'ai contemplé avec horreur mes poils drus, mes griffes, les croûtes qui s'étaient formées sur mes genoux et la paume de mes mains, qui s'étaient endurcies, puis se détachaient périodiquement en libérant une sève blanche, et je ne me suis pas reconnue. Qu'étais-je donc? Quelle créature étais-je devenue? Un bec-de-lièvre m'avait-il excisée de toute humanité? (ML : 102)

Even as a half-animal, half-human she cannot commit atrocities. Her interrogation of her transformation is evidence that she is now even more aware of her position, of her humanity. This in turn enables the questioning of what is a monster, for she is kinder to the humans than her family have ever been to her as the dog reminds her (ML: 93). Who is more monstrous, Mouna or her mother who tries to kill her because of her physical deformity?

It could be argued that they are both moral monsters because in the end Mouna is interned for having killed her own child, succeeding where her mother failed, but there is a difference between killing to protect and killing out of superstition and a lack of understanding. Mouna's words can be applied to her mother's case:

Les gens ont honte de la difformité des autres. Le plus curieux est qu'ils ne voient pas la leur. Pourtant, leur miroir a bien dû leur en parler, à un moment ou à un autre. N'ont-ils jamais vu leurs yeux torves, leur bouche rancie, leur chair tuméfiée d'envies ? [...] Tant d'injustice me navre.' (ML: 56)

The mother is only seen as *inhumane*, a potential murderer, either when she is plotting to or trying to kill Mouna or grand-mère grenier (sic) whose legs are paralysed and is just another mouth to feed. On the other hand, Mouna's reason for killing her child is driven by compassion and a knowledge of suffering that she does not want her child to share. Like Mitsy in *Pagli*, the novel which follows *Moi l'Interdite*, Mouna does not want her child to face the same destiny as her. The killing of a child by its own mother is recurrent in literature that seeks to unveil the suffering of people who are deemed to be different. It occurs in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, in which the protagonist, Sethe, attempts to kill her three children when her former master finds her. The child she does manage to kill haunts her throughout the novel, and while her motivations for such a brutal act are justified to some extent, it does not impede people's perception of her as a monster. For example, Paul D, another former slave, highlights the fact that she is not an animal but a human, 'You got two feet, Sethe, not four' (Morrison 1987: 165), and therefore should not have engaged in such an inhuman act. However, Mouna's act, like Sethe's is somewhat less demonised because of the treatment they both received at the hands of those who were responsible for them. For them, being free from the ill-treatment of society is associated with death, hence in a gesture of protection for Lisa, her only friend, Mouna thinks she should perhaps kill her in order not to leave her 'à la merci des mains et des gueules des hommes

carnassiers' (ML : 122). These people become the monster she once was, while she considers her otherness from another point of view, that of the angel: 'Me serais-je trompée, tout ce temps? [...] Serais-je un ange?' (ML: 123, 125).

Ambiguity thus marks the ending of this novel. Acts of love and monstrous acts are foregrounded and yet the reader cannot distinguish between the two. The blurring of boundaries central to this thesis is thus reflected on an ambiguous body that transforms, changes and transforms again from the beginning until the end, the double monster mutating as such into an angel. Killing to protect becomes more palatable in opposition to killing because of shame and superstition. Even as Mouna metamorphoses back into her human Self, she remains the 'mouna', the female ape, the girl with the harelip, thus underscoring her perpetual liminality and ambiguous position. Unable to reintegrate into society as she is still pseudo-human, and having determined she is not the monster she was considered to be, she chooses the opposite, the angel.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined instances of what I suggest are hybrid bodies in Devi's novels. Ferblanc's hybrid white/black body, Kitty and Mallika's hybridised bodies, Joséphin's ambivalent body and Mouna's human-animal body are all testament to the importance that the body has in

Devi's narratives. These bodies can be interpreted in terms of hybridity because they defy norms and categorizations. They belong to two categories or more *at the same time*. In a society where categories are very important especially when it comes to communities and ancestry, not belonging is problematic. As Ella Shohat has argued and which I have pointed out in the Introduction to this thesis, there are various factors influencing hybridity, especially "post-colonial" hybridity, including the different situations and dislocations experienced by people in various postcolonial societies (Shohat 1992: 110). As indicated in the Introduction, Mauritian society is segmented and this is also evident in Devi's narratives.

I suggest that the hybrid bodies I have examined in the course of this chapter help us answer the question of what is hybridity in the negative sense of the term that Devi implied in her interview quoted in the Introduction to this thesis. Indeed, it can be said that Devi's characters' bodies in these texts represent what can be termed negative hybridity in the sense that it had during colonial times for example. Here, I believe that Devi plays with the notion of 'métissage' in different ways. Hybridity in its negative aspects can be diluting one's identity psychologically or losing one's bearings regarding where one's roots are, but it can also be physically not belonging to one community or the other, as with Ferblanc. In *Le sari vert*, the mistreatment of animals leads to a blurring of boundaries between women's bodies and animal bodies, where there seems to be no difference linguistically between

the two species. This is taken a step further with Mouna when she actually becomes a half-animal half-human.

In most of these cases, the experience of hybridity brings liminality and lucidity. Mouna's critique of her society is only effected after her transformation. Like Mouna, Joséphin's marginal existence in the sea leads to his realisation that the society which rejected him is full of monstrosities that have nothing to do with the physical. Arguably, the women in Dokter-Dieu's life only realise their own value after he has repeatedly treated them as animals. However, since the story is given from the doctor's point of view, the women's feelings can only be conjectured by the reader. Ferblanc is the only character whose hybridity does not lead to a form of enlightenment, but his rejection is not complete. His friends still support him. However, Ferblanc lives in a homogenous Rodriguan community. Unlike every other character examined in this Chapter, he is the only one whose society is not divided. Nevertheless, his status and identity are ambivalent, problematic and shifting within the text, and open to a variety of responses.

Indeed, Joséphin, Mouna and Dokter-Dieu all dwell in Mauritius where the different communities are separated by ethnicity and culture. The notion of hybridity, I suggest, has far-reaching social connotations in such a society. As I expressed at the beginning of this chapter, difference is seen first and foremost through the body at the level of ethnic belonging. Keeping one's identity can sometimes be tantamount to keeping one's physical marker of identity as belonging to a specific community. As Paule states : 'de par mon

apparence je n'avais pas d'appartenance' (RLP: 170); appearance, and especially which community individuals visibly belong to is crucial in this society. It is also for this very reason that Daya's love in *Pagli* is forbidden since the child born of her and Zil's love would be 'sans substance', 'un être brumeux', an abomination, in the words of guardians of Hindu purity (P: 43). This formless child can be interpreted as a child who has characteristics of people who are of African descent and people who are of Indian descent. In his/her hybridity, he/she belongs nowhere and thus is condemned to feel emotionally and physically disconnected from the segregated communities.

In these narratives foregrounding hybrid bodies, I suggest Devi attempts to debunk the notion of identity as categorised and valorised through features and characteristics. The ambivalence that characters create and the questions that they raise throughout these novels are testament to the inadequacy of such categories and labels. The persistent use of such categories and classifications to objectify and fix individuals into set identities leads to psychological problems as demonstrated in Chapter Two. Thus, it can be said that these hybrid bodies are evidence that such categorisations are both deeply entrenched and fundamentally flawed.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to analyse Devi's texts through the concept of hybridity. Given Devi's own comments about her hybridity 'dans le bon sens du terme' (Indes Réunionnaises 2003), my aim has been to explore the relevance of notions of hybridity both to formal and thematic aspects of Devi's works, from *Rue la Poudrière* (1989) to *Le Sari Vert* (2009). As I pointed out in the Introduction to this thesis, hybridity has become a catch-all term deployed to describe the postcolonial condition (de Toro 2006). It is also the generic term used to describe various aspects of postcolonial writing, as well as being applied specifically to the understanding of the notion of identity in the current postcolonial climate. As Ella Shohat (1992) pointed out, it is one term that has the potential to be completely reified, even though it glosses over the variety of hybridities that exist in the contemporary world.⁶²

In the course of this thesis I looked at three types of hybridity that I suggest can be seen in Devi's texts. I have examined the ten novels throughout the analysis, hoping to demonstrate that Devi's texts can be read through the lens of hybridity, with a range of effects. Thus I analysed linguistic and formal hybridity in the first chapter in order to gauge whether Devi's statement that she can 'puise' from the different cultures and traditions at her disposal and thus is 'hybride dans le bon sens du terme' (Indes Réunionnaises 2003).

⁶² See Introduction p.13

Through a discussion of Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination* (1981), I set up the notion of language as intrinsically hybrid by nature as it is always someone else's language before it becomes our own. Devi's use of French 'émailé', in Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo's words (2004), with Mauritian Creole, Bhojpuri and English, is testament to the 'métissage linguistique', that is linguistic hybridity, that Dodille finds is prevalent in Indian Ocean literature (Dodille 2006: 19). I suggest that Creole has a growing importance in Devi's novels and could potentially be viewed as the language that distinguishes Devi's texts from other Francophone texts and to a certain extent other Mauritian texts.

Using the findings of critics like Tranquille (2004), Sultan (2001) and Bragard (2000), I also examined the form of the novels in order to demonstrate that the forms that are present in the narratives are also evidence that Devi employs forms and characteristics of stories from different literary traditions, for example with the circular narration of *Moi L'Interdite* and the metanarrative found in the same novel. It can be said that this is effectively what Devi means when she asserts that she is 'hybride dans le bon sens du terme' because it is an enabling aspect of such a postcolonial society as Mauritian society. It is because of its specific history that Mauritius has so many languages and traditions and it is quite empowering for an author to be able to deploy such a variety of languages and forms in their narratives. I thus used Boehmer's image of the mosaic to describe Devi's novels as each one has a different balance of languages and forms used, but every novel displays a range of these, thus mirroring the cultural and make-up of the island.

On the other hand, Chapter Two dealt with a more subtle aspect of hybridity, that of hybrid identities. Based on Fanon's depiction of the black man's struggle during colonial times, Bhabha's notion of hybrid identities located identity 'in the join' or in the 'Third Space' (1994). For Bhabha, an identity that could be constructed away from the paradigms of modernism and the unitary Self, is one that is most suitable for the postcolonial subject. However, one could argue that there are many varieties of postcolonial subject and that these varieties need to be distinguished according to the different modes of colonization which are evident in the range of distinctive colonial histories (Shohat 1992).

I have therefore attempted to examine the ways in which Devi's texts construct identities as hybrid and if so, what types of hybrid identities emerge in her texts. In the first section I examine *l'Arbre fouet* and *Le Voile de Draupadi* with a view to gauging the extent to which the two main protagonists can be deemed to have hybrid identities. I concluded that given the emphasis that was laid on the Indian roots of these protagonists, so much so that their identities were split, their identity was not hybrid, insofar as Bhabha's hybrid identity (1994), is the successful blending of two identities between which the subject is able to move at leisure and whim. In both Anjali and Aena's cases, this insistence on their Indianness, which is impressed upon them by their respective families, is not conducive to a positive and empowering sense of identity. It is only when they reject their Indianness and relieve themselves of their pasts that they gain a sense of selfhood.

As with the first section, the second section demonstrates that a reading of Devi's novels through the lens of hybridity and particularly hybrid identities, is impossible because of the impossibility of the identity 'in the join' because there are no two identities to choose from. Using Prabhu's reading of the absence of Africanness in Mauritian discourse, I attempted to demonstrate that it is because of the loss of the past that Creole protagonists in Devi's novels do not have a hybrid identity in the sense that Bhabha gives it (1994). Indeed, since their history is fraught and elided from the novels themselves, save for implicit references to slavery, it is imperative to highlight that Creole protagonists like Paule in *Rue la Poudrière* are struggling to come to terms with their identity as, unlike Indo-Mauritians for instance, they do not have an anchorage in the Mauritian society Devi depicts. Paule's identity is fragmented, which is evidenced by the different images of fragmentation she uses to describe her state of mind.

Similarly, I read Joséphin's predicament in *La Vie de Joséphin le fou* as a result of a lack of history. Joséphin's mother deprives him of a tangible history and while it is tempting to ascribe his madness to the abuse he was subjected to, I suggest it is more than anything the fact that his mother refused to give him an identity both as a human being and as a member of the Mauritian community that leads to his madness. Mothers offer love and compassion, as well as pass on culture and traditions. They are the ones who pass on history. Thus, the first thing that attracts Joséphin to eels is the fact that they have a sense of history and a memory that defies time. Despite being the eel-man

Joséphin still craves human companionship and this is what leads to his undoing at the end of the novel. His desire to be in the sea *and* part of the society is translated into what can be interpreted as a form of schizophrenia in the novel.

With *Soupir*, the notion of collective history becomes foregrounded in section two and Glissant's idea of 'délire verbal' (1981) was used to discuss whether the Creole protagonists of this novel could be compared to Antilleans and their concept of community. The 'délire verbal' being a notion that is deemed to be normal, it would seem that it cannot be employed in *Soupir's* inhabitants' case, since the *compères'* madness is depicted as negative and destructive. Like Paule and Joséphin, they suffer from an absent history relating to slavery especially. However, they have a complex immediate history which is painful in many ways, for example with Patrice l'Eclairé being Noëlla's father and never revealing this secret to the community. Their difficulties in dealing with their pasts are exacerbated by the revelation of their failure to uphold a promise their ancestors made to seek revenge. With both their immediate and ancestral past being crippling, they disintegrate psychologically at the end of the novel.

The only character who outlives the rest in *Soupir* is Royal Palm, who I suggest is the only one who does not focus on the past. Even though the 'lieu blanc' (S: 224) his memory is, is triggered by epileptic fits, I believe that it could be a way of undermining the importance that the past seems to have for individuals depicted by Devi. Royal Palm is told his history, but he

automatically forgets it and 'il ne s'arrêtera pas' because he is a survivor and will always move *forward*. Perhaps, this is ultimately what Devi's message is in these texts: that it is good to know the past, but it should not influence the future. Royal Palm's identity is thus constantly being negotiated because of his memory lapses, but he is also the happiest human being in the novel.

The last section of this chapter dealt with madness and writing since I hoped to show that some of Devi's texts can be interpreted as exploring the impact of so-called hybrid identities. In keeping with this, I began my analysis with *Pagli* because the protagonist is the first who actually expresses the wish to reconcile multiple facets of herself, as I quoted at the beginning of the Introduction to this thesis. Daya is conscious that she is different people at the same time, and she is also aware that she is perceived as mad. Easthope's notion that what Bhabha prescribes is akin to actual mental diseases (1998), is used here in order to demonstrate that as Daya attempts to negotiate her identity as a Mauritian, she breaks down mentally because she is faced with the wrath of her own family and community since they do not wish for miscegenation. Daya's lack of education and her incisive criticism of the heavily divided society in which she dwells enables a discussion of the subaltern, and especially of the role of the intellectual in narrating the story of those who cannot speak and thus Spivak's work on the subaltern (1988), was examined and provided a link to *Indian Tango* where the figure of the author appears in Devi's novel.

With the appearance of the author character, I suggest that Devi is perhaps attempting to situate the author's own hybrid identity and see whether the two 'narratives' in Radhakrishnan's words, can in fact be reconciled. Images of splits and doubling as well as multiplicity abound in *Indian Tango*, just as in *Pagli* and the earlier *Voile de Draupadi* and *l'Arbre fouet*, but unlike the previous novels, there is no destruction of the Self or leaving behind one identity for the other. The author has the advantage of incarnating different characters in every novel. She is not obliged to be one or the other, like the Mauritian society depicted so far has dictated. She can be different people simultaneously without losing herself. I read the ending of *Indian Tango* as positive and her encounter with the Indian Subhadra as enabling because liberating. However, this positive hybridity is only empowering insofar as it is someone who writes and therefore is able to be different characters through the medium of the blank page. The rest of the protagonists of Devi's narratives are not able to reconcile their different identities.

I thus read Maalouf's (1998) notion of one identity and multiple belongings as a potential solution to the problem of identity in Devi's novels. Maalouf's concept is interesting in that it provides a means of thinking of identity as something that is stable and unchanging, while belongings can change with every individual. This would have the advantage of giving individuals a core that is immutable and therefore would not lead to psychological dislocations along the lines of those I read in the different novels. However, the question of what this stable identity would be still

remains. I suggest that this could be the idea of being 'Mauritian' itself, experienced not as a lack, but as something that by itself implies that the individual is rooted in the island.

Indeed, as far as Mauritians seem to be concerned, the ethnic community they belong to comes before the nation as a whole, and this is mirrored in most of Devi's novels. Devi herself asserts that: 'Personnellement, je vis mon hybridation comme une chance, mais malheureusement, il reste beaucoup à faire à Maurice pour que l'hybridation ne soit pas perçue comme une menace contre l'intégrité du groupe' (Garcia 2007: 3). This is perhaps one of the first reasons why Devi speaks of 'hybride dans le bon sens du terme' (2003), with an implied alternative, negative sense, because in a Mauritian context, having a hybrid identity implies that the individual does not belong to a specific group and therefore has no 'identity' in the sense that Mauritians seem to perceive it.

Identity in the Mauritian context is often a category that has been in place since the colonial period as Prabhu has noted (2007), and I suggest that classifications are obsolete in the post-colonial society that Devi depicts. Since identification in colonial times depended on the country of origin, and ultimately physiological differences, I read the bodies that Devi presents through the lens of hybridity in Chapter Three.

In the first place I interrogate the notion of skin colour, with Ferblanc in *Soupir*. Individuals abiding in *Soupir* are descendants of slaves and live in a homogenous community. There is, I suggest, no actual need for differentiation

until Ferblanc's vitiligo makes him uncategorizable because he is different. He is neither white nor is he black. Since he is both simultaneously I interpret his body as hybrid. Through Fanon's notion of 'white masks' (1952) worn by the black man, as well as Benthien's study of skin and its interpretations, I read Devi's text as a critique of categorisations since colour associations are undermined in the novel. Ferblanc's whiteness and ostensibly angel-like derangement is offset by his rape of Noëlla in the novel, for example. In reading Ferblanc's skin colour and his positioning as both inside and outside his community as a result of it, I attempt to demonstrate the different ways in which his hybridity can be interpreted, thus ultimately showing that Devi's representation of Ferblanc is a means of debunking the very notion of categorization.

A hybrid body resists classification and is by nature a mix of two or more bodies. Very often hybrid bodies are grotesque bodies by virtue of being open and mixed. Benthien herself provides a link between skin and the grotesque in that skin is the link between the Self and the world. The grotesque body eschews categorization, as with Ferblanc, but I suggest that there are other ways in which bodies are hybrid in Devi's narratives. The second section of this chapter thus deals with language and its relationship with the grotesque hybrid body. Robertson's (1996) theory that the grotesque is also a linguistic concept is used in conjunction with Eagleton's (1993) notion that meaning is only produced through language. Thus, when a signifier and the signified do not refer to the same thing in language, the grotesque is also

produced. I examine *Le Sari vert*'s Dokter-Dieu in terms of the language he uses to refer to the women around him as animals. Through his verbal images, I suggest that Dokter-Dieu hybridises Kitty and Mallika time and again, turning them into women-animals, human-animals. This hybridisation is distinctive as it does not imply an actual bodily mutation, but the grotesque begins with the impossibility of classifying using language and thus they are in-between categories. It can be said that this then leads to a feeling of dislocation that is translated through the body itself.

I further suggest that this verbal hybridisation sometimes leads to transformation as illustrated in *Moi L'Interdite*, which I discuss in the third section of this chapter. Mouna is thus read in two ways: first of all as an individual whose identity is questioned from birth because of a harelip, which arguably places her in an in-between position. Human-animal traits are a characteristic of the grotesque as Bakhtin (1984) and Clayborough (1965) have indicated and Mouna's human-animal traits are perceived as other and lead to her rejection both from her family and the community itself. I suggest that it is the image of her as an animal, a mouna, half-animal already, which leads to her transformation in the text. Acceptance by the dog facilitates her mutation into a half-human, half-dog, a hybrid entity. However, she does not stay transformed. It can be said that it is this hybridity that places her on the margins of both the human and the animal worlds and enables her critique of society and its values. Hybridity, it suggests, can be positive in that it locates the individual both inside and outside a category. However, it is not lived

positively by Mouna and she transforms back into her former self. Yet, Mouna was not 'human' according to society in the first place, thus raising questions about what is human and what is monstrous, especially in the light of arguably monstrous acts other characters perform in this and other texts. Thus, I read these ambiguities as ways of questioning the very notions of categorisations that are undermined as Mouna straddles two worlds and two species, for instance.

Chapter Three ultimately demonstrates that categories of any kind are deeply entrenched in the society depicted and quite flawed. Yet, they are still widely accepted as the means of classifying individuals in the society. With the notion of identity beginning with the notion of appearance, mixing and hybridity, especially in terms of miscegenation becomes a very crucial issue. It is effectively what I believe Devi implies by hybrid in the negative sense of the term. It can be said that Devi perhaps attempts to underline these flaws and undermine the prevalent notions of identification that are still founded on physical appearance in the society depicted.

Reading Devi's texts through the lens of hybridity has been a useful and productive exercise as it enabled an extensive analysis of various aspects of the novels, namely the form and the content through the notions of identity and psychology, as well as the corporeal. It has raised questions about what can be seen as hybrid in the novels and the extent to which it is useful to read language as hybrid for example. In the Mauritian context, it is perhaps the most productive way of examining language as its linguistic history as well as

its cultural history, is testament to the hybridity that does exist on the island. I hope to have demonstrated that the language mirrors the different ways in which Devi includes different languages within one utterance, to use Bakhtin's terminology (1981). It is also evident that a variety of cultural references and traditions are embedded in these texts and these also reflect the society's make-up. In the first chapter I thus demonstrate that hybridity is positive in Devi's texts through the formal aspects.

However, with the second chapter and third chapters, hybridity's more complex issues are examined. On the one hand, I discuss the notion of the body in hybridity and the concept of classification which is undermined, as well as modes of identification themselves. On the other, I underscore the psychological issues that arise especially as Bhabha's theory of hybrid identities does not seem applicable to Devi's novels. Be it with Indo-Mauritian characters and with Creole characters, reconciling hybrid identities is not possible because they all have different modalities of hybridity, with the history and development of each segment having developed in different ways. Shohat (1992) and Radhakrishnan (1993)'s enjoinders not to reify hybridity and, especially, not to forget that there are different hybridities (discussed in the Introduction), are relevant here. Within the same society, two communities have responded to their uprooting in different ways. Therefore, it is crucial for theorists to take into consideration different histories. Identity is extremely problematic for postcolonial societies, but perhaps more so for people who have been uprooted and live with this history on a daily basis.

Discussing hybridity in Devi's narratives has enabled me to address the question of identity in the Mauritian society Devi depicts. The notion of identity itself is perhaps the root of the problem as it is quite reductive. Hybrid identities are intended to be a solution to the concept of a single identity or classification, in the postcolonial context; however, they are not themselves definable or stable. Devi's suggests in *Le Long désir* (2003), her poetry collection, that realising one comes from different parts of the world is enough and the question of identity should perhaps not even be an issue:

[...] et vous qui me croyez cadrée dans l'apparence comme une photo retouchée, oubliez vos préjugés,

Atride par la froide inespérance, apatride pour ma pierre veinée
d'ailleurs, atlantide pour mes rivages dissimulés, pourquoi toujours
poser la question d'identité?

Je suis. (*Le long désir*, 50)

It would be interesting to discuss whether or not texts by other Mauritian authors can be read through the lens of hybridity and whether they would yield similar results. Moreover, whether there is a difference in perception between Mauritius-based authors and migrant writers from Mauritius would further add to the debate.

In addition, since the discussion of both male and female protagonists in the novels has proved fruitful in this thesis, it would be worthwhile to focus on masculinity. Indeed, secondary criticism so far has centred on women's plight and oppression and feminine narratorial voices, but the men's situation

and the concept of masculinity have not been analysed. Devi's recent experimentations with male narratorial voices (Patrice, Joséphin and especially Dokter-Dieu) indicate that there may now be a place for the analysis of masculinity in Devi's novels.

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