

## **Postcolonialism and Translation: the Translation of *Wide Sargasso Sea* into Spanish**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The following article deals with the importance of maintaining in the translation of a postcolonial text the richness, in linguistic terms, of the original. It also highlights the risks and implications of not doing so: if language in postcolonial literary works is used to make social and political statements, failing to translate that language diversity in a satisfactory way may also imply the loss, or the damaging, of that statement. To illustrate this point, this paper will discuss three translations into Spanish of Jean Rhys's most famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which reflects the great linguistic complexity of the Caribbean.

**KEYWORDS:** *Wide Sargasso Sea*, West Indian literature, translation of Caribbean English, Creoles, Postcolonialism

### **Introduction**

The canon of English literature has encountered over time a considerable amount of new readings that challenge the traditionally established perspective towards canonical works. Postcolonial theories in literature have been one of the forces that have shaken assumed attitudes towards canonical texts, questioning, for example, the image that they project of the process and consequences of European colonization.<sup>1</sup> One of the ways in which that literary revision has been carried out is through the rewriting of canonical works using “a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text” to unveil “those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes” (Tiffin 1994:97-98). This is precisely what authors such as J. M. Coetzee and Samuel Selvon accomplished with, respectively, *Foe* (1986) and *Moses Ascending* (1975) in regard to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); what Aimé Césaire aimed at when writing *Une Tempête* (1969), a radical adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11), and what Jean Rhys accomplished with *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) regarding Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (Spivak 1985; MacDermott 1994:7-8; Choudhury 1996:318-319; Raiskin 1996:10, 113; Ashcroft 2002:32).

*Le Revenant* (“the ghost”) was the title of Rhys's first version of the novel, of which all but a few chapters disappeared. In 1966 the final novel was published under its definitive title of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Considered her masterpiece, it obtained several prestigious awards (among them, the WH Smith Literary Award in 1967), and fuelled a growing interest in Rhys's life and literary production. In fact, both her works and biography have been the subject of a number of studies that have often arrived at opposite or contradictory conclusions. As Elaine Savory points out, “[Jean Rhys and her texts] are in those readings: Caribbean, English, European; feminist and anti-feminist; elite, working class, marginal; white and white Creole; outsider and insider; ageless and of her time” (Savory 1998:x).

Even though Jean Rhys had read *Jane Eyre* as a child, it was in 1939, when she reread it as an adult, that the idea of writing a story with Bertha Mason as the protagonist became an obsessive thought. Rhys felt that the character of her fellow West Indies countrywoman Bertha Mason had been mistreated in the novel: not only was she the disruptive element in the love story between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester, Bertha being the latter's wife, but she was also depicted as a "gross, impure, depraved" (Brontë 1847: 369) white Creole from Jamaica;<sup>2</sup> a lunatic, foul-mouthed and violent drunkard without any spark of rationality, who ends up being locked up in the attic of her husband's house for no fewer than fifteen years. Jean Rhys could not help feeling that *Jane Eyre* was "only one side – the English side" of the story (Wyndham and Melly 1985:64), so she decided to create a fiction which explained the beginning of the relationship between Mr Rochester and Bertha Mason from a different point of view. Hence, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not set in the metropolis of a colonial empire, but in one of its colonies in the Caribbean; Bertha Mason is given a new name, Antoinette Cosway, and from being a marginal and silent character in *Jane Eyre*, she becomes the protagonist and the major narrator (although not the only one, for Mr Rochester also provides a direct account of his experiences). If *Jane Eyre* merely represented "one side" of the story, *Wide Sargasso Sea* was very consciously conceived as a multi-sided and, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology, a dialogic novel. Moreover, this multiplicity of voices and perspectives has an impact on the linguistic level of the work: unlike *Jane Eyre*, exclusively written in Standard English, *Wide Sargasso Sea* displays a great linguistic diversity.

Of all the possible perspectives from which *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be considered, this paper will focus on how the novel reflects the complex linguistic situation in the Caribbean, and on the way in which three translations into Spanish of the book have attempted to reproduce this linguistic complexity. The selected translations are by Raquel Costa (1981), Andrés Bosch (1982), and Elizabeth Power (1998).<sup>3</sup> While Andrés Bosch's and Elizabeth Power's translations have been the ones used in the various editions of the novel published in Spain, Raquel Costa's translation was published in Cuba, which means that it was intended to be sold in the Spanish-speaking countries of the American continent. Without a doubt, this geographical difference in the readership of the translations is also highly relevant to our analysis.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Linguistic Complexity of the Novel**

The Caribbean's strong colonial past has left an indelible mark on the linguistic complexity of the area, and consequently on the linguistic backgrounds of both Jean Rhys and Antoinette Cosway. Jean Rhys (1890-1979) was born the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a white Creole in Roseau, the capital of Dominica, where her mother's family had been living for four generations. Dominica was then a British colony, but since it had previously been under French rule, English coexisted with Standard French and patois<sup>5</sup> – although the French language and culture were more deeply rooted in the local population (Carr 2003:96).

Drawing on this real-life complexity, *Wide Sargasso Sea* exhibits an even greater degree of linguistic intricacy. The protagonist, Antoinette Cosway, spends her childhood in Coulibri Estate, Jamaica, which had been a British colony since 1655 and in which English is the official language. Nonetheless, her mother Annette and Christophine, the family's most loyal servant, are from Martinique, a French colony in which the majority of the population speaks patois. In fact, due to her mother's and Christophine's influence on her, Antoinette herself can speak patois and, very likely, Standard French as well. Then there is the town of Massacre,

Dominica, which becomes the island where Antoinette Cosway spends her honeymoon, where Daniel Cosway, her half-brother, lives – even though he was born in Jamaica – and where the character Amélie is from. By the time in which the narrative is set, a few years after 1833, when the Emancipation Act was passed and slavery abolished throughout the British Empire, Dominica was a British colony in which both English and patois coexisted.

As a result, we find in *Wide Sargasso Sea* characters with different mother tongues. First, there is the group of Standard English speakers which includes Antoinette, her stepfather (Mr Mason), Richard Mason, Antoinette's unnamed husband (Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre*), and, in general, all the characters of British descent. Next, secondary characters who are natives of Jamaica, such as Daniel Cosway, speak Jamaican Creole as their first language. Finally, Standard French is the mother tongue of Antoinette's mother, who is from Martinique, while patois is that of both Christophine and Amélie, from Martinique and Dominica respectively. Now, what is the actual weight of all these languages within the novel, and how have they been rendered into Spanish?

## Standard French and Patois

Standard French has a reduced presence in the book, for it is limited to a number of French proper names (Antoinette, Annette, Pierre, Christophine, Amélie, Baptiste, etc.), and isolated sentences or words which always appear in italics (*à dieu, adieu, Qui est-là?, sans culottes, bon sirop, à la Joséphine, fer de lance*, etc.). Some of the words and expressions in French are used either by Antoinette's mother or Christophine when speaking; others, if employed by secondary or anonymous characters, are left in the background and have the function of contributing to the creation of a particular atmosphere. This is the case, for instance, with the expression *bon sirop* (lit. "good syrup") in the following context:

I lay awake listening to cocks crowing all night, then got up very early and saw the women with trays covered with white cloths on their heads going to the kitchen. The woman with small hot loaves for sale, the woman with cakes, the woman with sweets. In the street another called *Bon sirop, Bon sirop*, and I felt peaceful. (Rhys 2000:41-42)

The above extract is part of Mr Rochester's own account of his life in Dominica at the beginning of his honeymoon, before his relationship with Antoinette begins to turn problematic. In the fragment, the expression *bon sirop* is a background noise that accompanies the depiction of the ordinary life in the town of Massacre.

On other occasions, French appears in conversations in Standard English or Caribbean English in the form of set or fixed expressions. That is the case with the expressions *à la Joséphine, sans culottes* or *fer de lance*. Antoinette uses *à la Joséphine* to refer to a certain sort of fashion made in St Pierre, Martinique. The expression alludes to the Empress Josephine, Napoleon's first wife, a native of the island. *Sans culottes*, in its turn, is a derogatory phrase dating back to the French Revolution, and is used by a Caribbean English-Creole speaking girl when insulting Antoinette's mother: "Your mother walk about with no shoes and stockings on her feet, she *sans culottes*" (Rhys 2000:27). Then, Antoinette mentions the name *fer de lance* in a conversation about snakes in Dominica, the *fer de lance* being a venomous snake common in Central and South America. Interestingly enough, the word for this type of snake in English is "fer-de-lance", exactly the same as in French but for the hyphens. However, since in the narrative the term appears in italics, it is very likely that Antoinette pronounces it in the French way.

Due to the fact that both her mother and Christophine are originally from a French colony, the French language is very present in Antoinette's childhood, although she was raised in Jamaica. Certainly, it is highly indicative that even though the green parrot Coco, the family's pet when Antoinette is a child, can say very few words, these are in French. According to Antoinette, "he could say *Qui est là? Qui est là?* and answer himself *Ché Coco, Ché Coco*" (Rhys 2000:22). Later on in the narrative, that same question is repeated twice, but in a very different context and by Antoinette's mother. Antoinette reports, in the following terms, that she overheard her "mother screaming '*Qui est là? Qui est là?*' then 'Don't touch me. I'll kill you if you touch me. Coward. Hypocrite. I'll kill you'" (Rhys 2000: 25).

The terms in patois, almost exclusively used by Christophine, also appear in italics and typically refer to architectural constructions or natural elements (*glacis*; *ajoupa*, small shelter; *morne*, mountain), popular songs (*Ma belle ka di*), and Caribbean folklore (*soucriant*, a legendary old woman who sucks the blood of her victims at night). In addition to this, we can identify expressions that denote affection (*doudou*, little darling; *doudou ché*, dear little darling; *doudou, ché cocotte*, dear little chicken; *ti moun*, little one), and others which can be grouped under the category of "miscellany": *obeah*, "a set or system of secret beliefs in the use of supernatural forces to attend or defend against evil ends" (Allsopp 2003:412); *béké*, a white person; and the exclamation *Que komesse!*, meaning "What's wrong?". In other words, the terms in patois refer to Christophine's universe, to the traditions and popular beliefs of the Caribbean. They are what Sider Florin (1993) calls *realia*, terms which convey certain cultural references so inseparable from a specific cultural context that they seem impossible to translate satisfactorily, and so are left in the translations in their original form. Were those lexical items removed from the text in English or from the translations, not only would an important part of Christophine's characterization be erased by obviating her native tongue, but a central piece in the description of the environment and culture of the Caribbean would be wiped out from the text as well. As can be seen in the following extracts, the three translations into Spanish that this article considers do maintain the terms in French and patois:<sup>6</sup>

'*Ti moun*,' I heard and '*Doudou ché*,' and the end of a head handkerchief made a finger on the wall. '*Do do l'enfant do*.' Listening, I began to feel sleepy and cold. (Rhys 2000:96)

T1:*Ti moun*, oí, y *Doudou ché*, y la sombra, en la pared, parecía un dedo. *Do do l'enfant do*. Escuchando empecé a sentir sueño y frío. (Rhys 1981:124)  
[*Ti moun*, I heard, and *Doudou ché*, and the shadow, on the wall, looked like a finger. *Do do l'enfant do*. Listening I began to feel sleepy and cold.]

T2: «*Ti moun*», oí, y «*Doudou ché*», y, entonces, la punta de un pañuelo de cabeza dibujó la sombra de un dedo en la pared. «*Do do l'enfant do*». Mientras escuchaba, comencé a adormilarme y a sentir frío. (Rhys 1982:154)  
[«*Ti moun*», I heard, and «*Doudou ché*», and, then, the end of a head handkerchief drew the shadow of a finger on the wall. «*Do do l'enfant do*». While I listened, I began to doze and to feel cold.]

T3: Oí las palabras «*Ti moun*», y luego «*Doudou ché*», y la punta de un pañuelo dibujó un dedo en la pared. «*Do do l'enfant do*». Al escuchar, comencé a sentir sueño y frío. (Rhys 1998:181)  
[I heard the words «*Ti moun*», and then «*Doudou ché*», and the end of a handkerchief drew a finger on the wall. «*Do do l'enfant do*». When I listened, I began to feel sleepy and cold.]

These terms and expressions are, thus, what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002:63-65) refer to as "untranslated words", words that in the target text appear exactly the same as in the

source one. In a note on her translation, Elizabeth Power explains that the original forms of the terms were retained in her rendering into Spanish of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in order to preserve an effect similar to the one which Rhys's novel would have upon the average English reader, who is unacquainted with patois. This would, on the one hand, help the reader share in the confusion felt by non-patois speaking characters such as Rochester; and, on the other hand, help him or her better to understand the closeness between Antoinette and Christophine (Power in Rhys 1998:70).

In any case, and interestingly enough, these examples show words and expressions in French and patois embedded in a discourse that takes place fundamentally in an English constantly infused by words from other languages or language varieties used in the Caribbean. In this manner, by including characters from different national and social backgrounds, and by giving them the chance to speak in a direct way, the narrative plays with a multiplicity of voices which contribute to its enrichment with various points of view. This is precisely what Jean Rhys missed in *Jane Eyre*, where the character of Bertha Mason, presented as an irrational creature, is never given the chance to speak and consequently, to dismantle, or at least question, Edward Rochester's account of their marriage. Indeed, Bertha's utterances in the novel are reduced to sounds more proper of a beast than a human being: Jane Eyre reports hearing her producing a "cry" (Brontë 1847: 245), a "shrilly sound" (ibid.), a "fearful shriek" proper of "the widest-winged condor on the Andes" (ibid.), a "scream" (Brontë 1847: 247), a "snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling" (Brontë 1847: 248), a "canine noise" (Brontë 1847: 251), a "growl" (Brontë 1847: 352), and the "fiercest yells" (Brontë 1847: 353). Hence, from what readers learn from Jane's accounts, never a word comes out of Bertha's mouth.

## **Caribbean English Creoles**

The Caribbean English Creole languages are of central importance to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, being the general means of expression of three key characters: Christophine, Amélie, and Daniel Cosway. Hence the relevance of examining their manners of speech, and the challenges that they pose for the translator. To begin carrying out this task, it is once again necessary to point out the particular national and linguistic backgrounds of each of the characters. First, as previously stated, Christophine comes from the French-speaking colony of Martinique, and although her mother tongue is a French-based patois, because she has lived and worked in Jamaica she speaks English Creole very well. Second, due to the fact that Amélie is from Dominica, a British colony that had also once been a French one, she speaks both patois and a form of English Creole. Finally, the character of Daniel Cosway, although living in Dominica, was born in Jamaica, and therefore has a Jamaican English Creole as his first language.

As a result of Christophine's and Amélie's similar social position, that of servants, taken together with the fact that both speak patois as their first language and a Caribbean English Creole as their second, their utterances have many points in common, at least at a grammatical level; for, as readers of a text written in conventional spelling and not in "phonemic orthography",<sup>7</sup> we do not have access to a representation of the characters' actual pronunciation. The following eight points are some of the grammatical features of the Caribbean English Creole that characterise Christophine's (C) and Amélie's (A) utterances, as demonstrated in examples drawn from *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

1) Absence of copulative verbs before adjectives or expressions of location.<sup>8</sup>

(C) “Your aunty [is] too old and sick, and that Mason boy [is] worthless.” (Rhys 2000:73)

(A) “Your husband’ he [is] outside the door [...]” (Rhys 2000:62)

2) Absence of third person –s in present simple tense.

(C) “But she love[s] money like you love money – must be why you come together.” (Rhys 2000:96)

(A) “He write[s] you two letters and he do[es]n’t say why he is writing?” (Rhys 2000:76)

3) Use of present simple forms to refer to past or, solely in the case of Christophine, to future time.

(C) “One night [...] I hold [held] on a woman’s nose because her husband nearly chop [chopped] it off with his machete.” (Rhys 2000:97)

(A) “ ‘Was this letter given to you?’ I [Edward Rochester] asked. ‘No, master. Hilda take [took] it.’ ” (Rhys 2000:76)

(C) “He [will] give again and well satisfy. In the end he [will] come to find out what you do, how you get on without him, and if he see you fat and happy he [will] want you back.” (Rhys 2000:69)

4) In interrogative expressions, absence of subject/verb or auxiliary element inversion.

(C) “Why you don’t take that worthless good-for-nothing girl somewhere else?” (Rhys 2000:96)

(A) “Why you don’t go and see him?” (Rhys 2000:76)

5) Use of singular for plural forms of nouns.

(C) “I send the girl to clear up the mess you make with the frangipani, it bring cockroach[es] in the house.” (Rhys 2000:52)

6) Multiple negations.

(C) “I keep my money. I don’t give it to no worthless man.” (Rhys 2000:69)

(A) “ ‘What did you say?’ ‘I don’t say nothing, master.’ ” (Rhys 2000:73)

7) Absence of auxiliary “be” to form the present continuous.

(C) “Tell your husband you [are] feeling sick, you want to visit your cousin in Martinique.” (Rhys 2000:69)

8) Differences in the use of personal pronouns.

(C) “My rings. Two are valuable. Don’t show it [them] to him. Hide it [them] away. Promise me.” (Rhys 2000:73)

One should bear in mind that Amélie’s role in the novel is more secondary than Christophine’s. As a result, some of the grammatical features of Christophine’s speech do not appear in Amélie’s discourse merely because her limited participation in the dialogue does not provide a context for them to be used.

Regarding the English spoken by Daniel Cosway, it constitutes an instance of Jamaican Creole. Although his half-sister Antoinette is also from Jamaica, their different social positions manifest themselves in the differences in the languages they use. Thus on the one hand, Antoinette, a white Creole born as a legitimate daughter of the English slave-owner who is also Daniel's father, speaks Standard English. On the other, Daniel Cosway, illegitimate son of the same man with a black slave, speaks Jamaican Creole.

Jamaican Creole has drawn linguists' attention especially because of its enormous diversity. The origins of Jamaican Creole date back to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, a period in which, as a consequence of the slave-trade, speakers of African languages mainly from the west coast of Africa were taken to work as slaves on Jamaican plantations. Creole developed as a way for African slaves to communicate not only among themselves, but also with the British slaveholders (Brathwaite 2005:296-306). As the Jamaican-born American lexicographer Frederic Gomes Cassidy points out, Jamaican Creole "is by no means homogeneous" (Cassidy 2002:xi); in fact, there even exists a controversy about whether Jamaican Creole is a point on a continuum that includes Jamaican English or a separate language altogether (Baugh and Cable 2003:328-329).

The varieties of Creole spoken in Jamaica range from speakers of Standard Jamaican English to those of the most "extreme" form of Jamaican Creole. Between these two poles, the acrolect and the basilect, there are a great number of mesolects or intermediate varieties, which is the reason why linguists view Jamaican Creole as a point on a continuum. This continuum is so complex that it has "mutually unintelligible" end points, and lacks a "clear cut-off point where the creole ends and the standard begins" (Todd 1974:52). So, for instance, while in the standard variety one could hear the sentence *I didn't get the ball*, in the Creole it would be possible to hear *mi no get di ball*, *mi neva get di ball*, *mi din get di ball*, *i neva get di ball*, or *a din get di ball* (Todd 1974:9).

The grammatical features of Daniel Cosway's speech indicate that it is one of the mesolectal varieties of the Jamaican Creole that can be easily understood by the Standard-English speaker. Again, the fact that it is a mesolect of the Creole and not a radical manifestation of it goes hand in hand with Daniel Cosway's social status: despite being born and raised in a context of economic difficulties, when he is young he received some money from his father; he obtained a basic education, for he can read and write; finally, and most importantly, the local people in Dominica see him as an educated man. Consider, in this respect, the summary that Edward Rochester provides of Amélie's thoughts about Daniel Cosway:

She added thoughtfully that Daniel was a very superior man, always reading the Bible and that he lived like white people. I tried to find out what she meant by this, and she explained that he had a house like white people, with one room only for sitting. That he had two pictures on the wall of his father and his mother. (Rhys 2000:76)

Hence, the fact that he uses a mesolect of the Jamaican Creole is coherent with his being neither black, nor white; neither rich, nor poor; neither well-educated, nor illiterate.

As for the grammatical features of his speech, they tend to agree with the ones displayed by Christophine's and Amélie's: absence of copulative verbs before adjectives ("She [is] too young for you", 78), absence of third person -s in present simple tense ("Your wife know[s] Sandi since long time", 79), use of present simple forms to refer to past time ("I tell you I leave [left] Spanish Town, I don't know all that happen[ed]", 79), in interrogative

expressions, absence of subject/verb or auxiliary element inversion (“Why you don't answer”, 75), and multiple negations (“I don't have to please no woman”, 79). However, in contrast with Christophine, for instance, Daniel Cosway always includes the auxiliary “will” to mark future tense (“he will want to tell you all sorts of lies”, 79), and sometimes the grammatical features of his speech that deviate from the Standard English grammar are not systematic. This is to say that, for example, on some occasions his questions do not show the subject/verb inversion, as in the example given above, but on others, they do: “Why don't you give me an answer when I write to you the first time?” (Rhys 2000:77). Once again, the features of the language that a specific character uses indicate his or her membership of a specific social group within the population of the West Indies. In other words, each character’s speech is integral to his or her identity and so, if their language is not successfully conveyed in the target text, a central part of their characterization is left out.

## **Rendering Caribbean English Creoles into Spanish: an Analysis and a Proposal**

It thus appears necessary to preserve the hybridization of the text, a central component of postcolonial writings and, as has been pointed out, “an expression of resistance to the hegemony of the colonial language” (Bandia 2007:221). If we fail to preserve that multi-layered language, we run the risk of impoverishing the text by homogenizing its linguistic characteristics, which would defeat the main purpose of postcolonial texts: the vindication of the culture of the former colony through the use of the languages of the colonized, or a distinctive use of the colonial language which differs from the standard. Therefore, overlooking language differences in the source text means depriving the target text of its political and ideological dimension. As Maria Tymoczko has put it, “suppressing the distinctive qualities of the writer’s culture and language [...] compromises the writer’s own affiliation with his or her culture and probably the very reasons for writing” (Tymoczko 1999:29).

Indeed, the translation of a dialect or a language variety different from the standard is such a complex enterprise that some critics even believe that it is “another of the impossibilities of translation” (Rabassa 1984:24). While scholars agree on both the importance and the difficulty of finding a satisfactory and feasible solution to it, their proposals notably differ. Mayoral Asensio (1990:40) distinguishes three possible approaches to the translation of dialects.<sup>9</sup>

First, a dialect can be rendered by another one with either similar social or popular connotations, or a similar geographical area of use. This constitutes a risky strategy because whenever the implications of the dialects at stake are not taken into account, the translation may result in an artificial correlation between speech and setting, a “lack of natural background atmosphere” (Sánchez 1999:308), unintended associations with the chosen dialects (Hatim and Mason 1990:40), “problems of incongruity and misplacement” (Bonaffini 1997:280), or “disastrous effects on the plausibility of the whole TT” (Hervey and Higgins 1992:118).

Second, the dialectal forms in the source text can be highlighted by introducing in the target text lexical, phonetic and/or syntactic markers. This relates to Hatim and Mason’s conclusions when analysing the translations of Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*: from their point of view,

instead of proposing a regional variety, the translator should rather render the dialect through a simplification of the standard target tongue (Hatim and Mason 1997:97-109).

Third, there is the possibility of translating the dialect by a standard variety, obviating altogether the dialectal forms of the source. This strategy has been regarded by Hervey and Higgins (1992:117) as appropriate provided that the dialect's presence in the literary work is merely "incidental". However, they remark that whenever it plays a central role, either in terms of plot or characterization, it is necessary for the translator to indicate its presence in the target text.

As will be demonstrated in the following pages, it is this third strategy (i.e. standardization) which is used by the three translators of *Wide Sargasso Sea* into Spanish when dealing with the speech of the non-Standard English speaking characters. In general terms, Andrés Bosch and Elizabeth Power tend to translate these parts as if they were in Standard English, and therefore render them into the standard language into which they translate the rest of the novel: Standard Peninsular Spanish. Of course, this is closely related to the fact that their translations were intended to be published in Spain and for a Spanish readership. Likewise, Raquel Costa's translation, published in Cuba and designed to cover the Spanish-speaking American market, translates the Jamaican Creole into Standard Caribbean Spanish, which she also uses to render the rest of the book. In other words, each translation ends up standardizing the Creole by rendering it into the type of Standard Spanish used by its intended readership, thus concealing the existence in the source text of different language varieties.

Nevertheless, since the role of the English Caribbean Creole within *Wide Sargasso Sea* is far from "incidental", it appears necessary to make it visible in the translation. The solution that this paper proposes is to translate the Standard English in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Standard Peninsular Spanish, while rendering the fragments in Caribbean English Creole as a Caribbean variety of Spanish. Ultimately, this means admitting a parallel between the colonizing powers of England and Spain, and the differences between the languages of the colonial metropolis and the ones used by the locals of their respective colonies in the Caribbean.

Of course, it could be argued against this proposal that there are great differences between Caribbean Spanish and Jamaican Creole in terms of their origin, development, and social connotations. Indeed, Caribbean Spanish is neither a Creole, nor forms a continuum as the English Creole spoken in Jamaica does; and while Jamaican Creole is associated in the novel with low social status and lack of education, being fundamentally used in the narrative by the characters from the lower spheres of society, Caribbean Spanish is merely an indicative of the geographical origin of the speakers who use it. Their correlation in this proposed translation is exclusively grounded on the fact that both are spoken in the same geographical area, and that their history is marked by the colonization process.

Having explained this article's translation proposal, it is now appropriate to illustrate it by looking at examples drawn from the novel. The first three fragments that will be considered are utterances by Daniel Cosway, who is, as has been previously stated, one of the major Creole speaking characters (the underlinings are mine):

1) “My momma die when I was quite small and my godmother take care of me.” (Rhys 2000:60)

T1: Mi mamá murió cuando era muy chico y mi madrina me crió. (Rhys 1981:75)  
[My mum died when I was very small and my godmother brought me up.]

T2: Mi mamá se murió cuando yo era muy pequeño, y mi madrina cuidó de mí. (Rhys 1982:98)  
[My mum died when I was very little, and my godmother took care of me.]

T3: Mi madre murió cuando yo era pequeño y mi madrina se hizo cargo de mí. (Rhys 1998)  
[My mother died when I was little and my godmother took care of me.]

2) “He look at me like I was dirt and I get angry too.” (Rhys 2000:78)

T1: Me miró como si yo fuera una porquería y yo también me puse bravo. (Rhys 1981:100)  
[He looked at me as if I was dirt and I also got angry]

T2: Me miró como si fuera basura y, además, se enfadó. (Rhys 1982:126)  
[He looked at me as if I was rubbish and, moreover, he got angry]

T3: Me miró como si fuese una porquería y me enfadé yo también. (Rhys 1998:161)  
[He looked at me as if I was dirt and I got angry too.]

3) “Very old he look in the bright sunshine that morning.” (Rhys 2000:78)

T1: Lucía muy viejo bajo la luz del sol aquella mañana. (Rhys 1981:100)  
[He looked very old under the sunlight that morning.]

T2: A la luz del sol de la mañana, se le veía muy viejo. Rhys 1982:127)  
[Under the morning sunlight, he looked very old.]

T3: Se le veía muy viejo aquella mañana a la fuerte luz del sol. (Rhys 1998:161)  
[He looked very old that morning under the bright sunlight.]

In the above examples one can see how the underlined terms are the same, or almost the same, in T2 and T3, the translations used in the editions of the book in Spain, and how T1, the translation published in Cuba, puts forward an alternative to them. In the first extract, T1 translates “momma” and “small” as “mamá” and “chico”, which in Central and South America are more frequent than “madre” (T2) and “pequeño” (T2, T3). In the second example, the verb “to get angry” appears in T2 and T3 as “enfadarse” (with the curious difference that in T2 it is not Daniel Cosway who gets angry, but his father), whereas in T1 it is rendered as “ponerse bravo”, an expression that is almost exclusively heard in Spain if the speaker is from Central or South America or has learnt his or her Spanish there. Finally, in the third example, the verb “to look”, in the sense of “seem”, changes in T2 and T3 to “se le veía”, while in T1 the chosen verbal form is “lucía”, again, very rare in Standard Peninsular Spanish while highly common in certain areas of the Spanish-speaking American continent.

If we aim to establish in the translation a parallel between Standard English and Standard Peninsular Spanish, and Jamaican Creole and a Caribbean variety of Spanish, Raquel Costa’s translation (T1) seems to be, for the parts of the dialogue in non-Standard English, more appropriate than T2 and T3. Nevertheless, if in T2 and T3 Standard Peninsular Spanish was an omnipresent and homogenizing force, the same thing occurs in T1 with Caribbean Spanish. As a result, in T1 there are occasions in which Standard English speaking characters, representatives of the colonial language, sound too “Caribbean” in Spanish. Consider, in this

respect, the different translations into Spanish of the following sentences by Edward Rochester:

1) “And it will all look very different in the sun.” (Rhys 2000:39)

T1: Todo luciría diferente en el sol. (Rhys 1981:48)  
[All would look different in the sun.]

T2: Y esto tendrá un aspecto muy diferente bajo la luz del sol. (Rhys 1982:66)  
[And this will look very different under the sunlight.]

T3: Todo tendrá un aspecto muy diferente a la luz del sol. (Rhys 1998:116)  
[All will look very different in the sunlight.]

2) “Then three little boys came to stare at us. The smallest wore nothing but a religious medal round his neck and the brim of a large fisherman’s hat.” (Rhys 2000:40)

T1: Entonces tres niñitos vinieron a mirarnos. El más chiquito sólo llevaba puesto una medalla de santo alrededor del cuello y el ala de un sombrero de pescador. (Rhys 1981:48)  
[Then three little boys came to look at us. The smallest only wore a religious medal round his neck and the brim of a fisherman’s hat.]

T2: Entonces, tres muchachos de corta edad vinieron a mirarnos. El más pequeño de ellos no llevaba nada sobre su cuerpo, salvo una medalla religiosa colgada del cuello, y las alas de un gran sombrero de pescador, en la cabeza. (Rhys 1982:66)  
[Then, three boys of a short age came to look at us. The smallest wore nothing on his body but a religious medal round his neck, and the brim of a large fisherman’s hat on the head.]

T3: Luego acudieron tres niños pequeños a mirarnos. El más pequeño no llevaba puesto más que una medalla religiosa alrededor del cuello y el ala de un gran sombrero de pescador. (Rhys 1998:116)  
[Then three little boys came to look at us. The smallest wore nothing but a religious medal round his neck and the brim of a large fisherman’s hat.]

3) “I thought about the letter which should have been written to England a week ago. Dear Father...” (Rhys 2000:40)

T1: Pensé en la carta que debía haber escrito a Inglaterra la semana anterior. Querido Papá... (Rhys 1981:49)  
[I thought about the letter I should have written to England the week before. Dear Dad ...]

T2: Pensé en la carta que hubiera debido mandar a Inglaterra, hace una semana. Querido padre... (Rhys 1982:66)  
[I thought about the letter that I should have sent to England, a week ago. Dear father ...]

T3: Pensé en la carta que debía haber escrito a Inglaterra hacía una semana. Querido padre... (Rhys 1998:117)  
[I thought about the letter I should have written to England a week ago. Dear father ...]

In the first example, we find again in T1 the translation of the verb “to look” as “lucir” (“tener un aspecto” in T2 and T3). Were this sentence uttered by Christophine or Daniel Cosway, the translation would be perfect for the purpose of achieving a parallelism in terms of geographical linguistic varieties in English and Spanish, for the term is in this context far more frequent in the Caribbean than in peninsular Spain. The problem here is simply that Edward Rochester is English and represents the colonizing power. In the second example, the expressions “niñitos” and “el más chiquito” (T1) do not seem the most proper phrases to translate the words by a man like Edward Rochester: a mid-nineteenth century Englishman

with a certain social status who has just arrived in Dominica, and who is not very enthusiastic about the place or the people. In Standard Peninsular Spanish, “niñitos” and “el más chiquito” are diminutives that transmit affection, which is not precisely the feeling that Edward Rochester shows towards them. Instead, “muchachos de corta edad” (T2), “niños pequeños” (T3) and “el más pequeño” (T2, T3) appear, in this respect, more appropriately connoted to translate Rochester’s impressions. Something similar happens in the third example with the rendering of “father” into Spanish. Whereas “papá” (T1) is more common than “padre” in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, “padre” (T2, T3) conveys more precisely the idea of “father” as conceived by someone like Rochester: “padre” is a more solemn term, and not only transmits respect and deference, but also distance. Again, it seems problematic to imagine that an adult man like Rochester, living in the mid-nineteenth century and with such a difficult relationship with his father, would address him using the very colloquial and familiar word “papá”.

Further examples of words that sound too “Caribbean” in the mouths of characters from the colonial metropolis can be found in Grace Pool’s speech, the servant who, in *Jane Eyre*, is in charge of looking after Bertha Mason when the latter is locked up in the attic of Thornfield Hall. The following are but three examples:

1) “Why did you behave like that when I had promised you would be quiet and sensible? I’ll never try and do you a good turn again.” (Rhys 2000:118)

T1: ¿Por qué te comportaste así, cuando yo había prometido que estarías tranquila y serías razonable? Más nunca te haré un favor. (Rhys 1981:152)  
[Why did you behave like that, when I had promised that you would be quiet and reasonable? Never again will I do you a favour.]

T2: ¿Por qué se comportó de semejante manera, después de haber yo prometido que se comportaría con compostura y sensatez? Jamás volveré a hacerle un favor. (Rhys 1982:185)  
[Why did you behave in such a way, after I had promised that you would behave with composure and good sense? Never will I do you a favour again.]

T3: ¿Por qué se portó de esa forma cuando yo juré que estaría tranquila y sería sensata? Nunca volveré a hacerle un favor. (Rhys 1998:205)  
[Why did you behave that way when I swore that you would be quiet and sensible? Never will I do you a favour again.]

2) “This gentleman arrived suddenly and insisted on seeing you and that was all the thanks he got.” (Rhys 2000:119)

T1: Este caballero llegó sorpresivamente e insistió en verte y ésa fue su recompensa. (Rhys 1981:152)  
[This gentleman arrived by surprise and insisted on seeing you and that was his reward.]

T2: Ese caballero llegó sin previo aviso, e insistió en verla, y usted no se lo agradeció. (Rhys 1982:185)  
[That gentleman arrived without warning, and insisted on seeing you, and you did not thank him.]

T3: Este caballero llegó de repente e insistió en verla a usted, y así se lo agradeció. (Rhys 1998:206)  
[This gentleman arrived suddenly and insisted on seeing you, and you thanked him that way.]

3) “‘Nobody’s hidden your dress,’ she said. ‘It’s hanging in the press.’” (Rhys 2000:120)

T1: Nadie ha escondido tu vestido – dijo –. Está colgado en el escaparate. (Rhys 1981:153)  
[Nobody has hidden your dress – she said –. It is hung in the wardrobe.]

T2:Nadie ha escondido su vestido. Está en el armario. (Rhys 1982:187)  
[Nobody has hidden your dress. It is in the wardrobe.]

T3:–Nadie le ha escondido el vestido – dijo –. Está colgado en el armario. (Rhys 1998:207)  
[Nobody has hidden you the dress – she said –. It is hung in the wardrobe.]

The problematic point in example number one is the translation of “never” as “más nunca” (T1), when in Standard Peninsular Spanish the common expression implies an inversion of the terms (“nunca más”). Then, in the second example “sorpresivamente” sounds proper of a speaker of Spanish in Central or South America,<sup>10</sup> while “sin previo aviso” (T2) or “de repente” (T3) are widely used in Spain with the same meaning. Likewise, in the third extract, readers encounter the word “escaparate” (T1) to denote a “wardrobe”, which is a meaning proper to Cuba and Venezuela. In contrast with this, in Standard Peninsular Spanish “escaparate” refers to a shop window, and “wardrobe” is expressed by means of the term “armario” (T2, T3). If the word “escaparate”, meaning “wardrobe”, appeared in the translation of a sentence by Christophine or Daniel Cosway, it would completely fit in, and it would produce an exact amount of strangeness in the non-speakers of a Caribbean variety of Spanish. However, if our purpose is to combine different varieties of Spanish to make a distinction at a linguistic level of the geographical origins of the characters, and to preserve, in that way, the source text’s hybridity, then putting “escaparate” in the mouth of Grace Pool goes against our main goals.

## Conclusion

*Wide Sargasso Sea* was conceived as a literary work intending to challenge the view projected by *Jane Eyre* of Bertha Mason both as an individual character, as the madwoman whom Rochester marries, and as a collective one, as representative of the West Indies female creole. In order to question the monological view which Brontë’s novel puts forward, Jean Rhys decided to include in her own narrative a wide range of voices, not exclusively Bertha’s (renamed Antoinette), but also Edward Rochester’s, as well as those of a series of secondary characters with different racial, social and geographical backgrounds. As a result, the novel displays a considerable linguistic complexity which echoes the complex colonial past of the Caribbean itself. Thus, language in *Wide Sargasso Sea* becomes not only a means of characterizing the different participants in the story, but also a way of vindicating languages different from Standard English, along with the culture and mentality that go hand in hand with them. Indeed, this is a common aim of postcolonial writers who, by reflecting in their works the complex linguistic reality of the former colonies, attempt to make social and political statements. As Paul Bandia states, “given the tendency toward a dominant monological practice, polylingualism becomes an aesthetic means of resistance, contestation and subversion, a means of projecting alterity as a ‘counter-discourse’ to an imperialistic homogenizing discourse” (Bandia 2007:204).

Bearing in mind the necessity to preserve the multi-layered language in Rhys’s masterpiece, the main aim of this article has been to analyse three translations of the book into Spanish to point out the way they deal with the distinctive language complexity of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The conclusions of the analysis indicate that the variety of Spanish which each translation displays is in agreement with the one used by its intended readership. Consequently, there exists a tendency to homogenize and make uniform the linguistic complexity of the book in favour of the variety of Spanish used by each translation's potential readers. This results in what Lawrence Venuti identifies as "fluent translations that produce the illusory effect of transparency", that is, translations which adhere "to the current standard dialect while avoiding any dialect, register, or style that calls attention to words as words" (Venuti 1998:12). The proposal of this article has been, however, to establish a parallelism between, on the one hand, Standard English and Standard Peninsular Spanish as the languages of the characters from the colonizing powers; and, on the other, between Caribbean English Creoles and Caribbean Spanish to render the utterances of the non-Standard English speakers. By means of this strategy, the characteristic linguistic complexity of the source text can also be present in the target one.

Of course, such a proposal encounters the risks of any translation dealing with dialects or language varieties different from the standard, namely, that dialects tend to lack exact correlates in other tongues, for every one of them has distinctive social, historical, geographical and even political connotations. Still, this cannot become an excuse to adopt a "position of monolingual superiority" (Spivak 1993:195) and make them invisible in translations. The views set out in the present article agree, thus, with Simo K. Määttä's when he states that "while the exact sociolinguistic stratification of the source text cannot be translated, emphasizing the role of dialect in the polyphonic structure of the text might give the readers of the translation an equal opportunity to discover the ideological framework of the novel by themselves" (Määttä 2004:335-336). In other words, preserving a multi-layered language in the translation enables translators not only to maintain the play of a multiplicity of voices and perspectives in the narrative, but also to transmit the postcolonial author's challenging ideology towards a monological and homogenizing discourse.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, postcolonial studies in general have been defined as the “philosophy that interrogates both the past history and ongoing legacies of European colonialism in order to undo them” (Schwarz 2000:4).

<sup>2</sup> In this particular case, the notion of “white Creole” refers to a “white, native West Indian”, “one who dates her family to the slaveholding European plantocracy of the Caribbean” (Raikin 1996:97).

<sup>3</sup> Raquel Costa’s translation was published in La Habana in 1981 by Casa de las Américas. Andrés Bosch’s translation was published in 1976 by Noguer Ediciones; in 1982 by Bruguera (which is the one used in this paper); in 1990 and 1998 by Anagrama; and in 2004 by Círculo de Lectores. Elizabeth Power’s translation was published in 1998 by Ediciones Cátedra, in an edition by M<sup>a</sup> José Coperías. From now on, Raquel Costa’s translation will be referred as T1, Bosch’s as T2, and Power’s as T3.

<sup>4</sup> Even though it might be surprising that two Spanish publishing houses edited *Wide Sargasso Sea* only sixteen years apart, and using two different translations, this phenomenon is far from unusual. Many publishing houses when editing a book prefer to retranslate it, rather than make use of a previous translation commissioned by another publishing house which may have a dissimilar translation policy. That way, the publishing house or the editor of the new edition can rely on translators they know and trust. In addition to this, it should be also clarified that there are a number of relevant differences between the two Spanish editions of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In the one published by Bruguera in 1982, Andrés Bosch translated the text and wrote some footnotes to it. Nevertheless, the translation lacks an introduction or a prologue. In contrast, M<sup>a</sup> José Coperías’s edition published by Cátedra in 1998 includes a sixty-eight-page long introduction, a bibliography of studies on Jean Rhys and Caribbean fiction, more footnotes than Bruguera’s edition, and a note preceding the text signed by both the editor, M<sup>a</sup> José Coperías, and the translator, Elizabeth Power, in which they make explicit the line of translation their edition favours.

<sup>5</sup> In this work, the term “patois” will be taken to refer to the French-lexicon Creole spoken in islands such as St Lucia and Dominica. Note, however, that “Jamaicans tend to use ‘Patois’ to mean English-lexicon (Jamaican) Creole, whereas people from the Eastern Caribbean often associate it with French Creole” (Mühleisen 2002:176).

<sup>6</sup> The translations of the fragments in Spanish back into English are mine.

<sup>7</sup> How to represent the Creole in the written form has been a great source of debate: while some authors defend the standard and conventional English spelling, others are more inclined to reflect the phonetic characteristics. For more on this controversial issue, see Mühleisen (2002:183-221).

<sup>8</sup> It has been observed that the presence or absence of the copula is determined, to a considerable extent, by the sort of construction that follows it: noun phrase, adjective phrase, or expressions of location (Holm 1991:238-240). Rickford (1999) also discusses copula patterns in English-based Creoles, paying special attention to Jamaican Creole.

<sup>9</sup> Note, however, that this article will not discuss the translation and adaptation of dialects in plays, which is a much more specific subject. For more on this issue see Vreck (1990), who recommends that the translator/adaptor and director of the play should work together, and who believes in the advantages drawn from limiting the instances of dialect in plays to avoid problems of understanding the performance on the part of the audience.

<sup>10</sup> The term “sorpresivamente” is not registered by the *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*. However, that of “sorpresivo-va” does appear as a word used to refer to something sudden and unexpected. “Sorpresivamente” is, thus, the adverb created from the adjective “sorpresivo”.