

‘Gewoon een Land Zijn’

Psycho-Postcolonial Perspectives on
National Identity and Belonging in Guyana and Suriname:
A Comparative Reading of Anglophone and
Dutch Caribbean Literature

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Abstract

Taking a new theoretical standpoint, this study combined postcolonial and psychological perspectives on national identity. The analyses focused on literary representations of discourses of national identity in Guyanese and Surinamese short stories, essays, and poems written between 1945 and 1985. The texts were analysed with critical discourse analysis and narratological methods. The study addressed several shortcomings of previous postcolonial research on national identity in the Caribbean. Notably, primordialist definitions of identity have been deemed unsuitable for the analysis and description of identity in the Caribbean. In these texts, however, identity was often construed as if identity was, in fact, essential or as if there was a natural connection between national soil and the identity of the people occupying the land. Although nativism and essentialism were appropriated to fit the socio-historical context of the Caribbean, identity constructions often engaged with nativism and essentialism as modes of construing. Together with the ethnocentric, chauvinistic politics of the time, these essentialist, nativist notions of identity created a national discourse which focused on the social and psychic realities of the Afro-Caribbean population marginalising the Indo-Caribbean population. Cognitive theories, such as the theory of personal constructs, were used to scrutinise the specific cognitive mechanisms related to these modes of construing. In the context of the ongoing ethno-political tensions, the discursive representations of identity were associated with social identity theory and in-group projection. Other recurring patterns in these narratives seemed to fulfil functions related to the basic psychological needs of affiliation, competence, and autonomy, as well as to needs related to self-comprehension, self-esteem, and self-enhancement. In turn, in many of the texts, hybrid characters grappled with the psychologically unsettling repercussions of their hybridity. In sum, the combination of psychological and postcolonial theories offered a new analytical perspective which provided new insights in discourses of national identity in Caribbean contexts and the psychological functions and mechanisms that these narratives may serve.

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Introduction

Background and Novelty of This Study

1. Why You May Want to Read This Book

What is identity? Most disciplines that concern themselves with this question give a similar answer: a construct. From a cultural, political, historical and psychological perspective, identity is a construct. But why and how are identities constructed?

Depending on the discipline, the answers to these questions may differ. For instance, from a political perspective, identity may be seen as strategic essentialism, a tool to push through a political agenda. From a cultural perspective, identity may be perceived as narration that weaves loose ends of cultural discontinuity, contradictions, and complexity into a smooth, meaningful fabric of cultural continuity. From a psychological perspective, certain kinds of identity can be understood as satisfying specific needs that ensure psychic wellbeing. Thus, the questions of why and how identity is constructed require more lengthy answers, particularly when looking at expressions of identity where political goals, societal issues, and psychological aspects are inextricably entwined. This book looks at two such cases: constructs of national identity in literature from both Guyana and Suriname shortly before and after their independence. The novelty of this study is its new multidisciplinary approach that combines the culturally- and politically-oriented perspectives of postcolonial studies with contemporary psychological theories on identity in an integrative way.

Accordingly, readers who are interested in why and how identity is constructed in specific contexts will find questions answered in this book. More specifically, they will learn about how constructs of ethnicity are used to support notions of national identity in order to serve political agendas as well as to satisfy specific psychological mechanisms and needs. In this sense, this book is also taking into account that, despite being constructs, identity, nationality, and ethnicity are often constructed and perceived as if they referred to something that is obviously, naturally there and that these concepts influence and shape people's physical, social, and psychic reality in a powerful way. Thus, this book addresses several readerships: readers who are interested in nationalism and national identity, postcolonial scholars, literary scholars and experts in Caribbean literature, psychologists who are curious how their perspectives can be applied in other fields, and theory-oriented students who enjoy interdisciplinary theoretical approaches on identity.

Identity, the nation, and ethnicity are powerful narrations. The painful reality of these constructs is exemplified in the abundant atrocities committed based on national and ethnic identity. This book sheds light on these concepts, contributing to understanding how they potentially shape our own realities.

2. *Background: Nationalism and Caribbean Literature*

This book is a discussion of national identity in Caribbean literature – *another one*, you may think. However, I think that the ongoing popularity of Caribbean nationalism as an object of research is justified, particularly from the perspective of literary and identity research. From a literary perspective, nationalism is interesting in relation to three main aspects. Firstly, nationalism significantly contributed to the formation of a Caribbean literary culture (Rosenberg 2007). As Leah Reade Rosenberg has shown in detail, nationalist movements fostered cultural productions and media in the Caribbean – preferably to disseminate their nationalist cultural-political visions (Rosenberg 2007, 1). Hence, in the wake of the “national awakening” in the 1930s and 1940s, Caribbean literary culture saw the foundation of many newspapers, magazines, Writers’ Associations and Cultural Clubs (Rosenberg 2007). Secondly, ‘the nation’ *is* a narration (Anderson

[1983] 2006; Bhabha 1990). The nation is based on a narrative structure that engenders historical coherence, provides meaning, and gives direction. Thirdly, nationalism became an important topic within literature. Writers all over the Caribbean committed themselves to giving voice to a new ‘authentic’ national Caribbean consciousness. These writers deemed themselves part of a revolution, and they understood their literary work “as the soul of the nation or of the people” (Rosenberg 2007, 1). Hence, in general, nationalism is not only a political, but also a cultural project. It defines common cultural, aesthetic, social and moral values.

Moreover, national discourses in the Caribbean are interesting from a theoretical perspective. They often incorporate and modify several (conflicting) epistemological perspectives on nationality and identity. Thus, these discourses reflect both essentialist or constructivist notions of identity – and their discontent. Regardless of the lack of cultural, ethnic, and historical homogeneity in the Caribbean, foundational nationalist concepts, such as nativism and ethnicity were not completely discarded, but often appropriated and re-invented to fit specific goals and socio-historical circumstances. As Stuart Murray has pointed out, “postcoloniality has offered a powerful re-imagining of the nation. The different versions of the national produced in postcolonial contexts disrupt the seeming stability of the inherited European concept” (Murray 1997, 12). Hence, post-colonial nationalisms often reveal the constructedness of national identity as such. Correspondingly, analysing Caribbean nationalisms offers new perspectives on nationalism and its functions.

The importance and role of nationalism for Caribbean literature, however, is nothing new, and several literary studies and theoretical criticism have been committed to this topic (e.g. Forbes 2005; Girvan 2001; Khan 2004; Knight 2011; Rosenberg 2007). Yet, in recent decades, Caribbean nationalism has been criticised for being a “false consciousness” unable to represent the social and psychic reality of people living in the Caribbean (Chrisman 1997, 56). The criticism assailed national identity for standing in the tradition “of a nineteenth-century tradition of cultural nationalism” that understood nationality in primordialist terms (Rosenberg 2007, 1). Next to being discriminating and chauvinistic, the primordialist nation has been exposed as a narrative, a myth

based on active acts of identity construction concealing the gaps and ambiguities within the national (Anderson [1983] 2006; Bhabha 1990).

However, the tendencies to express identity in nationalist terms should not be simply dismissed as a false consciousness. Regardless of what a nation is and the nature of the (voluntary or involuntary) ties that bind people to a nation, the national narrative is real in the sense that it affects the social and psychic reality of those who claim it.

Furthermore, nationalism is also, if not mostly, an identity project in the psychological sense. Nationalist movements induced a specific way of thinking, interpreting, and feeling about oneself, others, and one's place – a specific kind of national consciousness. From a psychological perspective, identity is not only a (cognitive) construct, but also related to several psychological functions and mechanisms (Kelly 1955; Maass et al. 1989). Thus, there is more to national identity than its constructedness. A person has several personal and social identities which are part of this person's self-concept (Baumeister 1999; 1997a; 1997b). Importantly, the self-concept and identity serve the fulfilment of psychological needs, such as self-esteem needs and the need for affiliation, autonomy, and competence (Baumeister 1997a; Brewer 1991; Fein et al. 2003; Ryan and Deci 2002; Turner and Reynolds 2012). Yet, identity (and its precursor, categorisation) is also related to intergroup conflict (Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000; Tajfel and Turner 1986; 2010). Identifying with specific social, ethnic, or national groups is related to stereotypical thinking, ethnocentrism, chauvinism and discrimination (Perreault and Bourhis 1999). These negative effects can be exacerbated by certain situational factors, such as the competition for power or resources (Duckitt 1994; Sherif 1966; Taylor and Moghaddam 1994). Hence, although identity is also relevant in political and theoretical terms, the psychological mechanisms and functions of identity can have an influence on how people think (or write) about themselves and others (Brewer and Roccas 2001; Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000; Turner and Reynolds 2012) – particularly in contexts where group categories and social competition are salient (Connor 1994; Horowitz 1985; Sherif 1966). Considering the violent history of colonisation in the Caribbean and its discriminatory repercussions, psychological functions of

identity, particularly esteem needs, may have played a salient role in Caribbean nationalisms.

Despite the obvious psychological dimension of national identity, Caribbean nationalisms have rarely been analysed from a psychological perspective in postcolonial studies. Hence, in comparison to previous research, this study will not only perceive national identity as a narrative construct, but as a *psychosocial* phenomenon that is construed in relation to social discourses, while adhering to specific cognitive principles and serving specific psychological functions (Brewer 1991; Turner and Reynolds 2012). This endeavour will be one of the goals of this study – and thus, its contribution to introducing a new perspective on into the debate on nationalism in the Caribbean. However, there is more novelty to expect from this study.

3. *The Novelty of the Study*

So, why another study on nationalism in the Caribbean? There are four domains in which this study seeks to contribute with a new perspective: a theoretical, a regional, an ethnic one and one related to genre.

First of all, as elaborated above, the theoretical perspective is new. Integrating psychological theory into the postcolonial analytical toolkit may provide new results that could help to create a more complex and interdisciplinary understanding of discourses on identity in the Caribbean.

Secondly, with its focus on Suriname and Guyana this study addresses another shortcoming in postcolonial studies. So far, there is no study that compares Surinamese and Guyanese literature. Although Suriname and Guyana are located on the South American mainland, they are considered as Caribbean in terms of their culture (Girvan 2001). In the face of the common colonial history they share with the rest of the Caribbean, this inclusion is certainly justifiable. In addition, Suriname and Guyana's discourses on identity were similar to those led in other Caribbean states. Yet, Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean have been traditionally neglected in the Anglophone dominated postcolonial studies (Smith 2011, 9). Although there are many anthologies and literary analyses that focus on the English-speaking Caribbean, there is hardly any research that compares

literature from the English and Dutch Caribbean (Evans 2011; Smith 2011). Thus, considering that Suriname has been neglected in postcolonial studies or simply seen as an extension of a general Caribbean discourse, a study that specifically compares Suriname with an English-speaking Caribbean country is already something new.

Thirdly, another novel aspect of this study is its focus on the ethnic specificities in Suriname and Guyana. Guyana and Suriname have a rather special position in relation to nationalist notions of Caribbean identity. In most other Caribbean countries the majority of the people are of African descent. Guyana and Suriname, however, have an Indo-Caribbean majority, and ethnicity played a salient role in their national discourses. In many Caribbean countries, the most prominent aspect of Caribbean nationalism was its focus on cultural and political anti-colonial resistance.¹ In Guyana and Suriname, however, the struggle for independence and the associated national discourses were dominated by ethnocentrism and a competition for ethnic cultural hegemony. Therefore, the political and ethnic situations in Guyana and Suriname are not so much comparable to discourses of identity in e.g. Jamaica or Martinique. In terms of culture and national discourses, the most similar Caribbean society is probably Trinidad (Khan 2004; 2007); however, the specifics of Suriname's Dutch colonial history and Guyana's political climate call for an analysis of national identity that takes their specific location and circumstances into account. Furthermore, considering that it has only been recently acknowledged that there are far more Indo-Caribbean writers than the famous Naipaul (e.g. Birbalsingh 2004; Bragard 2008; Searwar, Benjamin, and McDonald 1998), this study also seeks to contribute to a full recognition of Indo-Caribbean writing in Guyana and Suriname.

The fourth novelty is related to genre. This study has a special focus on short stories. As a literary form, the short story contributed significantly to the development of an independent Caribbean literary tradition. Due to its – well – shortness, the short story could easily be printed, published, and distributed in small numbers; an asset when resources are scarce and audiences small (Ramraj

1 Of course, this does not imply that they were not ethnocentric and chauvinistic against ethnic minorities. The point is that there is a clear African cultural majority in many Caribbean countries.

2001, 199; van Kempen 2001b, 543). Despite its role for the development of a literary culture in the Caribbean, the short story has been widely neglected in literary analysis – probably due to its reputation as a ‘beginners’ genre’ for both readers and writers (Benjamin 1984; Evans 2011; Seymour 1980; Smith 2011). Therefore, although this study also includes poetry and essays, a strong focus was set on the analysis of short stories.

In sum, this study will try to contribute to gaining a more complex and encompassing understanding of Caribbean nationalism and discourses of identity in the Caribbean.

4. *Research Questions*

While a special focus was set on the aspects mentioned above, this study also tries to tie in with previous research. As the general questions on nationalism and national identity remain largely the same (Whose nation is it? What is a nation? Who is written into or out of the national narrative?), the research questions of former studies² have been taken into account. Correspondingly, this study will try to answer the following questions for both Suriname and Guyana:

- Whose nation(alism) is it – who is included, who is excluded?
- What kinds of nations are imagined or re-imagined?
- Which notions of identity are conveyed in the literatures – are there different epistemologies informing the versions of identity?
- Is the process of creolisation itself a subject in literature?
- Are ethnic tensions represented in these literatures – how are they explored?
- Are the social and psychic realities of different ethnic groups equally represented in the literature – are there egalitarian or ethnocentric views on ethnic diversity?
- Are the narratives of identity related to psychological functions and cognitive mechanisms?

² Khan 2004, Lawson Welsh 2001, Rosenberg 2007.

5. *Goals*

This study has several goals. One aim of this study is to counter the shortcomings in relation to an adequate representation of short stories in postcolonial literary analyses. Furthermore, to address the former marginalisation of Indo-Caribbean texts, this study also aims to provide a more balanced representation of Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean texts. Yet, the main goal is to gain a better understanding of the displaced, reproduced, and re-invented narratives of national identity in Caribbean literatures. By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, the analysis may also help to understand the power of the national narrative in postcolonial settings.

Invoking national affiliations still mobilises people until today: “Der Staat will die Menschen ordnen und disziplinieren. Die Nation dagegen setzt sie in Aufregung und bringt sie in Bewegung” (Münkler 2014, 19) – the state is a power structure, a means to organise and discipline citizens; the nation, however, sets people in motion. The Scottish independence referendum on September 18, 2014 is only one of many examples for persisting popularity of nationalist ideologies. Regardless of its normative, political, and social aspects – its psychological dimension is what makes nationalism such a powerful construct. The national narrative interacts with a person’s self-concept through identification – hence, the norms and values inscribed into the nation become a part of how people understand themselves (Connor 1994; Fein et al. 2003). The identification induces vicarious experiences: the pride that is felt in the face of national ‘greatness’ and achievements is, in fact, a vicarious emotion; assaults on national values are experienced as a vicarious affront against one’s social group or even against the self (Lickel et al. 2006). Accordingly, the motivating effect of the nation is a result of identification and the associated vicarious emotions (Baumeister 1999; Brewer 1991). Therefore, a major goal of this study is to better understand the reciprocal relationship between the national discourse and the psychological functions that may be inscribed in its structure. Hence, analysing the displaced, reproduced, and re-invented narratives of national identity in Caribbean literatures may also help to set the history and different modes of European nationalism in

perspective. It may shed further light on the constructedness of nationality as such, and it may give impulses for further research and attempts to re-think nationalism.

Furthermore, hopefully, the interdisciplinary approach will generate a new and more encompassing knowledge on national identity. Personally, I think that it may be time to overcome singular disciplinary research in the humanities and embrace the complexity of research objects in the humanities and social sciences from an interdisciplinary standpoint – and I hope that the interdisciplinary approach of this study helps to provide new perspectives on an old topic.

6. *Structure of the Study*

The study is organised in five parts. Part one offers a detailed introduction to the theoretical foundation of the analysis. The philosophical underpinnings of identity, postcolonial theories, nationalism and psychological theories are explored. At the end, the interdisciplinary theoretical perspective of the study is stated. Furthermore, methodological concerns are discussed towards the end of this part.

Part two places the object of research (Guyanese and Surinamese literature) in the contexts of a common literary tradition in the Caribbean. Furthermore, in this part offers a short overview of the common historical background shared between Suriname and Guyana.

Part three is a case study on (national) identity in Suriname. After an introduction to the historical background, a selection of literary texts is analysed. Focusing on texts written by members of the influential *Moetete* group, the case study seeks to provide a representative overview of the nationalist discourse in Suriname – and its internal discontent. The analysis includes literature by Afro-Surinamese (*Creole*) writers, such as Thea Doelwijt, Leo Ferrier, and Josef Slagveer, as well as Indo-Surinamese (*Hindustani*) writers, such as Bhāi, Jit Narain, and Shrinivāsi.

Part four is a case study on (national) identity in Guyana. Again, after an introduction to the historical background of Guyana, representative literary texts are analysed in relation to the dominant national discourses. Acknowledging the influential role of the editor, cultural agent, and writer Arthur Seymour, his texts frequently reappear in different sections of this case study. In addition, the

analysis includes literature by other prominent Afro-Guyanese writers, such as Jan Carew, Martin Carter, and Wilson Harris as well as influential Indo-Guyanese writers, such as Mahadai Das, Rooplall Monar, and Sheik Sadeek.

Part five is a comparative conclusion of both case studies. The focus of the comparison is set on answering the research questions which were stated earlier. In the end, an evaluation of the project will be provided.

Part I:

Theory and Methods

Chapter 1

Identity and Colonialism

From the 16th century onwards, numerous countries, cultures, and societies worldwide have been shaped by colonialism. The rise of European empires and their overseas expansions did not only establish a socio-political structure of domination and exploitation, it also entailed the dispersal of European languages, mindsets, and ideologies. Colonialism was not only an economic enterprise to expand European wealth and territory; colonialism was also an ideological venture that disseminated European notions of culture and personhood around the globe. Hence, in some respects, colonialism was a project of *European identity* or *Europeanness*¹ which sanctioned specific versions of self-hood, self-worth, and humanness while deprecating others. *Postcolonialism*, accordingly, needs to engage with identity – and its discontents. Therefore, before dealing with issues of identity in the Caribbean, it is important to understand identity, its use and philosophical underpinnings.

1. *Identity*

Etymologically, the term *identity* derives from the Latin word *idem* which means ‘the same’ (Gleason 1983, 911). Accordingly, identity designates sameness. Identity has become a salient trope in how people speak about themselves and

1 Europeanness, as I use it here, should not be understood in terms of the ‘Europeanness’ promoted today by the European Union. It should be understood in the sense of an identity project that involved values and norms including notions of race, class, and gender (Allen 1976). I wanted to emphasise the link between identity, ‘Whiteness’, and European philosophical traditions; therefore, I decided to use the term Europeanness.

others. The term identity is often used to denote a person's individuality and authenticity. In this respect, identity is a reference to the constancy of a person's *self* (as in *self-consciousness* and *self-worth*), and it marks the continuous existence of the same self over time (e.g. Erikson 1956, 57; Gleason 1983, 911).

Interestingly, the usage of the term identity as a reference to people's inner thoughts and feelings is relatively new. It first appeared in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and in David Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739). In both, identity refers to the *experience* of continuity and personal sameness (Gleason 1983, 911). However, until the 20th century, identity was rarely used as an analytical concept; in fact, it was rarely used at all. It took until the 1950s and the work of psychologist Erik Erikson (e.g. Erikson 1956) for the term to enter the academic field as well as (Western) everyday language and encyclopaedias (Gleason 1983, 911). Today, the term identity is ubiquitous, and it is used as an analytical concept in the social sciences and the humanities; however, the term is elusive, and it may refer to different things.

Contemporary psychology considers identity as part of a person's *self-concept*, a cognitive structure that has various regulative cognitive and emotional functions. Within this structure, identity expresses individuality; it refers to specific features or characteristics that a person takes pride in or that are critical for a person's self-understanding and self-definition (Baumeister 1997a; 1997 b; 1999; Ryan and Deci 2002). In sociology, social-psychology, and political science, identity denotes the active commitment to specific social values, norms, and rules (e.g. Döring 2008; Hogg and Turner 1987; Kellner 1995; Khan 2007). Here, identity can refer to both a group and / or an individual. In that sense, identity is both: an expression of individuality and group affiliation *and* a psychological and social – psychosocial – construct (e.g. Erikson 1956; Hogg and Williams 2000). In the humanities, (post)structuralism has focused on unveiling the self-sufficiency of identity. It is seen as a narrative construct, a myth that is based on the normative structure of binary oppositions that define meaning (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Bongie 1998; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Derrida [1967] 1983; Iser 1997; Kellner 1995). Hence, all these disciplines understand identity as a construct that is open to change. Interestingly, however, identities are often perceived as inherent and unchangeable by the person or group who claim them – as if their

identity was naturally, obviously there. This may be related to the Western understanding of personhood and its philosophical underpinnings – these begin far earlier.

2. *Philosophical Background*

The Western notion of person- and self-hood is rooted in ancient Greek philosophy. The influential philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) maintained that having *anima* or ‘soul’ distinguishes living from inanimate bodies. The soul, he believed, was the actual *form* of living things, or the innate quality which made living things alive. Furthermore, he theorised that there are different types of souls: plants possess vegetative souls, animals possess sensitive souls, and humans possess rational souls. These different souls were ordered hierarchically according to their complexity. Rational souls, as the most complex form of souls, were positioned at top of the hierarchy (Fancher and Rutherford 2012, 7, 18). Hence, the Western notion that humans possess a unique, rational, innate soul is rooted in Aristotelian philosophy.

This concept was further elaborated by René Descartes (1596 – 1650) – one of the most influential philosophers of mind. Inspired by Aristotle and the scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages as well as by his methodological scepticism, Descartes developed a philosophy which accepted the thinking, conscious self as the only truth of which he could be certain (Descartes [1637] 1960, 24). His rationalist assertion ‘*je pense donc je suis*’, “*I think therefore I am*” (Descartes [1637] 1960, 24) was to become one of the major positions towards fathoming personhood and human experience. Similarly to Aristotle, he considered the rational soul as an innate *essence*, and as such, the possession of a soul implied a person’s sameness or identity (Fancher and Rutherford 2012, 7, 18). Furthermore, in contrast to Aristotle, Descartes believed that the soul is “entirely distinct from the body” and that it perseveres as the same entity even if the material body ceases to exist (Descartes [1637] 1960, 25). However, this would only be true for human souls, whereas animals and plants did not possess souls that outlasted the physical body (Fancher and Rutherford 2012, 19f). Accordingly, in Cartesian philosophy, persisting sameness (identity) was associated with

humanness, intellect, and essentialism. Sameness of the mind / soul² is deemed an enduring, inalienable quality of a person that expresses itself through rational faculties.

However, as mentioned earlier, Descartes did not use the term identity to refer to the inalienable sameness of a person's self – he used the term 'soul'. The empiricists Locke and Hume introduced the term 'identity' for the *experience* of continuity and personal sameness – because they fundamentally doubted the self-sufficient inalienable sameness of the Cartesian human self (Gleason 1983, 911). Hence, in their sense, identity is an experience, not an essence. Similarly, Erikson sees identity as the end product of a psychological process (not an essence) during adolescence determining which values to take and which goals to pursue (Erikson 1956). Nevertheless, in the colloquial sense, identity is still associated with inalienable sameness – people perceive themselves as if they were and remained naturally, obviously the same. Thus, the Cartesian legacy in the understanding of self and other has not been eradicated.

3. *Identity, Colonialism, and Nationalism*

In the context of colonialism, the Aristotelian-Cartesian notion of a person's inherent, inalienable sameness also presented a conceptual structure on the basis of which the discriminative system of colonial domination was established. Europeanness, i.e. European norms and values, was understood as a quality of Europeans, and their ways of being and living was perceived as self-sufficient, natural, and inalienable – and thus, unobtainable to non-Europeans. Hence, from our perspective today, 'identity' as an analytical concept, can be used to understand the ideology of colonialism because it denotes of the alleged self-sufficiency and sameness of colonial values. In this respect, colonialism can be seen as project of identity, although the term itself was not used to refer to European values and notions of personhood in colonial times.

Furthermore, identity is a construct – and a critical perspective on colonialism reveals its constructedness. From a (post)structuralist perspective, identity denotes sameness, and sameness implies the existence of difference.

2 What would be called identity today.

Sameness derives its meaning from being distinguished from what it is not (e.g. Lévi-Strauss [1964] 1969; Saussure [1916] 2001). Without its opposite, namely difference, sameness would be meaningless. Hence, as socio-linguistic constructs, European norms, values, and self-hood were differentiated from what they should not include – constitutive outsides. This dichotomous structure of self-/ otherness kept colonial power hierarchies, norms, and values in place. The borderlines of colonial notions of identity were elaborately defined by ideologically-charged binary oppositions which favoured European notions of humanness and ways of thinking (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Said [1978] 1979).

Postcolonial studies have committed themselves to reveal the mechanisms of this dichotomous structure. For example, in his seminal work, *Orientalism* ([1978] 1979), Edward Said revealed how identitarian ideologies were exercised in colonial societies and discourses. He showed how European colonialism established an intricate web of “political[...], sociological[...], militar[y], ideological[...], scientific[...], and imaginative[...]

associations and definitions that determined not only the colonisers’ own identity but also the identity of the colonial other (Said [1978] 1979, 4). The colonial power structures were based on the allegedly mutual exclusiveness between the coloniser’s and the colonised’s identity. In comparison to the colonisers, the colonised were designated as morally, culturally, physically inferior – regardless of their actual qualities and specificities of their cultures. The colonised functioned as a constitutive outside – the background against which a superior European identity could be carved out (Bhabha 1994, 54f). These discursive, economic, political and military strategies by which the colonisers set themselves apart from the colonised were exercised to produce a “gain[...] in strength and identity” for European culture (Said [1978] 1979, 4). Accordingly, identity was not only a matter of self-perception or self-presentation: European discursive strategies of representing self and other also *assigned* identities and praised certain kinds of identity while disapproving of others. As such, these strategies did not only present an effective structural means to monopolise and withhold access to power, they also had psychological ramifications affecting people’s sense of worthiness.

3.1 *Colonial Discursive Strategies*

Next to legal decrees defining the rights of slave and master, such as the *Code Noir*³ (Stovall 2006, 205), general discursive, political, and scientific developments in the history of European philosophy contributed to reinforce identitarian structures that maintained European superiority and helped to keep colonial hierarchies in place. Furthermore, discursive means also served to reconcile contradicting or incommensurable European values and beliefs. The ongoing European involvement in the slave trade and the exploitive plantation system, for example, posed a particular challenge to the morals and beliefs of the enlightened Europeans. To defend slavery and to be able to retain the economic benefits that came along with this atrocious practice, several discursive strategies circulated within European nations over the centuries. Many of these strategies had in common that they functioned through de-individualisation and de-humanisation. Social psychologist Herbert Kelman argues that oppression, exploitation, and other atrocities against humanity are made possible by “depriv[ing] fellow human beings of their identity and community” (Kelman 1973, 49). Hence, colonisation was also a project that *denied* identities of other cultures and people.

Slavery was a crucial element of European colonialism, and it needed to be justified in the face of the humanist ideals of the enlightened Europeans. In the earlier periods, the right for Colonisation and slavery was justified based on a specific interpretation of natural law and the idea of a natural supremacy of Europeans over all other ethnicities. Although this notion persisted as a general consensus, slavery was re-interpreted as unnatural, and therefore, later justifications also recited biblical mythology. In the 17th century, the *Ham-ideology* offered a Biblical justification for both the enslavement of Africans and Europe’s cultural and economic hegemony.⁴ According to Christian mythology, Noah cursed his youngest son, Ham, who ridiculed Noah for having exposed himself while drunk (Genesis 9, 18-29, cited in Paasman 2001, 482). His other

3 The *Code Noir* was written by Jean-Baptiste Colbert and passed by King Louis XIV in 1685, and its 60 articles defined among other things ownership, the rights of slaves and free Blacks, the eviction of Jews from French colonies, compulsory Catholicism (Stovall 2006).

4 The Ham-ideology was particularly popular and was widely spread, particularly among Dutch protestant theologians (Paasman 2006, 482).

sons, Sem and Japheth, were rewarded with blessings for helping Noah. In colonialism, West-Africans⁵ were considered as the offspring of Ham, and as such, they were deemed inherently evil. Accordingly, it was not only justifiable to enslave but also to castigate Africans to keep their alleged malignity at bay to save their vicious souls. In contrast, as the ostensible descendants of Japheth, Europeans were believed to be destined for world hegemony, and thus, to have the right to rule over other parts and peoples of the world. Accordingly, this interpretation of the Ham mythology did not only offer a vindication for slavery, it also justified the European colonial enterprise in general (Paasman 2001, 482).

In the late 18th century, legal and moral arguments were tailored in compliance with the logic of the Ham-ideology. A common pro-slavery apologetics involved depicting West-Africans as “vicious and remorseless sinners who demonstrate the extent of their duplicitousness by selling each other into the most onerous type of slavery” (Paasman 2001, 481). In this view, slavery was justifiable because West-Africans were “prisoners of war, [...] paupers and criminals” whose enslavement was more of a legal disciplinary measure and a humane alternative to the death penalty (Paasman 2001, 482). Those or similar arguments were even advocated by Europeans who would generally reject the practice of slavery due to its violation of human and natural rights – mainly for economic reasons.⁶ Accordingly, these discursive strategies helped to bridge the gap between the humanist ideals of the 17th, 18th, and 19th century on the one hand and the economic benefits of slavery on the other: Europeans were able to retain their positive, humanist self-view, while still engaging in slavery.

Slavery apologetics were not only based on twisted religious or legal arguments but also found in the emerging natural and social sciences. The late 18th century witnessed a growing popularity of evolutionary theories, a development from which, among other works, Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) originated. Evolutionary theories were used as explanations for all kinds of biological and social phenomena, including perceived racial and cultural

5 Most European nations purchased the slaves at the West African coast of Guinea before shipping them over to their American colonies (Estimates Database 2009c; see Table 3 in appendix 1 at page 518; Paasman 2006, 481).

6 Interestingly, the slave trade peaked in the fifty years before the Slave Trade Act in 1807; hence, the continuous moral considerations had little impact on the amount of slaves that were brought to the colonies (Estimates Database 2009a; see Table 1 at page 517).

hierarchies. Social-evolutionary theories, such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's (1744-1829) principles of the genetic inheritance of acquired characteristics, allowed for a seamless integration of moral and cultural values into biological principles of genetic inheritance (Dassen and Kemperink 2005, x-xii). According to *Social Darwinism*, as advocated by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), social, ethnic, and racial hierarchies were deemed a natural product of socio-biological evolution (Fancher and Rutherford 2012, 259-61). Of course, Europeans held the top positions in all these hierarchies (Bhabha 1994, 54; Stoler 2002, 5-7). Supported by biological, scientific 'facts', Europeans and their culture were again regarded as inalienably, 'naturally' superior to all other cultures. Moreover, with pedagogical and disciplinary tendencies arising in enlightened Europe in the 19th century, colonialism was conceptually transformed into a moral obligation, *The White Man's Burden* (Kipling 1899) to shed light into colonial darkness. Hence, the 'natural' supremacy of Europeans was used as an ideological justification for colonialism; exploitation, slavery, and oppression were masked as civilising sanctions of the morally superior.

The perceived 'naturalness' of racial hierarchies led to the general assumption that certain groups were less evolved – a denotation that can be regarded as synonymous to 'less human'. In the 19th century, the translatability of social phenomena into biological terms also helped to keep the atrocities of the slave trade, the plantation system, and colonial exploitation morally acceptable. Perceived as less evolved, criminals, or both, the (West-)Africans who were traded and purchased as slaves by European colonisers were not even considered fully human (Fernández Retamar [1974] 2005, 69; Kelman 1973, 55). The colonisers could retain their self-perception as being morally superior by claiming that moral concerns did not apply to slaves because they were not 'human' – and morality only concerned human beings (Kelman 1973, 55). Even after the abolition of slavery, most of the colonised were deemed less morally and culturally evolved, and thus, in need of European custody. Hence, falling into line with the apologetics of the Ham-ideology, socio-evolutionary perspectives helped to reconcile the legitimacy of the practices of colonisation with the enlightened humanist ideals of the time. The 'natural' inferiority of non-Europeans was used

to mask exploitation as charitableness and to present the slave trade and indentured labour as a morally neutral, economic endeavour.⁷

3.2 *Colonialism and Nationalism*

Yet another discursive strategy directly related to the development of a political notion of identity which emerged with the advent of European nationalism which prospered with the proceeding secularisation and rationalisation of the Enlightenment era (Bhabha 1990, 1). Therefore, beginning in the late 18th century and gaining more ground in the 19th century in the wake of the French and American revolutions, *the nation* became one of the most prominent tropes for identity in Europe. Based on the primordialist idea that the nation is a logical consequence of the ‘natural’ division of humankind into ethnic groups that settled and built their cultures on a specific territory, the nation was closely linked to the emerging concepts of ethnicity, culture, territory and history (Smith 1991). *Nativism*, i.e. a ‘natural’ connection to the nation through “lineage, family, and, most importantly, territory” (Conversi 2006, 15), was considered crucial for national divisions. Nationality became more or less synonymous with ethnicity. Most importantly, national identity was considered *innate*, deeply rooted in common ancestry, territory, and history and expressed through shared folklore, language, and culture. Specific identities, such as e.g. Englishness, could be easily demarcated along ethnic, territorial, historical, cultural, folkloric and linguistic lines (Smith 1986). These notions were fuelled by the uprising of cultural-anthropological projects, such as the work of Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859). Consequently, nationality and its ‘natural’ dependence on ethnicity became another way to sanction hegemony, deprecate non-Europeans, and restrict access to power. Accordingly, the primordialist, nativist notion of national identity that grew more and more popular over the course of the 19th century opened the gate for ever more blunt discrimination and depreciation of

7 Although there were several anti-slavery activists in several European countries whose influence grew louder from the 18th century onwards, there was a general tendency to accept colonialism as well as its ideological underpinnings (Paasman 2001, 479). Slavery was abolished by: Portugal in 1761; Spain in 1811; the British Empire in 1833; France first abolished slavery in 1794, reintroduced it in 1802, and finally abolished it in 1848; the Netherlands in 1863. However, slavery was not abolished in Cuba until 1886 and in Brazil not until 1888 (Hinks, McKivigan, and Williams 2007).

non-European ethnicities and cultures. The nation was also considered a sign of advanced civilisation, and correspondingly, not having a nation was not only equivalent to having no legitimate identity, it was also associated with savagery and uncivilisedness. Hence, together with the aforementioned socio-biological theories, nationalism and its cultural-anthropological ‘facts’ conferred legitimacy to discrimination, oppression, and hegemony based on nationality.

3.3 *Colonialism and Ethnic / Racial Mixing*

The primordialist association between ethnicity and nationality also functioned as a safeguard against any claims on European supremacy by the mixed-race offspring of colonisers and colonised (Stoler 2002, 6). Ideally, national borders also implied racial singularity. Although there are many historical examples which undermined this ideology, e.g. mestizo culture, the colonisers reasserted their power through ideological and discursive measures promoting racial purity (Stoler 2002, 79-80). Social-evolutionary theories and their procreative agenda disseminated specific ideas that equated miscegenation with moral and mental degeneration. Miscegenation was associated with evolutionary regression – yet another strategy to deny anyone else but (certain kind of) Europeans a legitimate access to power. As a means of classification, skin colour and other visible body features were used to categorise people in relation to a White European standard (e.g. Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 1995; Childs, Weber, and Williams 2006; Cliff 1996). A person’s skin colour determined their access to power and socio-economic possibilities. Different shades of skin tones were translated into a person’s distance from the White ideal. Furthermore, ‘Blackness’ or ‘Whiteness’ were not only categories that referred to outward appearances, but the ethnocentric and racist Black-White dichotomy was frequently used metaphorically, including references to a person’s interior qualities (Stoler 2009, 6). Predicated on Cartesian philosophy, Europeanness was associated with rationality, power, and integrity (Stoler 2002, 6). Other, Black or non-European identities were conceptualized as impulsive, lazy, indecent and (as mentioned before) even un-human (e.g. Fernández Retamar [1974] 2005; Stoler 2002; Stoler 2009). Therefore, in the context of colonialism, Europeanness (or being visibly

European) did not only sanction access to power, but also personhood, worth, and humanness.

3.4 *Colonialism and Class*

Additionally, European identity in colonial contexts comprised more complex relations than only those between coloniser-colonised. Social-evolutionary theories were also used to discriminate between Europeans. As Ann Laura Stoler has pointed out, the colonisers were not an homogenous category either, and that “racial thinking was part of a critical, class-based logic [...] that was part of the apparatus that kept potentially subversive white colonials in line” (Stoler 2002, 13). Accordingly, the colonial system favoured a certain kind of Europeanness, i.e. middle class and elite (Stoler 2002, 40). With evolutionary theories being adapted not only to race and ethnicity, but also to class (e.g. the aforementioned Lamarck or Spencer) as well as to economic circumstances (e.g. the economic theories of Thomas Malthus [1766-1834]), the European elite and middle-class enforced a positive self-presentation and successfully sanctioned their access to power. The racially and socially deviant were regarded as degenerated or delinquent (or both), and as such, they were deemed an impediment to the progress of humanity (Fancher and Rutherford 2012, 244-5, 259-61). Thus, colonialism culminated in an intricate system in which notions of race, class, and nationality interacted to keep all colonial subjects in place. Accordingly, in the colonial system, a person’s social, economic, and moral worth was significantly dependent on their race, nationality / ethnicity, and class. Having no, or only limited access to the colonial elite and middle-class, the colonised were usually at the very bottom of the hierarchy, and their identities were either denied or denigrated.

4. *Interim Summary*

Colonisation did not only introduce a worldwide system of exploitation and oppression with economic and political consequences; it also established a benchmark for personhood and what it meant to be human. Europeanness presented the universal standard by which cultures, people, territories and nations were assessed – and basically anyone non-middle-class-White-European was

dismissed as inferior (Stoler 2002; Stoler 2009). However, Europeanness could not be acquired, because it was deemed an inalienable, inherent quality. The representation of Europeans as naturally superior and the impermeability of Europeanness for others were highly efficient discursive tools that created and ensured a certain social hierarchy (e.g. Tuhiwai Smith [1999] 2005).

In that sense, it can be claimed that (what we would today understand as) European identity assumed a core position at the heart of colonialism. Europeanness or European identity and its distinct European philosophical underpinnings was one of the fundamental ideological concepts underlying colonisation. Therefore, as a postcolonial scholar concerned with the ramifications of colonialism, it is not only important to consider the political and social repercussions of colonisation but also its impact on notions of identity.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Foundations: Identity in Postcolonial Studies and Psychology

Considering the object of research, i.e. Guyanese and Surinamese literature, this study is affiliated with postcolonialism, its methodology and theoretical perspectives.¹ Yet, psychology will also play a significant role in the analysis. In the following sections, an overview of postcolonial and psychological perspectives on identity is provided. In the end, an interdisciplinary approach is suggested.

1. Postcolonialism

From the political academic climate of the 1980s, postcolonialism emerged as an academic discipline with an explicit orientation towards subversion and change. On its most basic level, postcolonialism is concerned with the social, cultural, historical and political consequences of colonialism (Döring 2008, 1-14). As such, it has always had a distinct political orientation, and its main goal is to reveal power inequities that result from colonialism. Hence, it is also associated with

1 A quick explanation of my use of capitalisation: I only capitalise proper nouns and names of *specific* nationalities (such as Surinamese), regions (such as Caribbean), languages (such as English) or references to ethnicities (such as Creole and Hindustani); but I *do not capitalise* schools of thought (such as essentialism or postcolonialism), theoretical concepts (such as creole or hybridity), or subject areas or disciplines (such as postcolonial studies). Hence, in this study, Creole (with a capital 'C') specifically and only refers to the **Afro-Surinamese**.

subversion, resistance, and the empowerment of the formerly colonised (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Grossberg 1996; Khan 2007; Said [1978] 1979).

1.1 *Disciplinary Matters*

Postcolonial studies take an interdisciplinary approach towards these politicised goals. By incorporating critical discourse analysis, ethnography, as well as analytical tools of Literary Studies, it aims to contribute to decolonisation by revealing and unsettling colonial ideologies in acts, texts, and mindsets. Therefore, literary studies and postcolonial studies are tightly connected. As a means to expound the problems of discourses and to analyse specific types of meaning, “the study of literature gains new relevance” in the context of postcolonialism (Döring 2008, 14), as colonial mindsets can be identified and criticised through the analysis of texts. Furthermore, postcolonial literatures are considered to possess a certain subversive power of their own. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin ascribe an “inevitable tendency towards subversion” to postcolonial literatures and praise them for ‘writing back’ against the grain of colonial domination (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 33). However, literature is not only a means of writing back, but it is also a vehicle for discursive and cultural (self-)expression. Therefore, Literary Studies do not only contribute to challenging colonial ideologies, they also present a means to credit alternative forms of (self-)expression that de-centre the ethnocentrism of colonialism.

1.2 *(Some) Issues in Postcolonialism*

However, notwithstanding postcolonial studies’ ambitious intentions to contribute to decolonisation and to debunk colonial myths, there are debates about the adequacy of the term. Not only does postcolonialism tie itself to a past that it claims to challenge; there also appears to be, as Ella Shohat has argued, a “tension between the philosophical and the historical teleologies in the ‘post-colonial’” (Shohat 1992, 101f). This tension derives from the ambiguity of the ‘post’ in postcolonial: on the one hand, postcolonialism could be considered to refer to the time after colonisation; hence, “mark[ing] a contemporary state, situation, condition or epoch” (Shohat 1992, 101). On the other hand, others would rather align postcolonialism with further academic ‘posts’, such as post-structuralism or

post-feminism, in which the ‘post’ denotes ‘going beyond’ or “a shift in critical perspective” (Döring 2008, 14; see also Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 2; Shohat 1992, 102). Currently, the latter notion is more dominant: postcolonialism is primarily regarded as a specific critical perspective rather than an epoch. However, such an a-historic notion might totalise current theories within postcolonialism and present it as a homogenous, global enterprise without considering historical and local specificities (McClintock 1993, 293; Shohat 1992, 101). Furthermore, such a perspective might neglect the *interplay* between postcolonial theory and historical or local circumstances (Shohat 1992, 104). Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of the historicity and the multiplicity of political and theoretical forces within postcolonialism; for example, the interaction between postcolonial theory and specificities of anti-colonial or anti-neo-colonial resistance (Shohat 1992, 101-104). Acknowledging these issues, I will try to remain critical and employ the analytical tools offered by postcolonial studies with due care.

1.3 *Postcolonialism and Identity*

As the ideological construct underlying the European colonial enterprise, identity is a heatedly debated topic in postcolonial studies. Considering the association between Europeanness, nationalism, worthiness and humanness in colonial societies on the one hand, and the postcolonial goal of deconstructing colonial mindsets on the other, identity assumes a controversial role in postcolonial discourses. Referring to the complex dynamics between colonialism, postcolonialism, and identity, Stuart Hall already noted almost 20 years ago that “there has been a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of ‘identity’” (Hall 1996, 1), and the salience of the topic remains (see Bongie 1998; de Toro 2003; Donnell 2006). Paradoxically, postcolonialism challenges identity, while also trying to (re-)establish it. On the one hand, the concept of identity has been subjected to deconstruction in postcolonial discourses, and the idea of the enduring, impermeable sameness of a person’s identity has been discarded in favour of post-structuralist, constructivist notions of identity (e.g. Kellner 1995; Kelly 1955; Said [1978] 1979). Identity is now perceived as fluctuant, ambiguous, and hybrid (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Glissant [1981] 1989; Hall

1996). Adopting a critical and post-structuralist stance towards identity is considered a powerful method to deconstruct colonial and imperialist ideals. As Robert Young has pointed out: “European thought [...] and its philosophical tradition make[...] common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same” (Young 1990, 18). From this perspective, identity should be discarded as one of the *grand theories* of the occident. On the other hand, although “put under erasure [...] identity has] not been superseded dialectically, and there are no other, entirely different concepts with which to replace [it]” (Hall 1996, 1). Furthermore, particularly (but not only) in socio-political and cultural discourses of former colonies, identity is more than just a concept, it rather is an emotionally charged political goal. According to Childs, Weber, and Williams, “Post-colonialism is much to do with the painful experience of confronting the desire to recover ‘lost’ pre-colonial identities, the impossibility of actually doing so, and the task of constructing some new identity on that basis” (Childs et al. 2006, 14f). Asserting an identity of one’s own is considered a pivotal aspect of political empowerment and a prerequisite for agency (e.g. Grossberg 1996; Khan 2007).

Therefore, Hall has suggested considering identity as necessary and impossible at once (Hall 1996, 16): necessary for social and political empowerment; impossible, as the stability, which the concept suggests, is a construct rather than a fact. However, Hall’s proposal sounds rather vague, particularly in relation to postcolonialism’s association with ‘the desire’ for identity and ‘the task of constructing some new identity’. Although postcolonial studies have called for new or alternative ways to articulate identity (or has discarded identity all together), “decolonizing the mind” (wa Thiong’o 1986) has turned out to be a rather intricate endeavour, and often, European notions of identity re-emerge in the self-representations of the formerly colonised. Therefore, it is important to consider how European notions of identity interact with alternative and postcolonial concepts of identity. Furthermore, a totalising outlook on ‘postcolonial identity’ neglects the different historical and local specificities of the individual regions and groups. Moreover, little attention has been paid to the ‘desire’ for identity and the psychological dimension to which it refers.

1.4 *Interim Summary*

With regard to postcolonialism and identity, it is important to look at the historical, local, and political circumstances that lead to the construction and claiming of a certain identity, and in which way these enterprises interact with postcolonial theories of identity. In the context of postcolonialism, identity does not simply denote ‘sameness’ – identity can have many meanings in postcolonial settings, and it has a discursive, psychological, and political dimension. Thus, any postcolonial study on identity needs to critically engage with all three dimensions.

In the following sections, I will give an introduction to the discourses on identity relevant to the specific historical and local context of this study, i.e. the Caribbean, followed by an overview of different notions on identity that are used for the analysis of identity in Caribbean contexts. It is important, however, to realise that Caribbean identity is not a ‘thing’ in an essentialist sense, but identity is (as always) multiple and constantly (re-)constructed.

2. *Identity in the Caribbean*

Norman Girvan (2001) has pointed out, there are *several* identities in “the greater Caribbean”, and the idea of a common *Caribbeanness* might be rather abstract in the face of all the different kinds of identity that co-exist in the region (Girvan 2001, 3). Notwithstanding the diversity of Caribbean *identities*, the Caribbean islands and mainland shared certain general historical and cultural developments – colonialism, slavery, indentured labour, the plantation system – particularly in relation to the importance which identity has assumed as a discourse across the region. Therefore, I will provide a more general introduction to the Caribbean as a cultural, political, and historical background, before turning to the specificities of the Caribbean discourse on identity.

Girvan (2001) defines *the Caribbean* as

a socio-historical category, commonly referring to a cultural zone characterised by the legacy of slavery and the plantation system. It embraces islands and parts of the adjoining mainland – and may be extended to include the Caribbean diaspora overseas (Girvan 2001, 3).

Accordingly, a defining feature of the Caribbean (in contrast to specific islands and nations within the Caribbean) is the region's shared history of being influenced by colonialism. In that sense, Suriname and Guyana are also part of the Caribbean. Although located at the South American mainland, their history, culture, and societies have been influenced by colonialism in the same way as other parts of the Caribbean. This is not a new perspective: most anthologies of Caribbean literature also contain texts that originated from the two independent 'Guianas'² (Brown 2001; Salkey [1965] 1972), and academic work on the Caribbean also includes these two regions (Arnold 2001; Donnell 2006; Childs et al. 2006). Hence, general issues related to independence, identity, and culture in Guyana and Suriname are comparable to the rest of the Caribbean region. Therefore, when referring to 'the Caribbean', I have Girvan's definition of the Caribbean in mind which includes Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. Accordingly, although I will elaborate on the specificities of Suriname and Guyana later on, the following issues and considerations are equally applicable to them.

Considering colonialism as an enterprise whose hierarchical structure was held in place by discursive means based on European notions of identity, it becomes clear that identity is an important issue in the Caribbean. Having been derided as possessing no identity of their own (e.g. Glissant [1981] 1989; Naipaul [1962] 2002), identity presents a salient topic in Caribbean politics, culture, theory and literature. However, the pillars of national and ethnic accounts of identity, i.e. common ancestry, territory, history, folklore, language and culture, which were tightly connected to European notions of identity, seem unsuitable for a definition of Caribbean identity.

2.1 *Issues of History and Territory*

The history of Caribbean people is a story of dislocation. Strictly speaking, "[e]veryone who is [t]here originally belonged somewhere else" (Hall [1999] 2005, 546). The region's original population was more or less wiped out by the colonisers. After 1492, when Columbus thought he had found a sea route to the

2 In contrast to the third Guyana, French Guiana, which is an overseas territory of France, hence, it is a part of the European Union and its currency is the Euro.

Indian subcontinent, a considerable proportion of the Amerindian indigenous population, the *Locono* (or Arawaks), *Kalinago* (or Caribs),³ and *Taíno* (or Trio) were killed by the colonisers – either directly or indirectly by the diseases they imported (Childs et al. 2006, 169; Hyles 2013, 11; van Kempen 2002 II, 133). As a consequence, there are hardly any Locono, Taíno, or Kalinago left.⁴ Today, the population of the Caribbean is mainly composed of descendants of former European colonisers, former African slaves, and former Indian and Asian indentured labourers – and their multi-ethnic offspring. Hence, there seems no possibility to claim some sort of Caribbean identity in terms of one singular unifying ancestry, ethnicity, and history.⁵

2.2 *Issues of Ethnicity*

The majority of the Caribbean population is constituted of people from African descent (Childs et al. 2006, 169). Twelve million people (a conservative estimate) were shipped over the Atlantic between ca. 1500 and the 1860s of whom ca. 1.5 million did not survive *the middle passage*⁶ (McDonald Beckles 2002, 47).⁷ Due to the abominable dimension of death and loss, the Atlantic slave trade (together with the Arabic slave trade) is sometimes referred to as *Maaafa* or *African Holocaust* (Spitzer 2002, 1319). Those who arrived alive were forced to work under horrendous conditions, mostly on sugarcane plantations that the European colonisers established after they had forcibly taken the land from the indigenous population. After the abolition of slavery, indentured labourers from British-India, China, Java and Madeira were brought to the Caribbean, particularly to Trinidad, Suriname, and Guyana, to replace the slaves on the plantations (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 8). Although officially ‘free’, the indentured labourers had to work under devastating conditions similar to those under slavery (Fokken

3 ‘Caribs’ and ‘Arawaks’ are debatable, outdated forms (Hyles 2013, 11).

4 Exemptions are the ‘Guianas’. Due to the geographical conditions, the percentage of Amerindians in Guyana is at 9.1% (CCDP 2002, 26); in Suriname they constitute 2% (CIA 2013; Heemskerk and Duijves 2015).

5 I would like to point out here that, actually, there is not one single nation that could evoke a singular, common ancestry or ethnic origin, because ethnic singularity is a European myth created to secure European claims on cultural hegemony (e.g. Said 1993, Bhabha 1994). However, the recency of colonial history and its specificities probably make the different origins of people living in the Caribbean more salient.

6 I.e. the middle route from Africa to America of the trade triangle between Europe, Africa, and America.

7 In appendix 1 of this study on page 517, Table 1 presents the dimension of the slave trade.

unpublished conference paper, 3). The memories of the traumatic experience of enslavement, *the middle passage*, and plantation labour are still present in Caribbean societies: “the plantation wounds still hurt” (Balutansky 1998, 5). However, a sense of community or solidarity between the former slaves and the indentured labourers was rare – not even in the course of struggles for political independence. A conspicuous hostility persisted between the African and the Indian population (Speckmann 1975). In fact, the former slaves accused the Indian indentured labourers of inhibiting the process of emancipation (Donnell 2006, 173). Hence, even after the abolition of slavery and the collapse of plantation system, there were not only ethnic conflicts between former masters and slaves, but also between the African and Asian population. Despite the conciliatory potential ascribed to processes of creolisation, ethnic mixing was not very common (although of course it existed) between Africans and Indians, and ethnic prejudices persisted. Although ethnic and cultural contact was much more common between the former colonisers and the African population of the Caribbean, the more and more frequent ethnic mixing did not dispel the persistent “colorism” (Cliff [1983] 1996, 368), i.e. the social hierarchy based on skin colour or ethnicity. Hence, remainders of colonial mindsets subsisted in Caribbean societies well after their independence from the former colonisers, and the repercussions of colonial power inequities and hostility between the different ethnic groups are still palpable today. The old colonial ideologies have been hard to overcome, and they have tenaciously lingered at the heart of Caribbean societies.

2.3 *Deprecation of Caribbean Identity*

Accordingly, Caribbean societies fail to adhere to the usual European notion of national identity and its hallmarks: one common ethnicity, history, culture and territory (Bongie 1998, 6). Notwithstanding their ethnic and cultural multiplicity, a lack of communality would not have necessarily implied that there are no alternative ways to express identity in the Caribbean. However, Caribbean societies have often been portrayed in a negative way in relation to identity – by people inside and outside of the Caribbean. In 1888, James A. Froude draws a

rather depreciative image of the Caribbean in his travelogue, *The English in the West Indies: Or, The Bow of Ulysses*:

It is strange how checkered a history these islands have had, how far they are even yet from any condition that promises permanence. [...] Only occasionally, and as it were by accident, they became the theatre of any grander game. [...] S]ociety there has never assumed any particular noble respect. [...] The natural graces of human life do not show themselves under such conditions. There has been no saint in the West Indies since Las Casas, no hero unless philonegro enthusiasm can make one out of Toussaint. There are no people there in the true sense of the word, with a character and purpose of their own (Froude 1888, 347).

Hence, there are no nations, no community, no history, no heroes, no people in the Caribbean according to Froude. If that had not been enough already, almost 75 years later, subsequent Nobel prize winner V.S. Naipaul, born in Trinidad, evoked a similarly dark image of the Caribbean. According to Naipaul, Caribbean people do not only seem to lack identity, but they also have no chance to create one, because they have no common history: “[h]istory is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies” (Naipaul [1962] 2002, 20). To Naipaul, Caribbean people do not have any claims to authenticity and identity, because they are mere mimics of people. Metaphors of ‘shipwreck’ and ‘disorder’ dominate his portrayal of the Caribbean in his novel *Mimic Men* (Naipaul [1967] 2002). In a similar vein, the Martinican Édouard Glissant argues that the Caribbean is totally dependent on foreign countries, intellectually and economically (Glissant [1981] 1989, 94f). The intellectuals are torn between their wish to define an independent cultural identity, and the knowledge of the impossibility of their endeavour. Furthermore, due to their Western education that ‘made’ them intellectual, they lack authenticity and are trapped in an infinite, viscous circle of mimicry (Glissant [1981] 1989, 11f). Economically, the Caribbean developed a “passive consumerism” which inhibits invention and creativity (Glissant [1981] 1989, 45). Unless they find a way to overcome this dependency and inadequacy, Glissant does not think that there can truly be something like a Caribbean identity. Correspondingly (and although Glissant eventually provided a solution to overcome these issues) even prominent Caribbean people tended to portray Caribbean cultures and societies in a negative way. Apparently, without any notable achievements, no common history, no

indigenous population that could claim a native connection to the homeland, no unity: Caribbean societies seemed to be doomed to lead insignificant lives in the shadow of real nations with authentic identities.⁸

2.4 *Need for Identity*

Despite these negative portrayals of Caribbean societies, claiming an identity of one's own became a salient topic in Caribbean discourses. According to Stuart Hall, there is a strong need for Caribbean people to find a positive representation, not *despite the fact* that identitarian categories hardly apply the Caribbean, but *because* Caribbean people have always been presented as lacking these qualities (Hall 1996). Taking a similar line, Tuhiwai Smith emphasized the importance of identity in (post)colonial societies, and she argues that “[c]olonized peoples have been compelled to define what it means to be human because there is a deep understanding of what it has meant to be considered not fully human” (Tuhiwai Smith [1999] 2005, 101). In fact, identity assumes such a salience in Caribbean discourses that Derek Walcott stated that the Caribbean entered a true “rage for identity” (Walcott [1974] 1996, 357), and the “hysterical obsession with [...] authenticity” tenaciously persists (de Toro 2003, 21). The desire for an identity continuously haunts Caribbean discourses, and the longing for an “originary moment”, a “foundational myth” capable of “healing all rupture, repairing every violent breach” (Hall [1999] 2005, 546), of “something more affirmative [than tolerance] to overcome the idea of slave and slave master and nigger and coolie” (Lovelace 2003, 100) is a conspicuous, if not pivotal aspect in Caribbean literatures and discourses. The only question was which kind of identity, old or new, would be appropriate for the Caribbean?

2.5 *Discourses of Identity*

The specificities of how a new identity should be created – or not be created at all – have differed at different times after the end of the colonial period, and they remain under debate. Several theoretical and political attempts, local and regional, have been undertaken to create and claim a Caribbean identity – in both pan-

8 Not that such a thing could possibly exist; but this was the logic of the common argumentation against Caribbean authenticity.

regional and national forms. Appropriating nativism, territory, history and ethnicity to Caribbean conditions (or overcoming these old identitarian criteria all together), Caribbean notions of identity engage with European notions of identity (old and new) while also giving rise to the emergence of new ways of thinking about identity within Western academia. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a short overview of the general discourses and theoretical approaches that have been employed to discuss identity in the Caribbean.

2.6 *The Essentialist-Universalist Divide*

On a very basic level, postcolonial discourses on Caribbean identity are often presented as being divided into an essentialising *discourse* and a *universalizing discourse* (e.g. de Toro 2003, 20). Despite sharing a common goal (namely the subversion of colonial power structures and political empowerment), these ‘two camps’ strongly diverge in terms of their ontological and epistemological positions. Although essentialism has now been widely rejected as a philosophical position in postcolonial studies, and the notion of identity as a construct has become widely accepted in contemporary debates, it is important to look at the theoretical tradition of these two camps.

Similar to the essentialist notion of identity adopted by the European colonisers, the essentialising discourse of Caribbean identity embraces the idea that identity is an inherent quality of a person that makes them distinguishable from everyone else. The essentialising discourse seeks to challenge colonial, Eurocentric concepts of identity by creating its “own Subject of enunciation and object of knowledge” (de Toro 2003, 20). Such a self-sufficient identity was often tried to be invoked by a “redemptive return” to a lost origin (Hall [1999] 2005, 545). Accordingly, supporters of the essentialising discourse reject any relation to European imperialist theoretical discourses in favour of their own theorization in which the definition of ‘own’ is determined by the ontological quest for an authentic origin. Hence, they embrace an essentialist ontology of identity that emphasises their own inalienable uniqueness. Prominent examples are several nationalist projects in the Caribbean, as well as other projects of Afro-Caribbean and Pan-African culture such as Garveyism, *négritude*, and Ethiopianism (Edwards 2004, 6). For example, Léopold Sédar Senghor proposed that *négritude*

could offer an alternative “humanism of the twentieth century” suitable to present an “African ontology”, and an identity for the formerly colonised of African heritage that embraces “*the sum of the cultural values of the black world*” (Senghor [1964] 2005, 184, original emphasis). However, *négritude* and also most kinds of “third world nationalism” (Shohat 1992, 104), which sought to establish an alternative but essentialist identity, have been accused of copying the homogenising master narratives of the West (de Toro 2003, 26). Robert Young, for example, noted that “the figure of the lost origin, the other that the coloniser has repressed, has itself been constructed in terms of the colonizer’s own self-image” (Young 1990, 168). Therefore, essentialist approaches towards the (re)articulation of identity have been by and large dismissed in academic discourses, since they are considered to proliferate the discriminatory logic of colonialism, rather than subverting it (Ashcroft et al. 1989; Bhabha 1994; Said 1993; Soyinka 1976; Spivak 1990; Young 1990).

Universalist discourses take a different approach that is associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism. “[C]omposed, not of one, but of many peoples” (Hall [1999] 2005, 546), Stuart Hall has described the people of the Caribbean as “conscripts of modernity” (Hall [1999] 2005, 547), and as such, he considers them to be prototypes of post-structural definitions of identity. Therefore, engaging with these postmodern, post-structuralist notions of identity, universalising discourses of postcolonial identity do not presume an innate essence to be the basis of identity. Based on a constructivist epistemology, universalist discourses deem identity a socio-linguistic construct. Identity exists on the level of meaning, constructed upon a conceptual *constitutive outside*, an other that needs to be excluded in order to distinguish one meaning from another (Butler 1993; Derrida [1967] 1983; Lacan, [1977] 2003). Furthermore, every meaningful pair also establishes a hierarchy between the construct and its outside. This hierarchy guarantees a system of value-laden binary oppositions (Butler, 1993; Derrida [1967] 1983; Lévi-Strauss [1964] 1969). However, post-structuralist universalising notions of identity also dismiss the stability of meanings, and “by and large reject [any] essentialist and rationalist notion of identity” (Kellner 1995, 232; see also Lyotard [1979] 1984). By incorporating or assimilating Western theories, like postmodernism and post-structuralism, and

appropriating them to postcolonial contexts, universalising approaches claim power by actively participating in the academic “theory machine” (de Toro 2003, 36) and by furthering and subverting Western thought and power hierarchies from inside. Endorsing *in-betweenness* (Bhabha 1994; Shohat 1992), postcolonial identities have come to be negotiated in terms of hybridity (e.g. Bhabha 1994), creolisation (e.g. Khan 2007; Knörr 2008), and creoleness (e.g. Bernabé et al. 1990; Glissant [1981] 1989). The idea of identity as based on some sort of essence has been superseded by the notion that identity is more fluent than stable – nomadic, rhizomatic, and cartographic (Braidotti 1994, 5; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7; de Toro 2003, 41). Proponents of the universalising discourse seek to dismantle “Eurocentric philosophical and conceptual systems [such as identity] from within” (de Toro 2003, 27). By revealing the constructed nature of Western concepts, the universalising discourse of identity exposes them to deconstruction.

The general consensus in postcolonial studies seems to favour universalising over essentialising discourses – with good reason, considering the inadequacy of essentialist notions of identity to reflect the actuality of ethnic and cultural formations. However, proposing that the transition from essentialising to universalising discourses is a matter of succession (chronological or paradigmatic), neglects the historical and theoretical multiplicity within each discourse. A totalising, a-historical perspective on universalising discourses of identity would dismiss particular forms of resistance and identity, i.e. those with an essentialist stance, as unsuccessful and illegitimate (Shohat 1992, 109). Therefore, a rejection of any theoretical position remotely associated with essentialism seems as precarious as uncritically accepting essentialist notions. Anne Cheng has criticised that it appears as if the opposition between open, hybrid, post-structuralist concepts and essentialist ones is advocated with such vigour “as though the former cures the latter” (Cheng 2001, 26); as if “heterogeneity and hybridity” could hold “as [a] safeguard[.] against essentialism in the formations of [...] disciplinary categories” (Cheng 2001, 26). However, as I will show later on, essentialist and universalist notions of identity are not as mutually exclusive as their proponents would sometimes like to suggest. Such a radical opposition between essentialist and universalist discourses seems partly driven by the overt political orientation of postcolonial studies. The political stance in the work of

many influential postcolonial scholars is striking, and Homi Bhabha has explicitly stated that the choice of one's theoretical position and object of research serves "specific political objectives" (Bhabha 1994, 45). According to Aisha Khan, the prospect of actively contributing to decolonisation has fuelled the hope of postcolonial critics "to make [their] scholarship meaningful beyond the hypothetical" (Khan 2007, 653). The vehement defence of *the* proper theoretical position appears to be related to the desire to endow one's work with meaning and impact, and this "[i]ntellectual desire can be a powerful force, orienting the observer (as well as participants) toward realizably auspicious futures" (Khan 2007, 665). Although one should, of course, choose one's theoretical position and object of research with due care, it is equally important to consider the relativity of this position. These issues are particularly salient in relation to the articulation of identities in the context of Caribbean nationalism.

3. *Analytical Concepts*

There are several concepts with which identity in the Caribbean has come to be understood. In the following sections, I will provide a brief overview of the concepts that I use for my analysis of Surinamese and Guyanese texts. I will focus on creoleness and nationalism, but I will also elaborate on hybridity and coolitude as well as on transnational concepts such as the Black Atlantic, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism.

3.1 *More than One, Less than Double – Hybridity, Creoleness, and Coolitude*

The two most prominent concepts that can be aligned with the universalist, postmodern discourse of identity are hybridity and creoleness. Although the two concepts challenge essentialist notions of identity, they are not characterised by a complete denial of the possibility of identity. Hybridity (as well as creoleness) shift the domain of identity into the sphere of (self-)representation:

We are no longer confronted with an ontological problem of being but with the discursive strategy of the moment of interrogation, the moment in which the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture and politics (Bhabha 1994, 71).

Identity is not understood as an inalienable, inherent quality of a person, but it is considered as a construct which is subject of continuous change. Creoleness and hybridity aim to embrace both the constructedness as well as the changing nature of identity.

3.2 *Hybridity*

Predicated on Derrida's concept of *différance* (Derrida 1972; Derrida [1967] 1983), Bhabha's notion of identity questions the possibility of an ontological identity. However, he does not question identity as representation (Bhabha 1994, 70f). Identity is a process that occurs in the sphere of symbolisation. It is located in the "Third Space [which], though unrepresentable in itself, [...] constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (Bhabha 1994, 55). Therefore, identity is never stable, but *hybrid*: "*neither the One [...], nor the Other [...] but something else beside*" (Bhabha 1994, 41). Nevertheless, hybridity is not a concept that focuses on presenting an alternative, new unifying sense of identity, but it continuously challenges the singularity of identity. Its subversive power emerges from demonstrating the impossibility of 'pure' identities and the inevitability of hybrid identities. According to Bhabha, hybridity is the process of cultural and political change that subverts the foundation of colonial power structures (Bhabha 1994, 41). Hybridity is the process through which the assigned place of the powerful and the discriminated is destabilised. It is through the *performativity* of culture and social structures (see also Butler 1993, 1997), that

the disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid [...] that is more than the mimetic but less than the symbolic, that disturbs the visibility of colonial presence and makes the recognition of its authority problematic [...]. Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination [...]. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but re-implicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminate back upon the eye of power (Bhabha 1994, 159).

Accordingly, hybridity describes the perpetuating process through which identities overlap and interchange. Hybridity subverts essentialist justifications for

power hierarchies; it challenges the impermeability of the margins of identity, because it rejects the very possibility of identity.

Although hybridity does not deny the articulation of identity in the sphere of representation, it does not necessarily offer a model of an alternative identity upon which a common, e.g. Caribbean, identity, can be articulated. Although it assumes that the agents of discourse possess agency, it does not provide agency in the form of an identity that could be claimed or articulated. Therefore, hybridity is best seen as a useful analytical tool fathoming the instability of meaning and power, with a distinct political orientation towards subversion.

3.3 *Creolisation and Creoleness*

On a very general level, in the Caribbean, creolisation denotes “the interactional or transactional aggregat[ion] of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history” (Bernabé et al 1990, 892). As theoretical concepts, creolisation and creoleness were significantly coined by Édouard Glissant (Glissant [1981] 1989). Glissant’s theoretical foundation of creolisation is strongly affiliated with post-structuralist thought (Bongie 1998, 11; Britton 1999, 5) emphasizing the diversity and opacity of cultures and identities as well as rejecting the singularity of entities and meanings (Glissant [1981] 1989, 170). Therefore, creolisation and creoleness are often used synonymously with hybridisation and hybridity (Khan 2007, 653). However, there is no consent on the proper meaning and use of the terms creolisation, creole, and creoleness in postcolonial discourses – and they have also been used in various postcolonial settings outside the Caribbean. Depending on the group and their cultural, historical, and political background, the meaning and use of the terms creolisation, creole, and creoleness varies (Knörr 2008, 2). Correspondingly, creolisation is a vividly debated concept that has been redefined by several scholars.

Etymologically, the term derives from *criollo* which denotes ‘locally bred’ (Knörr 2008, 2). Historically, the terms *criollo*, or *creole* underwent a considerable change. *Criollo* was first used by Spanish colonisers to distinguish children (and later adults) born in the New World from the *penisulares*, the European Spaniards born in Spain. Later it was used to refer to African slaves in

the same way; hence, to differentiate between those born in the colonies in comparison to those born in Africa. When, over the course of history, the distinction between people born in the New or Old World became redundant, *creole* became a term to refer to all people who “descended from relations between (former) slaves on the one hand and between members of different heritages and skin colors on the other” (Knörr 2008, 3). Hence, creolisation became a signifier for cultural mixing.

As a theoretical concept, creolisation has been strongly influenced by Édouard Glissant who sees creolisation as the continuous process of fusion, mixing, and re-creation, entailing that a singularity of elements (and consequently of meaning) is not given anymore (Glissant [1981] 1989, 170). Central to his concept of creoleness are the notions of *opaqueness* and *diversity*. Both imply cultural and ethnic ambiguity which, in his opinion, offers a way to circumvent discrimination and exclusion. He sees potential for creole cultures to live an “accepted difference” and “wholeness” (Glissant [1981] 1989, 98). Although he also emphasises the importance of Caribbean myths, heroes, economic autonomy, history and landscape, he does not restrict Caribbean identity to a single set of markers (Glissant [1981] 1989, 182). He considers creoleness and, eventually, Caribbeanness to offer a possibility to accommodate “the human spirit’s striving for a cross-cultural relationship, without universalistic transcendence” (Glissant [1981] 1989, 98). Although rather vague at times, Glissant’s notion of creoleness embraces both, the mixing of cultural elements and the creation of a new identity rooted in Caribbean culture but also (allegedly) endlessly open and undiscriminating.⁹

More recent interpretations of the concept have emphasised the connection between creoleness, agency, and empowerment – thereby getting closer to the political, subversive tendencies of hybridity. According to Aisha Khan, on its most basic level, creolisation “refers to the [...] cultural change that occur[s] over time as [...] heterogeneous peoples come into [...] ‘culture contact’ and undergo

9 It is important to note that Glissant’s appropriation of ‘identity’ to Caribbean contexts mainly considers Afro-European cultural elements. When talking about Caribbeanness, he refers to a cultural identity that is hybrid and open to change; but with a strong Afro-European cultural basis. Therefore, Glissant’s Caribbean hero is the *Marroon*, not the *Dougla* or *Coolie* (Glissant [1981] 1989, 87).

acculturation” (Khan 2007, 653). However, in contrast to hybridity, Khan asserts, agency is a central aspect of creolisation:

agency [is] the creative, generative energy of creolization [...]. It is as if the process of creolization itself, independent of human actors, were presumed to have agency. Moreover, this supposed agency tends to be presumed to be for the good[...]; [it is] manifest implicitly or explicitly in individuals’ and groups’ motivated engagement with the structure of power relations (Khan 2007, 653f).

The agency related to creolisation is connected to a “good [way] to think” of cultural change, because it bears the promise of a change for the better (Khan 2007, 654). Creolisation is often depicted as a way out of the backwater of Western concepts of identity – to move beyond hegemonic power structures and to endow the marginalised with agency (Khan 2007, 654). However, Khan emphasises that ‘agency’ should not only be understood in terms of resistance and subversion. Due to its *teleological optimism*, the concept of creolisation establishes an “ideology of alterity” rather than a counter-hegemony (Khan 2007, 654, 656). Nevertheless, Khan retains the general political overtone of the concept. She emphasises the “‘political’ agenda” of academic as well as political postcolonial projects in which “agency and teleological optimism are implicated” (Khan 2007, 654). Thus, Khan’s definition of creoleness does not only offer a concept for counter-hegemony and resistance, but also for an alternative, empowered way of living. Although processes of creolisation are presented as “free floating events” (Khan 2007, 665), creoleness presents a positive interpretation of Caribbean culture, and thereby, it empowers those who claim creoleness as their cultural representation.

Arguing for a different perspective, Jacqueline Knörr claims that creolisation should not be used interchangeably with hybridity (Knörr 2008, 5). In her interpretation of the term creolisation, Knörr argues that in contrast to hybridity, creolisation does not “indiscriminately refer to everything that is mixed and somehow ‘in-between’” (Knörr 2008, 11). According to Knörr, creolisation is “a finite process that is completed when a new group identity has been constituted, which makes reference to heritage and ethnicity” (Knörr 2008, 5). Importantly, creolisation does *not only* denote cultural mixing, but it explicitly refers to

(neo-)ethnogenesis and re-ethnicizing, [...] a process in which ethnically diverse people become indigenized and develop a new collective identity bearing (varying degrees of) ethnic reference [...]. Creolisation dissolves old boundaries, but it also produces new ones (Knörr 2008, 5, 11).

Therefore, it also needs to be pointed out that creolisation is not an indiscriminating process in which new identities can be incorporated infinitely: “Creole groups vary in the intensity of their ethnic identity and the flexibility of ethnic boundaries just as much as non-creole groups” (Knörr 2008, 5). In terms of identity, Knörr also distinguishes between creolisation “as a *process* [and] creoleness [or creole, or *creolité*] as a *quality* resulting from creolization” (my emphasis; Knörr 2008, 6). Therefore, according to Knörr, the Caribbean is not an example of contemporary creolisation, but of *past* creolisation that resulted in creoleness (Knörr 2008, 11).

Although Knörr’s interpretation of the concept of creolisation presumes that identity is a construct, she does not assume that it is indefinitely open in all directions, and at all times.

Creolization implies not only a mix of cultural characteristics but also the endowment of these characteristics with ethnic reference; the result, [creoleness], being new cultural representations *plus* a new ethnic group and identity directly associated with them (Knörr 2007, 13).

In that sense, creolisation results in a new identity that relies on a *distinct* representation, an identity that is socially, culturally, and historically specific (Knörr 2008, 11). Although not absolute or fixed, creole, creoleness, or *creolité* are distinct identitarian categories: “creole culture and identity must remain recognizable as ‘specific’ and ‘unique’ in order to enable (selective) identification” (Knörr 2008, 15). Interestingly, in Knörr’s interpretation of creoleness, the borders between the essentialising and postmodern discourse are fluent. However, she is not the only one whose notion of identity appears to approximate an essentialist notion of creole identity. Knörr even claims that creoleness “implies – to varying degrees – the essentialization of identities, insofar as the emerging creole identity is not only linked to specific cultural characteristics, but also [to] ancestry and heritage” (Knörr 2008, 4-5). She refers to Sidney Mintz who pointed out that, in the Caribbean, “the term ‘creolization’ [...] had been historically and geographically specific. It stood for centuries of culture-building, rather than

culture mixing or culture blending, by those who became Caribbean people” (Mintz 1998, 119). Consequently, it is important to distinguish between different local and historical meanings of the denotation *creole*.

Knörr’s definition of creoleness is also reflected by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant who declare: “Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles” (Bernabé et al 1990, 886). Despite their intention to resist “the temptation of the unified and definite” (Bernabé et al 1990, 898), ‘we proclaim ourselves Creoles’ is the declaration of an identity – an identity that is exclusive because it is built upon a constitutive outside. Furthermore, their definition of creoleness as the result of the aggregation of diverse ‘cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history’ evokes associations with the focus of nationalist notions of identity on history and territory (Bernabé et al 1990, 892). A similar observation is made by Chris Bongie: he maintains that although creoleness is strongly affiliated with post-structuralist theories, it also embraces “conventional [essentializing] identity politics” that strongly resemble the ethnic and territorial premises of the nation and nationalism (Bongie 1998, 11). Although the criticism directed towards creoleness for employing essentialising identity politics seems justified (Bongie 1998, 67), it would be an overly hasty reaction to discard creoleness as another instrument of essentialism that fraternises with the kind of essentialism that has been so difficult to discard. Creoleness is just not (necessarily) transnational and elusive (Knörr 2008, 5; Mintz 1998, 119), nor is the “subversive, liberating vitality of the process of creolization” – against Kathleen Balutansky’s opinion – inevitably testified by “overlapping borders” (Balutansky 1998, 9). Creoleness simply accommodates different versions of the result of cultural mixing as well as traditional identitarian notions: Knörr defines creolisation as (neo)ethnogenesis (Knörr 2008, 5); Glissant associates creoleness with Caribbean mythology and landscape, and he promotes a “rerooting in our true place” (Glissant [1981] 1989, 182) – and with ‘true place’ he explicitly refers to the Caribbean; and Bernabé and his fellow ‘Creoles’ are proud to be ‘neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians’. Hence, creoleness does not necessarily oppose conventional hallmarks/tropes of identity such as history, territory, and ethnicity, but it create a space in which these concepts can be accommodated in different ways.

3.4 *Criticism and Coolitude*

Although creolisation and creoleness bear the capacity for the articulation of new, alternative kinds of identity, the concepts should not be praised unconditionally. Despite their potential to embrace the cultural forces of both mixing and neo-ethnogenesis, creole identities still grapple with the association between identity and authenticity. As indicated by Glissant's evocation of a 'true place', there is a slippery slope from authenticity to indigeneity, nativism, and nationalism (Kutzinski 2001, 13). Due to the scarcity of remaining Amerindians in the Caribbean, the meaning of 'indigenous' had to be adapted to Caribbean circumstances. Kutzinski argues that, in the Caribbean, indigeneity was reinvented in terms of "local cultural resistance", particularly in association with African slaves and their descendants (Kutzinski 2001, 13). In the mid-19th century, Afro-Caribbeans replaced Amerindians in terms of cultural hegemony, even in regions where the indigenous population still existed or where the majority of the population consisted of Indo- rather than Afro-Caribbeans, as in Suriname and Guyana (Kutzinski 2001, 13). A salient cultural symbol for Afro-Caribbeanness was found in the run-away slaves, the *Maroons*. For Glissant, for example, the maroon was a symbol of successful escape, resistance, and survival, a stronghold of identification, and therefore, the runaway slave should be acclaimed as the "tutelary hero" of the Caribbean (Glissant [1981] 1989, 87). The repercussions of these early associations between cultural authenticity, quasi-indigeneity, and Afro-Caribbeans presents a salient feature of Caribbean identity today, and it is also palpable in contemporary definitions of creoleness.

Hence, the 'specific cultural characteristics' that Knörr relates to the concept of creolisation are inextricably connected to the Afro-Caribbean population. Accordingly, creoleness contains a very specific ethnic dimension that explicitly refers to Afro-Caribbeanness. In that sense, creoleness does not necessarily discard the hallmarks of former notions of identity, such as nationality, because it also refers to ethnic relations. Furthermore, in the context of the Caribbean, nationalism, anti-colonialism, and creolisation but also chauvinism went hand in hand – at least at certain times of history. Therefore, an unconditional 'praise of creoleness' (Bernabé et al. 1990) conceals the issues associated with its ethnic dimension. Many notions of creolisation and creoleness

are still specifically related to Afro-Caribbean culture. The focus on Black subjectivity in creoleness neglects other cultural identities that do not find their historical, psychic, and social realities expressed in Caribbean discourses on identity. Furthermore, the almost hegemonic position of Afro-Caribbean culture seems to single out creoleness as its major signifier of identity (Donnell 2006, 149ff; Kutzinski 2001, 13). Particularly Caribbean people with Indian roots do not consider themselves to be represented by the concept of creoleness. Therefore, Martina Carter and Khal Torabully suggest an alternative concept, *coolitude* that is supposed to express the specific cultural and psychic reality of people with an Indian heritage (Carter and Torabully 2002). Incorporating specific characteristics of the lives and histories of Indo-Caribbean, such as indentured labour, the relation to the homeland, and specific cultural tensions, coolitude has the potential to offer a counter-discourse to the hegemonic position of creoleness. So far, however, coolitude has failed to come out of the overpowering shadow of creoleness in Caribbean discourses. Therefore, it will be important to consider several aspects of creolisation and creoleness: the historical specificities of their emergence, the ethnic dimension that is hidden within them, and the hegemonic position they claim in Caribbean discourses.

In conclusion, it can be said that hybridity is a concept denoting cultural change – and to a certain extent, political subversion. Creoleness and creolisation denote processes related to the formation of identity, embracing cultural and historical specificities of cultural and ethnic mixing as well as the resulting identities. Some definitions of creoleness, such as proposed by Knörr and Bernabé and his colleges, even include aspects of ethnic and national identity (even if the ethnic markers are creole, i.e. a result of ethnic mixing). In the following section, I will elaborate on the role of nationalism in Caribbean discourses on identity.

4. *National Identity and its Discontents*

While all nations are, in Benedict Anderson's words, 'imagined communities', this phrase has particular resonance for the Caribbean anglophone or otherwise: the Caribbean is a world imagined and inscribed from afar with cultural coherence where there is neither economic stability nor political unity, invested with cultural authenticity where there is no (longer) indigeneity (Kutzinski 2001, 12).

In the contemporary political moment, it has become common to lament the fragmentation of 'the people', the sovereign agents of the nation. Thanks to post-colonial studies, however, we know this contemporary itself to be fragmented, divided along the fissures of race, class, gender, sexuality, national belonging; in a word, along the fault lines of power (Reed 2011, 517).

Nationalism was a crucial factor for political independence and cultural emancipation of the former African slaves – of which C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) is a prominent example. Therefore, culminating in the mid-20th century, nationalism was central concept for the re-articulation of a new independent Caribbean culture and identity (Rosenberg 2007). In the past decades, however, nationalist definitions of culture and identity have become the target of scathing critique. Particularly nationalisms that stood in the tradition of 18th century primordialist notions of the nation have been met with suspicion.

4.1 *Primordialism, Modernism, Instrumentalism, and Ethnosymbolism*

Primordialists explain people's motivation to organise themselves into nations as based on common emotional and cultural 'givens' that people possess due to a history of kinship and family lineage. Thus, on the one hand, these givens are conceived as consequences of extended kinship and nepotism – and thus, based on (inalienable) biological and genetic factors (van den Berghe 1978). In that (primordialist) sense, nationality is almost tantamount to ethnicity. On the other hand, biological factors are supplemented by and manifested in culture, such as common food, language, and customs (Smith 2009, 8). Correspondingly, primordialism presumes ethnic homogeneity as well as linguistic and cultural singularity within a nation. Hence, primordialist explanations for the emergence of nations are socio-biological *and* cultural. Yet, the most important factor

determining both biological as well as cultural commonalities in primordialist accounts of the nation is *territory*. Primordialist nationalism is predicated on *nativism*, i.e. the presumption of the existence of perennial connection between land and people – a connection that expresses itself biologically and culturally (Conversi 2006, 15; Smith 2009, 8-9). The natives are perceived as sharing evolved¹⁰ characteristics – which evolved to adapt the group optimally to their land. Thus, their common psychological as well as biological characteristics are rooted in (i.e. adapted to) the land. Importantly, the perception of ‘rootedness’ also pertains to culture, because culture is understood as expressions of these shared characteristics. As Liisa Malkki points out, culture is “conceived as something existing in ‘soil’” (Malkki 1992, 29). Hence, the relationship between the nation, culture, and identity has a distinctively metaphysical dimension (Malkki 1992, 29). Nevertheless, the air of naturalness surrounding primordialist accounts of the nation remains.

Modernist perspectives on nationalism see the nation as a distinctly modern phenomenon that is tightly connected to other modern social developments. Hence, nation-building is conceived as a deliberate project by progressive individuals or groups who actively engaged in social and political modernisation (Anderson [1983] 2006; Gellner 1964). In that sense, modernist accounts of the nation are closely linked to instrumentalist notions on nationalism. Instrumentalists maintain that the nation is a socio-political construct that serves to assign or foreclose access to power and legitimacy (Anderson [1983] 2006; Gellner 1964, 168; Hechter and Okamoto 2001, 193). Hence, instrumentalism does not perceive the nation as an expression of any perennial, biological, or any other inalienable connection between people and land, but a means to assert power – and as such, the nation is related to the interests of specific people, particularly elites (Conversi 2006). Instrumentalism also embraces the notion that the nation is a modern, not a perennial phenomenon (Anderson [1983] 2006; Gellner 1983). Thus, modernist, instrumentalist nationalism sees the nation as a specific context-bound, modern phenomenon that is related to political goals and power.

10 In the biological, evolutionary sense.

In addition, there is another perspective related to the modernism, and instrumentalism dealing with the mode of construction. Next to being social institutions, Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006) and Homi Bhabha (1990) have maintained that nations are *narrative* constructs that create the illusion of a perennial, homogenous national community. Their notion of nations and nationalism tie in with Ernest Gellner who maintained that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner 1964, 168) – and this invention involves narrative strategies. From this perspective, primordialist narratives of the nation *employ* and *invent* national symbols – thus, *create* foundational myths as signs of national unity and homogeneity that did not exist before. Accordingly, ‘rootedness’ or a native, natural connection to a specific territory are *tropes* with which the relationship between territory and people are described (Malkki 1992). These myths bridge the gaps between the imagined (or demanded) ethnic, historical, and cultural singularity and the actual complex, hybrid reality resulting from internal historical, cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity (Anderson [1983] 2006; Bhabha 1990; Conversi 2006; Gellner 1983).

An in-between position between instrumentalism and primordialism can be related to Anthony Smith’s ethnosymbolist notion of nationalism (Smith 1986; 1991; 1995; 2002; 2009). Although Smith also embraces aspects of the modernist constructivist perspective (because he acknowledges the role of narrations, myths, and memory for nationalism), he still considers the nation to be rooted in *ethnie*, or ethnicity (Smith 2009, 104). Although, in his work, he makes clear that *ethnie* is not primordial, he still considers ethnicity as a determining factor for the emergence and persistence of nationalism:

a sense of common ethnicity is central to the persistence of nations through various processes of reinterpretation of national identities, whereby various strands of ‘our’ ethnic pasts are selected and debated. [...] Historically, we can trace a number of important cases of transformation of ethnic communities into ‘nations’, and an even greater number of cases where the symbolic elements of different ethnic groups fed into, or were used by, subsequent nationalisms in their nation-forming activities. To omit all reference to ethnic elements in the past and present is to make the task of explaining the contents and appeal of nations and nationalism infinitely more difficult (Smith 2009, 18-21).

Hence, in Smith's opinion, nations are forged socio-political institutions – but they still need “ethno-cultural resources”, e.g. an ethnic group's common myths and memories, to create a sense of community and solidarity (Smith 2009, 21). Therefore, Smith defines the nation as “a named human population occupying an historic territory, and sharing myths, memories, a single public culture and common rights and duties for all members” (Smith 1991, 14). Thus, in his notion of nationalism, nationhood is based on a definition and invocation of shared factors between a ‘national people’; and these shared aspects are related to ancestry; community, territory, history and destiny (Smith 2009, 91). Thus, although he does not maintain that these myths are accurate or authentic accounts of a real past, he considers an invocation of a shared ancestry; community, territory, history and destiny as crucial for the emergence and maintenance of nationalism.

4.2 *Alternative Concepts*

Discarding the logic of essentialism and nativism inscribed in primordialist and ethnosymbolist national accounts of culture, the academic climate of the 1990s and 2000s has given rise to analytical tools for the explanation of cultural formations that are associated with post-structuralism. The *postnational turn* (Appadurai 1996) and the preoccupation with hybridity and transnationalism has overridden nearly all national claims on culture, origin, or identity. Along with the related essentialist notions of racial and ethnic identity, national identity has been unveiled as a (Western) narrative construct that excludes and discriminates on a more or less arbitrary basis. In addition to having been exposed as a socially constructed, historically evolved narration, i.e. fiction (Anderson [1983] 2006, Bhabha 1990), nationalism has become “socially and politically undesirable” because the primordialist nation is potentially discriminatory towards minorities (Chrisman 1997, 51). Since primordialist nationalism is predicated on the notion of a common, inalienable identity of the people that is deeply entrenched in common origin, blood, and language (e.g. Smith 1986, 32), the concept is unable to represent the growing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of contemporary nations (Appadurai 1996). In addition, primordialist, nativist concepts of national identity are inadequate to express the various transnational dynamics of our

globalised world which is increasingly dominated by dislocation and dissemination.

Particularly in postcolonial studies, nationalist narratives that convey a primordialist notion of nationality have been met with increasing suspicion and deprecation. The national “son of the soil” (Appadurai 1996, 55) ideology, naturalising the link between national territory and national identity, is considered unqualified to account for postcolonial identities that “reach outside the normative territory and temporality (myth/history) of the nation-state” (Clifford 1994, 307). National fictions, in which personal, ethnic, and national identity overlap due to an inalienable bond between territory, ethnicity, and individual are unable to embrace the psychic and social reality of individuals whose sense of self is significantly affected by the experience of dislocation, miscegenation, and (post)modern ambiguity. This criticism is significant for representations of identity in the Caribbean. The historical linearity, territorial seclusiveness, and ethnic singularity inscribed into primordialist and ethnosymbolist national narratives (as in Smith 1991, 9) is deemed unsuitable to embrace the hybridising forces of cultural formation in the Caribbean.

Therefore, postnationalists and postcolonialists call for different kinds of communal narratives that represent the complexity of our social and psychic realities. The socio-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has prompted that “we need to think ourselves beyond the nation” and that we should introduce a “postnational geography” which embraces “ethnic plurality”, as well as “diasporic pluralism” (Appadurai 1996, 40, 56, 57, 58). Taking a similar line, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah calls for a concept that is able to accommodate our “global tribe” of mankind (Appiah 2006, xiii). Consequently, in many critical discourses, the nation has lost its power as an appropriate signifier for identification. As James Clifford states: “[p]eoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be ‘cured’ by merging into a new national community” (Clifford 1994, 307). The alternative, postmodern, supposedly more adequate concepts for articulation of identity in postcolonial studies, and particularly in the context of the Caribbean, have become associated with creolisation and hybridity. Further prominent

concepts to express territorial identitarian relations in postcolonial contexts are the Black Atlantic, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism.

4.2.1 *The Black Atlantic*

Paul Gilroy's seminal work, *The Black Atlantic* (1993), introduces a "transcultural, international [model of identity] formation with a rhizomorphic, fractal structure" (Gilroy 1993, 6). The term refers to the spread of African cultures in countries along the shores of the Atlantic due to the colonial slave trade. Hence, Gilroy offers a concept of ethnic community that surpasses national borders, but takes into consideration the various involvements of African people at all sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, the concept also accommodates the painful history of the slave ships and the fateful Middle Passage. Rejecting the preoccupation with roots and origins in "modern black political culture" (Gilroy 1993, 19) and various essentialist Black ideologies like Garveyism, *négritude*, and Ethiopianism (Edwards 2004, 6), the Black Atlantic offers an account of (Black) identity as an indefinite, ambiguous, and eminently transnational process that can only be "appropriately approached via the homonym routes/roots" (Gilroy 1993, 19). Despite the fact that roots and rootedness functioned as a vehicle of cultural and political empowerment for the descendants of former slaves, the ideological return to African roots is rejected by Gilroy, because he considers a focus on Africa too narrow and unsuitable to embrace the dissemination of African culture across national borders. In this 'travelling discourse' (Clifford 1994, 306) major tropes are: the ship, as it "immediately focuses attention to the middle passage" (Gilroy 1993, 4), and the sailor who is "moving to and fro between nations, crossing borders" effortlessly (Gilroy 1993, 3). Accordingly, the "transcultural, [...] rhizomorphic, fractal structure" (Gilroy 1993, 6) of the Black Atlantic evokes associations with *uprootedness* or *un-homeliness* (Bhabha 1994, 15). Nevertheless, Gilroy's concept succeeds in offering a sense of community and cultural impact in the face of dissemination and hardship.

4.2.2 *Diaspora*

Joining Paul Gilroy's account of transnational formations of identity and Homi Bhabha's hybridity, the concept of *diaspora* has been met with approval among

postcolonial critics. Taking the same line as the Black Atlantic, diaspora focuses on the various transnational and cross-Atlantic ties that are not only salient features of postcolonial, but also more generally of postmodern forms of living. However, it is less centred on the dispersal African cultures, but more on transnational and transcultural relations resulting from migration as such. Diaspora tries to accommodate those kinds of lives that are faced with the repercussions of a postmodern, globalised world. Diaspora embraces the dissemination and mixture of cultures, as well as the painful scattering and remoteness of families and friends. Opposing theoretical approaches which accept the nation as a socio-political fact and basis for their contemplations, the historian James Clifford proposes diaspora as a theoretical concept that “can be taken as nonnormative starting point[.] for a discourse that is traveling or hybridizing in new global conditions” (Clifford 1994, 306). In his opinion, ex-colonial, modern identities and their “transnational connections [...] need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland” (Clifford 1994, 306). Affirming Gilroy’s Black Atlantic, Clifford emphasises that the “black diaspora is a cosmopolitan, Atlantic phenomenon” (Clifford 1994, 315) that defies national borders. Similar to Gilroy, he appears to deprecate Black Caribbean identities predicated on nationalist ideas (Clifford 1994, 315). Therefore, diaspora offers a concept of identitarian ties and affiliations that overcomes the limitations of national borders.

4.2.3 *Cosmopolitanism*

In recent debates, cosmopolitanism has also been re-contemplated as a suitable vehicle for the articulation of postcolonial, postmodern identities and their territorial relations, since the concept is presumably open, un-discriminating, and evidently *transnational*, hence unrestricted by national claims on identity. Accordingly, it also aligns itself with the Black Atlantic and diaspora. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism bears certain ethical implications. In *Ethics in a World of Strangers*, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah calls for a reconsideration of cosmopolitanism in the face of globalisation which entails new “obligations to others [...] that stretch beyond [...] the ties of kith and kin” and which demands a consideration “not just of human life but of particular human

lives” (Appiah 2006, xv) in all their forms and practices. In relation to migration, eviction, and refuge, Jacques Derrida emphasised solidarity which he sees as an unalienable characteristic of cosmopolitanism, along with “the right for asylum and the duty to hospitality” (Derrida [1997] 2005, 4). Furthermore Derrida stressed the potentialities of the cosmopolitan metropolis, “equipped with new rights and greater sovereignty, [to] open up new horizons of possibility” (Derrida [1997] 2005, 7) in opposition to the supposedly restricting and discriminating regulations and boundaries of the nation. Accordingly, I will consider cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework in which the transnational and the local meet, and which allows for an accommodation of hybrid and creole identities.

4.2.4 Criticism

In sum, all three concepts are ostensibly *transnational*, and thereby, they reject any association with nationalism. However, lumping together all kinds of nationalisms and dismissing them as a “reprehensible self-inflicted false consciousness, worthy of denunciation” (Chrisman 1997, 56), bypasses the importance nationalism has played in the Caribbean, as has been elaborated by e.g. C.L.R. James in *The Black Jacobins* ([1938] 2001), a historical analysis of the 1791-1804 Haitian revolution. The nation “is an imagined thing” (Appadurai 1996, 41), but that does not make it any less real to the people who are imagining and claiming it for themselves. In defence of third world nationalism, Ellen Shohat argues that:

the anti-essentialist emphasis on hybrid identities comes dangerously close to dismissing all searches for communitarian origins as an archaeological excavation of an idealized, irretrievable past. Yet, on another level, while avoiding any nostalgia for a prelapsarian community, [... f]or communities which have undergone brutal ruptures, now in the process of forging a collective identity, no matter how hybrid that identity has been before, during, and after colonialism, the retrieval and re-inscription of a fragmented past becomes a crucial contemporary site for forging a resistant collective identity [... for] the politico-cultural movements of various racial-ethnic communities (Shohat 1992, 109f).

Shohat emphasises the role of national identity for (post)colonial resistance and its potential for empowerment and agency. However, unlike Chris Bongie who

maintains that it is hard to think, let alone express, identity completely outside conventional, i.e. essentialist, identity schemas (Bongie 1998, 11), Shohat argues that identity does not necessarily need to be “unitary and transparent” (Shohat 1992, 109f). Furthermore, Laura Chrisman cautions to “posit nationalism and outer- or trans-nationalism as mutually incompatible political goals, cultural values, and analytic perspectives” (Chrisman 1997, 56), and neither should essentialist versions of identity be considered as incompatible with universalist ones. Although it is important to criticise definitions of nationality that conflate nation, ethnicity, and state, such as the aforementioned definition provided by Anthony Smith (2002, 65), it is also important to look at the different versions of nationalism that emerged in Caribbean contexts and which embrace ethnic and territorial multiplicity, such as the *Callaloo nation* in Trinidad (see Khan 2004). Furthermore, Anne Cheng argues that it is often overlooked that each theoretical position, essentialist or postmodern, comes with its “own brands of allegiances, each demanding an identity” (Cheng 2001, 26). Similarly, Simon Gikandi criticises any notion that would depict cosmopolitanism, hybridity, and postcolonialism as an opposition to ‘the nation’. He argues that claiming a cosmopolitan identity is adhering to conservative identitarian paradigms in disguise (Gikandi 2010, 33). Accordingly, cosmopolitanism still presumes a subjectivity which is identifiable – and notably rooted in intellectual culture. Hence, in relation to identity, the borders between essentialist and universalist positions are not hermetically sealed off. A similar observation can be made in relation to nationality and national borders. Gikandi maintains that “cosmopolitans are not *stateless*: they move freely *across* [national] boundaries” (my emphasis; Gikandi 2010, 32). The postcolonial discourse, he claims, is an eminently elitist discourse of individuals who can afford to act out the legal and emotional freedom to neglect national boundaries (Gikandi 2010, 33). The focus on postcolonial theory ignores the specific reality and the devastating circumstances by which most ex-colonial people enter the global system: as refugees and illegal aliens (Gikandi 2010, 34). Interestingly, a similar issue is related to the content and origin of national identities. Often, as Walker Connor remarks, postcolonial nationalisms are not even narrations of ‘the people’ whose identity or consciousness the national narrative is supposed to reflect, but they are

the inventions of the colonial elite (Connor 1994, 159). By claiming to be able to speak for these *others* (no matter if in nationalist or cosmopolitan terms) and by taking a position which is both metropolitan and ex-colonial, postcolonial elites “conceal[.] [their own] peculiar, particular and often privileged entry into the world cultural system” (Gikandi 2010, 33f). Therefore, many have called for and exercised an intersectional perspective on postcolonialism or nationalism and their interplay with race, class, and gender (e.g. Donnell 2006; Forbes 2005). Hence, no matter which kind of identity one is presented with, one needs to consider the position from which it is created.

Accordingly, depicting all ‘third world nationalisms’ as an essentialist thing of the past would conceal the tension and multiplicity of different notions incorporated within them (Shohat 1992, 104). Furthermore, Stuart Murray has proposed that postcolonial nationalism undermines European nationalism: “[t]he different versions of the national produced in postcolonial contexts disrupt the seeming stability and function of the inherited European concept” (Murray 1997, 12). The multiplicity and discrepancies within postcolonial images of the nation *re-imagine* the nation and appropriate the concept to different contexts and people. Hence, a historically and theoretically sensitive analysis of articulations of identities in the Caribbean will require a more complex notion of both postcolonial as well as national identity. Vera Kutzinski proposes that, as literary and cultural scholars, we need to consider that there are many and flexible identities – identities which are assigned, claimed, imagined and overcome, identities “which include, but are not limited to nationality” (Kutzinski 2001, 17). In particular, it might be fruitful to consider the synchronicity of nationalist and other versions of identity. As Monserrat Guibernau has pointed out:

In spite of globalization and emerging cosmopolitanism, which so far is primarily an elite phenomenon, local and national attachments remain strong and I expect them to continue to be so in the foreseeable future. [Nationalism] is not a process opposed to cosmopolitanism, but a process parallel to it (Guibernau 2004, 138).

I will take the suggested synchronicity of national and postmodern notions of identity as a starting point for my analysis. However, I would not necessarily

embrace the notion of parallelism, as suggested by Guibernau, since parallel implies the impossibility of an encounter, and thus, of a mutual influence.

4.3 *Analytical Foundations and Prospects*

Generally, I consider national identity as a narrative construct as proposed by Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006) and Homi Bhabha (1990). Hence, I take an instrumentalist perspective on nationalism in my analyses (Conversi 2006, 17). In the former sections, I already concluded that nativist notions of identity and also the ethnosymbolist definition of the nation, as proposed by Anthony Smith (2002), fall short of fully embracing this constructed nature of national identity. However, many national narratives still do follow a certain pattern that falls in line with nativist notions. As Monserrat Guibernau has pointed out:

Belief in a shared culture, history, traditions, symbols, kinship, language, religion, territory, founding moment, and destiny have been invoked, with varying intensity at different times and places, by peoples claiming to share a particular national identity (Guibernau 2004, 134).

Hence, the aforementioned national premises of common ethnicity, territory, and history, which were already present in primordialist versions of nationalism, still remain salient in national narratives. Notwithstanding the obvious inadequacies to depict the complexities of actual historical, territorial, or ethnic entanglements, national narratives are actively and deliberately constructed by specific people in specific historical contexts – and often national identity is constructed as if it were, in fact, essential. According to Guibernau (2004), perceived similarity or commonality within a community can lead “to the subjective belief that its members are ancestrally related” (Guibernau 2004, 134). Therefore, although the national community is an imagined one, it is not any less real for those who claim it. Furthermore, Guibernau proposes a notion of national identity that is not merely based on ethnicity, territory, and history. His concept of national identity contains five dimensions: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political. Particular attention should be paid to the psychological dimension and the fundamentally non-rational nature of the sense of belonging and community that is *created* by the national narrative (Guibernau 2004, 135). Importantly, this positive “emotional bond” does not exist priory as some kind of innate primordial

psychological connection, but is created through the narrative (Guibernau 2004, 135). Despite its dependence on a constructed narrative, this psychological effect plays a salient role in explaining the benefits of the national narrative, and Guibernau emphasises the positive psychological consequences of this emotional bond:

The strength of emotions overrides reason, because it is through a sentimental identification with the nation that individuals transcend their finite and, at least for some, meaningless lives. Their efforts and sacrifices become worthwhile, even heroic, and the conviction of having contributed to a higher aim, that of preserving and enhancing the nation, increases the individuals' self-esteem (Guibernau 2004, 135-6).

Guibernau refers to several psychological aspects of identity: the emotional component of identification related to feelings of belonging and security, as well as the relation between identity and esteem needs. However, he neither offers the theoretical foundations nor the analytical tools to engage with these aspects. Thus, although I generally agree with Guibernau's notion that national identity comprises several dimensions, i.e. psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political, he does not offer the appropriate tools to analyse the psychological dimension that he proposes. Therefore, I will generally adhere to Guibernau's notion of national identity; however, I will introduce some adaptations that will allow for a more detailed analysis of the psychological dimension.

Correspondingly, I am not only interested in the narratological particularities of a specific national narrative, but also in the reason, occasion, and the purpose of its construction. For instance, the interaction between existing discourses on nationalism and people who perceive themselves as sharing certain characteristics should be taken into account. Furthermore, I would also suggest that this lack of adequate analytical tools related to psychological aspects of identity, as well as a general neglect of a psychological dimension is symptomatic of postcolonial discourses on identity in general. Identity has mainly been discussed in terms of political agency and cultural empowerment (Khan 2007; Knörr 2008) or dismissed for its association with discriminating European ideologies (Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1991). This focus on the political, cultural, and historical components of identity appears to be rather limited, because it fails to explain the ongoing preoccupation with identity, despite the postmodern

revelation of its constructedness. Laura Chrisman has even suggested that the tenacity with which identity is defended should be considered “as a symptom, rather than as a cause” (Chrisman 1997, 56). Considering identity as symptomatic of a cause other than its political usefulness calls for a different approach that does not only consider identity to be located at the level of discourse, but at the intersection between discourse and the psychic domain. In the following passage, I will explain why I think that both nationalism (as suggested by Guibernau) and postmodern notions of identity might benefit from a more conceptualised version of the psychology of postcolonial identity. Therefore, in order to fully grasp this dimension, I will offer a proposal for a more detailed psychological approach which can be used as a supplement to the already existing theoretical concepts for the analysis of identity in the Caribbean.

5. *Power and Psyche*

What most theoretical concepts in postcolonial studies commonly share is their distinct political notion of identity. As such, they grapple with accommodating psychological perspectives on identity. However, identity is not only a political tool for empowerment, but identity is a psychological phenomenon. However, this psychological dimension of identity is not sufficiently accounted for in the discourse of identity in postcolonial studies. Essentialising discourses, such as *négritude*, did not specify the psychological processes of identification, as they consider identity as an inherent quality that is independent of psychological states or contextual factors. Hybridity and creolisation neglect the psychological (e.g. cognitive or emotional) mechanisms of identity, because they focus on the social-constructedness of identity on the level of discourse and in relation the norms and power-structures of society. This focus on discourse and the political domain seems to be linked to the salient role of post-structuralism and *New Historicism* in postcolonial studies.

Many of the seminal proponents of postcolonial studies, such as Edward Said or Homi Bhabha, owe a substantial part of their ideas to the work of Michel

Foucault. His work centres on discourse and power, and thus, provided a critical perspective for the analysis of colonial power-structures. Furthermore, he also had a very specific notion of personhood. For Foucault, the subject, i.e. a person endowed with agency, basically emerges through its *subjection* to power (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733). As Foucault considers the subject to be a product of its self-disciplining internalisation of social norms, its identity needs to be discussed in terms of discourse. However, Foucault's theory of the formation of the subject has been criticised for its inability to account for the fact that identification is a psychological process (Butler 1997, 18).

The neglect of the psychic dimension of identity has already been noted by various scholars. As Judith Butler observes, "Foucault is notoriously taciturn on the topic of the psyche" (Butler 1997, 18). Foucault seems to consider the psychic domain, summarized as 'the soul', as a regulatory 'instrument and effect of power' (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733). As such, 'the soul' is considered a *part of power* (and therefore, not innate)¹¹ or the product of a mimetic internalisation of power, producing and regulating the body's agency (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733). Hence, Foucault's notion of the psychic domain suggests that identity is as an internalised proxy of power.

Butler, however, argues that social norms "are transformed [...] through a kind of internalization that is not, ultimately, mimetic" (Butler 1995, 173).¹² Hence, according to Butler, the internalised norm within the psyche is not a mimetic double of the social norm in the social sphere outside the psyche. Nevertheless, Butler emphasises that "the ontological dualism that posits a separation of the political and the psychic" (Butler 1997, 19) needs to be refused. She suggests that the discourse of identity needs to engage in the theorisation of the link *between* the political and the psychic domain. In line with this argumentation, Anne Cheng claims that "psychical experience is not separate

11 The notion of the soul as an effect and instrument of power that incarcerates the body (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733) conveys that everything 'inside' is coming from 'outside' – as if the soul were a pure manifestation of Lacan's *Symbolic* (Lacan [1977] 2009, 71-73). Consequently, the body is considered an 'empty' vessel, an unresistant surface on which the disciplinary effects of power can be inscribed (Butler 1997, 84).

12 Bhabha also rejects the idea that "Psyche and Society mirror each other, transparently mirroring their difference, without loss, into a historic totality. Forms of social and psychic alienation and aggression [...] can never be acknowledged as determinate and constitutive conditions of civil authority" (Bhabha 1994, 42).

from the realms of society or law but is the very place where the law and society are processed” (Cheng 2001, x); and Jacqueline Rose suggests that “if ideology [or power] is effective, it is because it works at the most rudimentary levels of psychic identity” (Rose 1986, 5). Therefore, in falling short of embracing this psychological dimension, current postcolonial concepts, such as hybridity and creolisation, might not be fully adequate for the analysis of identity, even at the level of representation.

In addition, Stuart Hall (1996) argues that a shift in perspective and the subversion of colonial power structures can only be achieved, if it is considered that colonial ideology

works at *both* the [...] levels of psychic identity [...] *and* at the level of discursive formation and practices which constitute the social field; and that it is the in the articulation of these mutually constitutive but not identical fields that the real conceptual problems lie (Hall 1996, 7).

According to Hall, postcolonial discourses of identity need to consider Foucault’s notion of discourse and power, but he also calls for

a theory of what the mechanism are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the ‘positions’ to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and ‘perform’ these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves (Hall 1996, 14).

The theory that Hall seems to have in mind does not only reject the idea of the body as an empty vessel that needs to be filled with socio-cultural content, or a ‘soul’ that itself is an instrument of power; it also implies that there is an internal motivation that drives the process of identification.

Although the psychoanalytical perspectives of Frantz Fanon (e.g. [1952] 1967) and Lacan (e.g. [1977] 2008) have always played a (sometimes smaller, sometimes bigger) role in postcolonialism, their impact in terms of introducing a proper psychological dimension has been meagre, and the tendency to mainly focus on the political domain prevailed. Therefore, several scholars have argued that postcolonialism needs to draw more attention to the psychic domain (Bhabha

1994; Brah 1992; Hall 1996). Bhabha suggested that “[t]he time has come to return to Fanon” (Bhabha 1994, 91), and he positively acknowledges that Fanon was “privileging the psychic dimension” (Bhabha 1994, 61). According to Bhabha, Fanon’s “psychoanalytical language of demand and desire” operates outside the dichotomy of the essentialising and universalising discourses (Bhabha 1994, 60). Fanon does not raise questions of “the colonial man in universalist terms of the liberal humanist [...], nor is he posing an ontological question about [the colonial] Man’s being” (Bhabha 1994, 61). Notwithstanding his political overtone (which too plays an important role in his writing), Fanon is concerned with what the colonial man *desires*. However, it would be an overly hasty decision to uncritically adopt Fanon’s notion of the “Manichean delirium” (Fanon [1961] 1969, 30) in which he considers the colonial man to live, or to relapse into speculations about the psychopathology of “the Negro” who “lives an ambiguity that is extraordinarily neurotic” (Fanon [1952] 1967, 192) and who “is forever in combat with his own image” (Fanon [1952] 1967, 194). Furthermore, psychoanalytic and psychological perspectives differ, and therefore, it might not only be necessary to return to Fanon and psychoanalysis, but also to introduce a psychological perspective into postcolonial discourses on identity. Therefore, although it might no longer be appropriate to ask “What does the black man want?” (Fanon [1952] 1967, 8), it might be necessary to ask, together with Hall, “Who needs identity?” (Hall 1996, 1) – and why.

5.1 *Identity in Psychology*

Historically, the psychological notion of identity was coined by Erik Erikson (1956) and referred to a person’s sense of self-sameness. Generally, identity is an integrative achievement of the mind – hence, a construct. Originally, Erikson used the term in the context of developmental psychology. He maintained that towards the end of adolescence, after a period of “*psychosocial moratoria* [...] a lasting [role] pattern of ‘inner identity’, [...] a more final self-definition [...] is scheduled” (Erikson 1956, 66). Accordingly, he saw identity as the result of a separation process, a decision regarding which values to hold, or which goals to pursue in life. Hence, having an identity was equated with having established a sense of psychic integrity. For Erikson, the two central psychological functions of identity

are *continuity* and *contrast*. On the one hand, identity is the psychological achievement to develop a “conscious *sense* of [...] self-sameness” or self-*continuity* (Erikson 1956, 57). On the other hand, although identity is an achievement of the mind, it is not an innate quality of the psyche *per se*. It needs to be constructed in concordance with and in *contrast* to others. Accordingly, identity is a “psychosocial” construct (Erikson 1956, 56), a psychological achievement that is made possible only with reference to the social domain. Identity denotes a *feeling* of “a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” or a deliberate contrasting the self from a defining character of others (Erikson 1956, 57). Thus, identity is experienced in terms of essences, although it is a construct. Although many aspects of Erikson’s notion of identity were retained, today, the psychological definition of a person’s sense of self is more complex. There are several branches within psychology which deal with identity and identification. In this study, cognitive and social psychological perspectives on identity are presented.

5.1.1 *The Self-Concept*

Cognitive psychologists see identity as the achievement of an actively construing mind. Today, when cognitive psychologists talk about identity or a person’s sense of self, they often refer to a person’s *self-concept*. Basically, a person’s *self-concept* comprises the sum of inferences that a person can make about her or his self (Baumeister 1997a, 681). Similarly to Erikson, contemporary psychologists consider the self-concept to be a symbolic, socio-linguistic phenomenon constructed out of *meaning* – or more precisely, a network of interrelated concepts that assign meaning to oneself and others (Baumeister 1999). Similar to linguistic and (post)structuralist notions of meaning and identity, psychological theories assume that identity is defined in relation to others (Turner et al. 1987) and, thus, categorisation entails the distinction between self and other (Turner and Reynolds 2012). Hence, Erikson’s notion of how identity is created, i.e. through continuity and contrast, is retained. However, the notion of self-concept is more complex, and it distinguishes between different kinds of interrelatedness: interpersonal (“I” vs. “not me”, i.e. others), intergroup (“us” vs. “them”), and super-ordinate group (“we”) (Gaertner, Dovidio, and Bachman 1996; Turner et al. 1987). A person’s

self-concept can be broadly divided into two domains: *personal identity* and *social identity*. *Personal identity* refers to self-knowledge about subjectively relevant characteristics which establish a person's uniqueness (Baumeister 1999; Hogg and Turner 1987). In addition, personal identity also includes projective aspects such as possible, ideal, and ought selves (Carver et al. 1999). *Social identity* refers to knowledge about and feelings related to one's belonging to certain social groups, i.e. social identity generates self-knowledge and specific emotions by making inferences about one's self based on group membership (Turner et al. 1987; Turner and Reynolds 2004; Tajfel 1974). However, personal and social identities are not entirely distinct from each other, but they interact (Hogg and Williams 2000; Rubin and Hewstone 1998). Furthermore, people have several personal and social identities, and, depending on the situation, some identities may have a greater influence on a person's (self-)interpretations and behaviours than others. Hence, discourses of identity that can be found in literature are mainly relevant in relation to social identity. When speaking of identity in literary contexts, identity refers to the discursive aspects that influence a person's social identity.

In comparison to linguistic and (post)structuralist notions of meaning and identity, psychological theories of identity add a third, evaluative component: *self-esteem*. *Self-esteem* refers to evaluations related to a person's self concept and determines how people feel about certain characteristics of themselves or the groups they belong to (Baumeister 1997a). Linking self-esteem to the self-concept provides a connection between certain (allegedly universal) emotions, such as shame, anger, and pride (Ekman 1999), and the historically specific content of the self concept and evaluation criteria (Baumeister 1999). Hence, the psychological notion of identity acknowledges the socio-linguistic, historically specific meanings that identity can take, its inter-relational nature, as well as the emotional evaluations and psychological functions identity is associated with.

5.1.2 *How Identity is Created*

Generally speaking, identities emerge because people self-categorise and identify with the categories that they think they belong to (Turner and Reynolds 2012). According to George Kelly, every person has a set of categories or "personal

constructs” through which they understand the world: “[people] look[.] at [the] world through transparent patterns or templates which [they] create[.] and then attempt[.] to fit over the realities of which the world is composed” (Kelly 1955, 9). Importantly, these constructs give meaning to the world, to the self, to others, and therefore, they determine their intelligibility: “[people] create[.] their own ways of seeing the world in which [they] live[.]; the world does not create them for [them]” (Kelly 1955, 9). Moreover, Kelly identified thirteen principles, or corollaries¹³ according to which people organise meaning into categories. In addition to being a description of how meaning is organised in language, these principles reflect how people integrate new knowledge and observations into their existing categories. However, it is important to note that these categories are not made up by the individual from scratch in a cultural void. Mostly, categories reflect cultural meanings, and they are shared by people who hold that these categories are important (Fiske, Lin, and Neuberg 1999). Nevertheless, people can differ in relation to the categories they embrace, depending on the meaning and importance they assign to them. The same holds true for identities that people claim. Some categories (such as race and gender) are more or less forced upon the person, while other categories can be embraced more loosely (e.g. club identities, music styles) (Baumeister 1997a). Hence, identity is the (more or less) flexible product of the psycho-social process of self-categorisation which interacts with psychological as well as social-normative factors.

13 The construction corollary: a person anticipates events by construing their replications. [...] The individuality corollary: persons differ from each other in their construction of events. [...] The organization corollary: each person characteristically evolves, for [their] convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs. [...] The dichotomy corollary: a person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs. [...] The choice corollary: a person chooses for [themselves] that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of [their] system. [...] The range corollary: a construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only. [...] The experience corollary: a person's construction system varies as [they] successively construe[.] the replication of events. [...] The modulation corollary: the variation in a person's construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose range of convenience the variants lie. [...] The fragmentation corollary: a person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other. [...] The commonality corollary: to the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, [their] psychological processes are similar to the other person. [...] The sociality corollary: to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, [they] may play a role in a social process involving the other person (Kelly 1955, 46-104).

5.1.3 *The Narrative Aspect of Identity*

[I]dentity is not synonymous with the ‘self’ or the ‘self-concept’ [...]; rather, it refers to a particular quality or flavoring of people’s self-understandings” (McAdams 2001, 102).

Generally, people have several personal and social identities. Furthermore, these identities are somewhat flexible, and they also interact with situational factors (Baumeister 1999; Sherman, Hamilton, and Lewis 1999). Dependent on which identity is salient in specific situations, one specific identity may be more representative of the person’s current behaviour and attitudes than another. However, people also possess ‘chronic’ social and personal identities which are generally cognitively more available to them, and thus, have a greater impact on their cognitions, attitudes, and behaviour across situations (Sherman, Hamilton, and Lewis 1999). The psychological theory of narrative identity seeks to provide a framework for the representation of these more enduring kinds of identities.

Recent psychological theories have focused their attention towards the narrative aspect of human behaviour and cognition. Dan McAdams and Elli Schachter have suggested a *life story model of identity* (McAdams 2001, Schachter 2011). According to McAdams, people weave their past, present, and future into the fabric of a coherent story, including “settings, scenes, characters, plots, and themes” (McAdams 2001, 117). Thereby, they construct one overarching identity that provides their lives “with with unity and purpose”, as well as “temporal, biographical, causal, and thematic coherence” (McAdams 2001, 100, 103). By claiming the position of the main character, stories endow people with a sense of purposefulness but also agency and autonomy (McAdams 2001, 117). The symbolic level of the story provides the teller with the possibility to integrate their different and contradicting (synchronic) selves, as well as their past, present, and future (diachronic) selves into “a wide range of self-stories, and these stories are nested in larger and overlapping stories, creating ultimately a kind of anthology of the self” (McAdams 2001, 102, 117). Jack Bauer et al. even found a correlation between narrative identity, psychological well-being, and happiness; they argue that the integrative function of identity narrations are important for interpreting oneself as happy (Bauer et al. 2008, 81).

In addition, narrative identity also engages with the socio-historical context:

Life stories are psychosocial constructions, coauthored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person's life is embedded and given meaning. As such, individual life stories reflect cultural values and norms, including assumptions about gender, race, and class [...]. [People] are born, they grow, they proliferate, and they eventually die according to the norms, rules, and traditions that prevail in a given society, according to a society's implicit understandings of what counts as a tellable story, a tellable life [...]. Life stories are intelligible [only] within a particular cultural frame (McAdams 2001, 102, 112).

Accordingly, for analytical purposes, it is important to consider the historical and cultural circumstances in which narrative identities emerge and to look at the discourses that inform them. Although based on biographical events, life narratives transcend the level of facts, but include historically and personally contingent values, beliefs, and motives.

5.2 *Psychological Functions of Identity*

In comparison to the content oriented notion of identity in cultural studies, in psychology, the identity is deemed to serve several functions (Katz 1960). On a very basic level, these functions can be distinguished into cognitive and need functions.

5.2.1 *Cognitive Functions*

For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it (Lippmann [1922] 2010, 11).

To a certain extent, identity requires categorisation: distinguishing between self and other implies the existence of a cognitive structure that can recognise and discriminate between entities. As the quote by Lippmann ([1922] 2010) suggests, humans categorise in order to be able to live in a complex and ever changing environment. In other words, thinking in categories allows people to cognitively

represent an environment which would exceed our mental capacities if it had to be perceived and understood in all its complexity. Hence, categorisation is adaptive in the sense of helping people to understand and manage their environment effectively: “knowing what to expect – and exactly where, when, and from whom to expect it – is information that renders the world a meaningful, orderly, and predictable place” (Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000, 94). Thinking in categories reduces uncertainty which basically makes the world seem safe and predictable (Kunda 1999). Not-knowing, ambiguity, and the failure to understand potentially create anxiety and reduce psychological well-being (Kelly 1955, 486-534). Supporting this explanation of categorisation, psychological research has found that children start to perceive and categorise from a very early age onwards (Fagan and Singer 1979). In addition, people generally seem to dislike categorical ambiguity and are motivated to reduce it (Deaux and Lewis 1984). Therefore, in psychology, categorisation is considered as a human universal (Brown 1991). Thus, the cognitive function of assigning an identity to ourselves and others is the simplification of the complexity of our social world (Turner and Reynolds 2012).

Correspondingly, people partially construct and make sense of their social reality by putting themselves and others into categories (Turner et al. 1987). To a certain extent, categories provide information about *social roles*, i.e. which traits, behaviour, clothing, emotions, etc. are appropriate for individuals belonging to a specific category (Eagly and Wood 2012). Hence, (self-)categorisation does not only assign identities to self and other, it also makes salient behavioural scripts and social norms. Although this does not strike one as a positive consequence, the awareness of social norms and social roles allows people to predict the behaviour of others and to make inferences about which behaviour will be appropriate in specific situations – which helps to prevent social exclusion (Blair 2002). Hence, people *want* to have (what is called) an identity.

A similar function can be associated with narrative identity. By bringing episodic life events into a meaningful order, narrative strategies help people to make sense of their lives and experiences (McAdams 2001). This hypothesis is supported by other research which found that narrative structures contributed significantly to how events in a text were understood and remembered (Radvansky, Spieler, and Zacks 1993; Radvansky and Copeland 2006; Radvansky

2011). Hence, narrative identity is an active, motivated act of sense-making and evaluative streamlining that helps people to perceive their lives as secure and predictable.

5.2.2 *Need Functions*

According to motivational psychology, all of human behaviour, emotion, and cognition is driven by *basic psychological needs* which are “necessary conditions for the growth and well-being of people’s personality and cognitive structures[...]” (Ryan and Deci 2002, 7). These needs are considered to be a product of human evolution in the sense that they represent specific psychological characteristics that provided an adaptive advantage for survival (Brown 1991; de Waal 2002). As such, they are universal, i.e. “they represent requirements, rather than acquired motives [and] [a]s such, they are expected to be evident in all cultures” (Ryan and Deci 2002, 7).

One of the earliest theories on psychological needs was proposed by Abraham Maslow. He argued that people have five internal needs which are organised hierarchically according to their fulfilment priority: physiological needs, a need for safety, a need for love and belonging, self-esteem needs and a need for self-actualization (Maslow 1941, 91). Later, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan summarised Maslow’s need hierarchy into three basic psychological needs: *relatedness*, *competence*, and *autonomy* (Ryan and Deci 2002; Baumeister 1997b). *Relatedness* corresponds to the need for belongingness to others in terms of individuals and one’s community and the desire to care for others and being cared for by others (Ryan and Deci 2002, 7). *Competence* refers to a person’s sense of efficacy in relation to one’s social environment (Ryan and Deci 2002, 7). *Autonomy* means acting according to integrated values and beliefs, as “being perceived origin or source” of one’s actions (Ryan and Deci 2002, 7). These needs are considered to be adaptive in the sense that they may have provided evolutionary advantages in the past. For example the need for affiliation may have evolved because individuals who preferred to live together in groups were more likely to survive, and hence, to pass on their genes to the next generation (Brown 1991; de Waal 2002). The need for competence and autonomy may have evolved because they presented advantages in terms of capabilities to manage, control, and

predict the environment; i.e. characteristics that may also have provided individuals that had these capacities with better chances of survival and reproduction (Brown 1991; de Waal 2002).¹⁴

Furthermore, the needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy are closely connected to the evaluative component of the self-concept, i.e. self-esteem. Generally, humans are motivated to develop and maintain a positive self-esteem (Aberson, Healy, and Romero 2000; Rubin and Hewstone 1998; Baumeister 1999; Baumeister 1997b), and there are two explanations that link self-esteem the basic psychological needs.

The first explanation is associated with the need for relatedness. Considering that identity is always created in relation to others (Festinger 1954), some researchers have proposed that self-esteem should be considered as a “*sociometer*” that provides information about a person’s feelings of being accepted or rejected by others (Leary et al. 1995). Hence, considering that people are social animals that have adapted to a life in groups, ‘self-esteem’ might be a psychological tool providing information about the functioning of the group and one’s status within the group. Therefore, people’s motivation to maintain a positive self-esteem is related to social adjustment, group cohesion, and promotes adherence to group norms.

Another explanation is provided by *terror management theory* (Burke, Martens, and Faucher 2010; Greenberg et al. 1990) which links self-esteem to autonomy and competence. The theory assumes that people cope with their own mortality by seeking accomplishments and by creating cultural meanings which make them feel good about themselves (Burke, Martens, and Faucher 2010; Greenberg et al. 1990). Feelings of accomplishment, i.e. competence and autonomy, may provide people with a sense of importance and immortality (Burke, Martens, and Faucher 2010). Thus, people secure their positive self-

14 Although the explanations and concepts discussed above are generally accepted in psychology, evolutionary explanations about functions and basic psychological needs should be considered carefully. Although it seems reasonable to assume that some psychological characteristics are the product of evolutionary processes, psychological needs should not be considered as absolute, nor should they be assumed to be equally present in everyone (de Waal 2002). Furthermore, as most psychological phenomena, these needs always interact with the environment, i.e. the context and discourse. People’s motivations and desires can differ significantly, and they are dependent on factors such as historical context, situation, personality, history of interaction, etc.

esteem by constructing world-views that give them a sense of meaning and importance (Burke, Martens, and Faucher 2010; Greenberg et al. 1990). Hence, positive self-esteem is a psychological coping mechanism creating an illusion of importance, security, and immortality which interacts with cultural meanings and values.

Importantly, self-esteem requires some kind of identification or categorisation. A person's self-esteem is based on evaluative judgements in relation to the standards and values implied by their self-concept and, thus, by the identities they claim (Baumeister 1997b). In line with terror management theory, claiming identities that are associated with positive cultural meanings and values is a means to maintain a positive self-esteem. According to the sociometer hypothesis, adhering to group identities rewards people with self-esteem due to its association with social adjustment and prevention of social ostracism. Either way, people create their identities in ways that put them in a favourable light and associates them positively with others or distinguishes them positively from others (Burke, Martens, and Faucher 2010; Greenberg et al. 1990). Moreover, people even "process, remember, and judge self-referent information in ways that maximize the positivity of the self-concept" which helps them to maintain a positive self-esteem (Sedikides 1997, 1330). Hence, once people have claimed a positive identity, they do not easily disengage.

However, people do not have only one identity, but they have several – and they have several personal and social identities. Although these identities all interact with self-esteem, they are related to self-esteem in slightly different ways. In order to make positive distinctions between themselves and others, people seek to construct *personal identities* that are unique and self-sufficient (Hogg and Turner 1987). Hence, on an interpersonal level, people try to create and claim identities that establish that they are different (and better) than other people (Brewer 1991). On a group level, this distinction is more complex. In general, people are motivated to self-categorise and identify with social groups, because identifying with a group (or category) reduces uncertainty, provides structure, and it serves their need for relatedness. However, the need to for positive distinctiveness remains. Therefore, people balance their need to be unique and their need for affiliation by identifying with groups that offer *optimal*

distinctiveness (Brewer 1991). These groups allow people to maintain positively distinct personal identities, while simultaneously offering a sense of belonging through group identities (Brewer 1991; Tajfel and Turner 1986).

In addition, self-esteem also plays a role in how people assemble their identities into one coherent narrative (McAdams 2001). The basic psychological needs of relatedness, autonomy, and competence have been proven to play an important role as both motives for and themes within life stories (McAdams 2001, 112). Furthermore, Schachter maintains that narratological specificities “reveal [...] the goals, constraints, and values guiding identity construction” (Schachter 2011, 107) and, according to McAdams, they also offer an insight into a person’s “personality dynamics and dispositions” (McAdams 2001, 111). Thus, people consciously and unconsciously construct their life stories in a way that provides them with meaning, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. Therefore, by offering an account of identity as a motivated narrative construct, narrative identity bridges the gap between narratology and psychological aspects of identity.

Despite evidence for the existence of cognitive and need functions of identity, it should not be assumed that a person is necessarily conscious of their psychological needs (Bargh and Morsella 2008, 75; Ryan and Deci 2002, 7). Recent psychological research has shown that

unconscious goal pursuit produces the same outcomes that conscious goal pursuit does [...], [and] once activated [...] without the [person]’s awareness, operates over extended time periods (without the person’s conscious intent or monitoring) to guide thought or behavior towards the goal (Bargh and Morsella 2008, 75).

Correspondingly, basic psychological needs are not necessarily translated mimetically into articulated goals and objectives. Identity is complex and multiple, and dependent on much more (e.g. context, discourse, situations) than a person’s needs. Nevertheless, “the healthy human psyche continuously strives for these nutriments, and, when possible, gravitates towards situations that provide them” (Ryan and Deci 2002, 7). Therefore, it can be claimed that people may automatically adopt behaviours in accordance with their basic psychological needs, while avoiding those which threaten their fulfilment. These basic principles also apply to the ways in which identity is constructed – people may design their

identities in ways that assure security and a positive self-esteem without being consciously aware of why they create them in such a way.

5.3 *Identity and Discrimination*

Social psychology does not only see identity as something that is cognitively created at the level of the individual. In social psychology, identity can also be related to the identity of groups. Hence, this branch of psychology also deals with social context in which (personal and group) identities are created. Although self-categorisation has positive psychological effects for individuals, it can have adverse effects for interpersonal and intergroup relations. Due to their motivation to create and maintain a positive self-esteem, people generally have a *positive in-group attitude default* (Otten and Moskowitz 2000), i.e. people tend to perceive the groups they identify with as generally ‘better’. Henri Tajfel and John Turner demonstrated that (self-)categorisation is enough to elicit this kind of *in-group favouritism*. Unfortunately, categorisation also seems to entail intergroup discrimination. Tajfel and Turner identified a *minimal group paradigm* for intergroup discrimination, i.e. that “the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups – that is, social categorization per se – is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group” (Tajfel and Turner 1986, 13). Accordingly, their social identity theory suggests that once people have identified with a certain group or certain norms and ideals, they express a general tendency towards in-group favouritism and discrimination against out-groups (Tajfel 1974, 67). Hence, categorisation and identification can be considered as a source of derogation, discrimination, and hostility between groups.

Furthermore, the *positive in-group attitude default* is also related to the way in which people create their identities in relation to other groups. People’s need for distinctiveness leads people to create highly distinctive social identities (Brewer and Brown 1998; Brewer and Gaertner 2003; Brewer and Roccas 2001). In need for optimally distinctive group identities, people define their groups as not only positive, but also make clear distinctions between in-group and out-group. As a result, out-group characteristics are not only generally seen as negative, but also as mutually exclusive to in-group characteristics. Furthermore, the more people invest in values of the group and its moral standards, the more they see

their values as incompatible with other group values (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999; Tropp and Wright 1999). Hence, particularly those who strongly identify with a certain group are prone to in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Leonardelli and Toh 2015; Perreault and Bourhis 1999). This is even true for people whose social identity is associated with negative stereotypes. When the circumstances are favourable, people cope with a negative social identity by engaging in *social creativity*, i.e. re-defining their negative identities in ways that are more positive (Scheepers et al. 2006).

Generally, however, people are motivated to maintain the social status quo of their identity relations – and thus, to retain their negative out-group attitudes. There are several factors leading negative attitudes toward out-groups not being changed. One factor is the perception that the out-group's characteristics are incompatible with one's own group (Brewer 1991). Hence, dialogue and cooperation are prevented by assuming that effort will be futile due to incompatible goals. This effect is amplified by the *ultimate attribution error* (Pettigrew 1979) and the *out-group homogeneity effect* (Park and Judd 1990). The ultimate attribution error refers to attributing failure or negative behaviour of an out-group member and success or positive behaviour of an in-group member to inherent characteristics of the person; while attributing success or positive behaviour of an out-group member and failure or negative behaviour of an in-group member to situational factors – which leads to in-group members being perceived as inherently more positive than out-group members (Pettigrew 1979). This attributional effect is aggravated by the out-group homogeneity effect which refers to people perceiving their in-group as being composed of diverse individuals, whereas the out-group is perceived as a homogenous whole with little diversity (Quattrone and Jones 1980). The out-group homogeneity effect also fosters stereotypical thinking which, in turn, leads to more prejudice and discrimination (Park and Judd 1990). Other related factors are the *linguistic bias* (i.e. people's tendencies to only discuss stereotype-consistent information about the out-group) and the *linguistic intergroup bias* (i.e. describing positive in-group and negative out-group characteristics in abstract terms, while describing negative in-group and positive out-group characteristics as individual cases; since abstract descriptions are harder to disconfirm, positive in-group and negative out-group

characteristics are more likely to persist) – which also contribute to maintaining negative attitudes about the out-group (Maass et al. 1989; Thompson, Judd, and Park 2000). Accordingly, once these negative identity relationships are in place, they are unlikely to change.

The consequences of holding negative attitudes of out-groups are prejudice, discrimination, derogation (Davis 1994; Otten and Mummendey 1999; Tajfel and Turner 1986) – and in the context of ethnically diverse groups: ethnocentrism (Perreault and Bourhis 1999). Depending on group status, discrimination can happen in extreme forms, such as genocide, or it can appear in more subtle forms, such as negative group depictions in media and literature (Sternberg 2003). On the group level, identities are formed into narratives in a similar way as personal identities – often in order to create positive depictions of the in-group and negative ones of the out-group (Sternberg 2003). Robert Sternberg (2003) identified major narrative themes regarding depiction of out-groups. These themes are centred on moral and cultural bankruptcy of the out-group which is exemplified by the out-group's transgression of important in-group values. Furthermore, the negative depiction of the out-group provides the background against which the moral and cultural superiority of the in-group can be contrasted. In most cases, the positive in-group characteristics do not even have to be mentioned, because they are indirectly implied by the out-group's transgression of the in-group norms. Accordingly, derogative tendencies in narrative group identities contribute to spreading stereotypes and foster animosities between groups (Sternberg 2003).

Furthermore, discrimination within a group can arise. If the in-group is composed of various different groups, *in-group projection* can occur, i.e. defining the common super-ordinate group¹⁵ that includes several different subgroups in terms of the prototypical characteristics of only one subgroup (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Thus, in-group projection leads to negative attitudes against specific subordinate groups, because they are perceived as less worthy to stand in for the identity and values of the super-ordinate group.

15 A super-ordinate group is a group that is composed of several subgroups. For example, people of Indian descent may be perceived as a less prototypically 'Caribbean' because Caribbeaness and creoleness have become associated with people of African descent (Arion 1998; Donnell 2006, 149ff; Kutzinski 2001, 13).

5.4 *The Power of the Situation*

There are specific situations which foster identification and moderate the intensity with which people identify. One of the earliest theories of negative intergroup relations was *realistic conflict theory* which posits that competition between groups over some resource (e.g. social power, domination, food, land) is sufficient to produce negative attitudes towards the other group or out-group (Duckitt 1994; Sherif 1966; Taylor and Moghaddam 1994). People may perceive competitive situations as a threat to their group's status and values, and thus, react with out-group derogation. Hence, competition potentially leads to hostility and animosity between groups. Interestingly, competition has been related to both intergroup conflict and categorisation (Hartstone and Augoustinos 1995; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Supposedly, categorisation may be enough to perceive situations as competitive which, in turn, may lead to intergroup discrimination.

5.5 *Interim Summary*

Identity is based on the human tendency to perceive themselves and their environment in categories (Brown 1991). Self-categorisation and identification has several cognitive and need functions (Lippmann 2010). The primary cognitive function of identity is comprehension. (Self-)categorisation reduces the cognitive load needed for processing the environment (Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000). Categories simplify complex environments which makes them seem understandable and predictable (Kunda 1999). To a certain extent, this cognitive function is related to people's need to be safe and secure (which is associated with the need of relatedness). Furthermore, self-categorisation provides behavioural guidelines which facilitate social adjustment, foster group cohesion, and prevent social ostracism (Deaux 1996). Moreover, identity is relevant for people's desire to create and maintain a positive self-esteem – which is also related to the basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Aberson, Healy, and Romero 2000; Rubin and Hewstone 1998). Generally, people will identify with categories that they consider as personally relevant. Although the kinds of identitarian categories differ among people, their perceived relevance is mostly dependent on socially, culturally, and historically specific discourses (Fiske, Lin,

and Neuberg 1999). Despite the positive cognitive and need effects of identities for the individual, (self-)categorisation also has negative consequences. In general, people's strong need to maintain a positive self-esteem prevents them to consider their own and other categories on equal terms (Fein et al. 2003). As a result, stereotypical thinking, prejudice, and anxiety can arise (Hogg and Turner 1987). Furthermore, people process self-relevant information differently than they process other information: the ultimate attribution error (Pettigrew 1979), the out-group homogeneity effect (Park and Judd 1990), the linguistic bias (Thompson, Judd, and Park 2000) and the linguistic intergroup bias (Maass et al. 1989) are examples of how information about others are processed in a way that solidifies categories and leads to stereotypy. These factors are particularly relevant in relation to people's social identities (Tajfel and Turner 1986). People tend to have a positive in-group attitude default which leads to a kind of "us" vs. "them" thinking that produces and maintains intergroup stereotypes, out-group derogation, and discrimination (Otten and Moskowitz 2000; Tajfel and Turner 2010). Although categorisation is already sufficient to elicit out-group derogation, categorisation has other effects that amplify intergroup conflict. Categorisation is also sufficient for competition to arise (Tajfel and Turner 1986), and the degree of perceived competition for power and resources (Taylor and Moghaddam 1994). Hence, psychology offers a vast body of research that explains both why people (need to) identify and why identification leads to discrimination.

6. *Postcolonialism and Psychology – Towards an Integrative Approach*

Social and cognitive psychology embrace the notion that identity is dynamic, multiple, and interacts with discursive and situational factors, while simultaneously acknowledging people's need to perceive their identities as continuous, linear, and unitary. Postcolonial theory acknowledges the constructedness of identity and offers theoretical concepts with which the content of identities, their cultural embedment, and the historicity of identitarian signifiers can be analysed. Hence, while postcolonial theories provide information about the content of identities inscribed into postcolonial texts, socio-psychological theories can offer an explanation of the narrative structure of identity and the

cognitive/need functions behind it. Therefore, a combination of postcolonial and psychological theories may provide the necessary analytical tools for the analysis of postcolonial literary texts.¹⁶

Although psychology and postcolonial studies seem to have little in common with regard to their methods and epistemological perspectives, some of their theories are actually quite compatible. For example, cognitivist perspectives of identity share some aspects with post-structuralist notions of identity. In Kelly's personal constructs theory (1955), there are four corollaries which seem to be particularly related to postcolonial notions of identity: the dichotomy, the choice, the fragmentation and the sociality corollary – which can also be associated with post-structuralist theories of meaning and language (e.g. Derrida 1972). They reflect the (post-)structuralist notion that meaning is constructed in dichotomous binary oppositions (dichotomy corollary) within which one term is preferred over the other (choice corollary). Furthermore, the theory of personal constructs assumes that the system of binary opposition that determines a person's ways of knowing is not perfect and without contradictions but contains mutually incompatible, fragmented, and fluent concepts (fragmentation corollary). The theory even integrates a notion of 'discourse', as it acknowledges that the individual does not come up with their concepts and meanings by themselves, but they are influenced by and influence others (sociality corollary). Thus, personal constructs are seen to influence each other, they are open to change, but not infinitely; they are sometimes contradictory or incomplete, and they are socially influenced.

This notion reflects postcolonial concepts of identity found in the writing of e.g. Edward Said ([1978] 1979) and Homi Bhabha (1990) who claim that the coloniser's identity was created against the background of a constitutive outside (dichotomy corollary). Furthermore, the colonisers' culture and accomplishments were depicted as better and more important than the one of the colonised (choice corollary). Said and Bhabha, however, revealed the many inconsistencies and discrepancies of the coloniser's identity (fragmentation corollary), and they also

16 In the meantime, a similar approach has been suggested by Patrick Colm Hogan (2015). In his article, he argues for an integration of cognitive psychological perspectives on identity into postcolonial studies. Interestingly, he mentions many of the theoretical approaches that I also used, such as social identity theory and the cognitive approach to categorisation.

set the coloniser's identity into context of other socio-historical events and discourses (sociality corollary). Thus, although the objectives and objects of research of postcolonial studies and social psychology are different, there are common grounds upon which a combined perspective can be built.

Furthermore, Kelly's theory of personal constructs might help to re-think the notion of essences in postcolonial theories of identity. Kelly is a *cognitive constructivist*, but not a *social-constructivist* (Raskin 2011, 223). Although psychological constructivism does not "deny[...] external reality", its focus is shifted from questions concerning the nature of identity to the ways in which identity can be construed: psychological "constructivism addresses ontology and epistemology [...] as modes of construing" (Raskin 2011, 223-4).¹⁷ By moving ontological as well as epistemological questions into the realm of mental representation, Kelly's own epistemological position provides room to accommodate both postmodern and essentialist notions of identity. Essentialism becomes a way of knowing, and essences are seen as a cognitive structure that helps humans to mentally represent themselves, the world, and others (Raskin 2011, 224). Hence, Kelly's theory of personal constructs proposes a kind of *cognitive essentialism* that acknowledges both the postmodern notion of a constructed identity and essentialism as a mode of cognition.

Correspondingly, Kelly's theory of personal constructs offers an account of the formation and structure of identity in line with postmodern theories that suggest that identity is fragmented construct open to change. However, cognitive constructivism does not reject essentialist notions of identity as illegitimate or worthy of deprecation, but sees them as a mode of construing inherent to human cognition. Acknowledging that people tend to perceive themselves, others, and the world in terms of essences offers an explanation for the difficulties of adopting a notion of identity that completely discards essentialism (as proposed by Bongie 1998). However, the theory of cognitive constructs also recognises that identities are the products of an actively construing mind, and as such, they are imperfect, contradictory, and continuously open to change. Therefore, Kelly's cognitive

17 Which means that psychological constructivism does not ask about the actual nature of identity, or more specifically, if identity exists as an essence and causes certain behaviour (ontological question), or what can be known about identity (epistemological question); psychological constructivism concerns itself with the question of *how* identity is constructed.

constructivist approach to identity might present a positive way to understand notions of creoleness which embrace both essentialism and postmodernism, such as the concepts proposed by Knörr (2008) or Bernabé et al. (1990). Hence, Kelly's theory of personal constructs embraces both the general constructedness of identity as well as the inability to overcome essentialist notions of identity.

Furthermore, there are other social-psychological theories that can help to explain why colonialism was not only an economic project, but also a project of identity. They provide access to the psychological dimension underlying colonialism. In the course of colonisation, Europeans were not only confronted with riches and territories to exploit and annex, but also with otherness. *Social identity theory*, *realistic conflict theory*, and the *positive in-group attitude default* can be used to analyse the discursive and political strategies adopted by Europeans. Furthermore, the *out-group homogeneity effect*, as well as other cognitive biases, such as the *ultimate attribution error* and the *linguistic intergroup bias*, may explain how psychological processes contributed to the de-individualisation and de-humanisation of Africans and Indians (Kelman 1973). They also show how psychological processes led to a perception of a mutual exclusiveness between European and other identities which contributed to making the slave trade and the plantation system seem morally acceptable in the eyes of Europeans (see also Kelman 1973). Hence, a combination of postcolonial and social-psychological theories provides more complex accounts of the discursive strategies of colonialism.

Combining postcolonial and social-psychological theories can also provide a different perspective in the discussion of Hall's question, 'Who needs identity?' Hall himself argues that particularly people who have been deprived of a positive identity may have a great need to present themselves in a positive light (Hall [1999] 2005, 547). Hence, people need identity, because they are psychologically predisposed to seek security, predictability, and self-esteem. Psychological research on self-esteem supports that idea. Correspondingly, considering that the possibilities to re-invent identity are somewhat limited by the historically and locally specific cultural discourses, it seems understandable that some Caribbean attempts to restore a sense of identity resorted to nationalism. Julia Kristeva considers the need for identitarian security as an explanation for the

postmodern subject's inability to let go of national symbols, and the resulting continuous preoccupation with the nation as a common identitarian signifier (Kristeva 1993, 1). Moreover, according to Kristeva, this perceivable "harking back" (Kristeva 1993, 1) to national origins does *not* surprisingly occur *despite* the nation's shortcomings on representing the social and psychic realities of the fragmented postmodern, postcolonial individual. People claim a national identity for themselves *because of these ambiguous, alienating realities*:

The values crisis and the fragmentation of individuals have reached the point where we no longer know what we are and take shelter, to preserve a token of personality, under the most massive, regressive common denominators: national origins [...] (Kristeva 1993, 2).

According to Kristeva, the nation has become an identitarian safeguard for those whose sense of self with grapples with the disseminating and alienating forces of (post)modernity. In *Not on Any Map*, Stuart Murray makes a similar postulation: he argues that "the desire for a bounded, linear, and empirical version of self-hood that is so strong in many postcolonial societies finds in nationalism a set of useful ideological tools" (Murray 1997, 8). Accordingly, Kristeva and Murray acknowledge that identifying with national categories is a means to an end for the fulfilment of people's psychological need for certainty, security, and positivity.

However, considering the manifold discursive strategies to deprecate non-European identities, it also seems understandable that people in the Caribbean sought to rehabilitate their self-esteem by creating *different* kinds of identity without resorting to old identitarian signifiers. According to Hall, it was particularly important, yet also particularly challenging for people in the "post-colonial world" (Hall 1996, 4) whose "history is marked by the most horrendous, violent, abrupt, ruptural breaks" (Hall [1999] 2005, 547) to create a positive way to understand and present themselves. Hence, claiming an identity which is *positively distinct* from European identities was considered as a crucial step to the restoration of a positive self-esteem (Tuhiwai Smith [1999] 2005, 101). As a concept that (to a certain extend) defied European identitarian signifiers, creoleness provided a useful concept to regain identity and its psychological benefits. The relation between creoleness and the psychological functions of identity becomes clear when having a closer look at how creoleness is presented.

In their “In Praise of Creoleness”, Bernabé et al. repeatedly and explicitly associate the concept of creoleness with “self-acceptance”, “self-knowledge”, and “convivial desire” (Bernabé et al 1990, 892, 898). Thus, creoleness offered a way to create and retain a positive self-esteem in the face of a history of colonisation, violence, and contemporary cultural multiplicity. From this perspective, colonial nationalism and creoleness do not oppose each other, but they become ways of construing an identity that offers certainty, security, and a positive self-esteem.

Social psychology provides theories explaining the relationship between categorisation, identification, and discrimination without necessarily making political judgements. The inability to fully discard some tokens of identity, such as nationality, and the difficulties to overcome essentialising tendencies in creole identities in Caribbean discourses seem to derive from people’s general inclination to perceive themselves, others, and the world in terms of categories. Hence, social psychology offers a theoretical framework for the analysis of postcolonial nationalism and creoleness without accusing nationalist identities of being some kind of false consciousness. Overcoming essentialist notions of identity is not only difficult, but may also be impossible. Incorporating a social-psychological perspective into postcolonial analyses may help to acknowledge that people tend to create their identities as continuous, linear, and unitary, while also embracing the notion that identity as such is dynamic and fragmentary. Eventually, even national identities are multiple and contradictory (Murray 1997, 8), and creoleness is also ethnocentric (Knörr 2008). A combination of postcolonial and social-psychological theories can help to make sense of this contradiction. Hence, postcolonial and social-psychological theories of identity do not oppose each other, but they can be combined to provide a more encompassing perspective on identity in postcolonial contexts.

However, ascribing psychologically beneficial functions to national and creole identities does not imply that they should be accepted uncritically or simply be praised for their benefits. After all, identity *does* lead to discrimination, and both national and creole identities in Caribbean contexts entail the derogation of others who do not fit into the respective identitarian categories. Considering that nationalism often incorporates some kind of ‘son of the soil’ ideology, discrimination of national outsiders or misfits seem inevitable. Due to the

hegemonic position of African cultural heritage within creoleness, the concept also bears a negative potential for *in-group projection* which potentially leads to the derogation of group members that do not have African ancestors.

Hence, it *does* matter how we represent ourselves and others. In the face of the history of discrimination and derogation, Hall suggests to keep searching for alternative ways for self-presentation without the derogation of otherness (Hall 1996, 4). Identity, Hall proposes, is “not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’”, but identity should assist to understand “what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (Hall 1996, 4).

Thus, in order to understand discourses of identity in the Caribbean – its identitarian heritage of European colonialism; its ‘rage for identity’, authenticity, and self-worth; its struggles for political and economic independence – it is important to look at the intersections between psychological, historical, and political factors, as well as national, ethnic, and creole discourses that merge in the narratives of Caribbean self-representation.

7. *Summary and Prospects*

In the previous sections, I have elaborated on the various epistemological perspectives on identity as they are used in the social sciences and the humanities. Taking an interdisciplinary approach in my analyses, I understand identity as follows:

1. **Identity is a discourse.** Identity is a reference to power hierarchies, norms, and values of a certain social group at a specific point in time. This aspect is reflected in the notion of identity in postcolonial studies.
2. **Identity is a psychological necessity.** From a psychological perspective, people want to have unambiguously identifiable self. Identity is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of three basic psychological needs, and it serves self-enhancement, self-comprehension, and self-esteem; thereby, it creates the illusion of security and predictability and reduces anxiety and

ambiguity. Thus, identity has a psychological function because it is vital for psychological well-being.

3. **Identity is a narration.** Identity follows a narrative structure. Through this structure, people make sense of their present as well as their past selves and predict their existence into the future. Again, the narrative structure is conducive to the fulfilment of psychological needs and creates the illusion of security and predictability.
4. **Thus, identity is a psychosocial construct.** Identity functions through categorisation (continuity and contrast) and is created through imbalanced (e.g. unequally emotionally, normatively, ideologically charged) binary oppositions. Hence, it is a psychological necessity and a cognitive achievement that engages with normative social discourses.
5. **Identity is discriminatory.** Identity is the basis for discrimination and deprecation of otherness. Identity is created by contrast – often in contrast to so-called out-groups. Hence, due to its dichotomous structure, identity is related to stereotypic thinking, out-group derogation, and intergroup conflict. Stereotypic thinking and discrimination are exacerbated by situations of real or imagined conflict.

Thus, generally, I perceive identity as a socio-linguistic-psychological construct, construed according to specific cognitive principles, integrated into a greater narrative by narratological means, and interacting with historically and contextually specific discourses. Furthermore, I also acknowledge the psychological perspective that identity is a psychological necessity crucial for psychological well-being. This interdisciplinary perspective may help to understand why identity is often presented as an inherent quality of a person or a whole people, when, in fact, it is a construct, a narration, a fiction. Accordingly, this theoretical position could be fruitful for the analysis of national identity in Caribbean texts.

However, I do neither propose that written texts are mimetic transcripts of the author's personal identity, nor could I infer an author's specific psychological states from their texts. Nevertheless, I think that the author's self-understanding, their knowledge of the world, and the categories in which they think to be

inscribed in literary texts. Furthermore, I believe that authors may use the texts they produce as a means to express their social and personal identities – and social-psychological theories suggest that they may do so in a way that is related to the self-esteem, in-group favouritism, and out-group derogation (McAdams 2001; Schachter 2011; Sternberg 2003). Nevertheless, I still assume that historically and context specific notions of identity (as ways of knowing about the self and ways of construing political agency) are found in literary texts. Hence, I presume that context specific discourses have an impact on the notions of identity that are presented in literary texts.

Eventually, narrations of identity have a certain purpose: “[s]tories live to be told to others” (McAdams 2001, 118), they speak of a desire to be recognised and accepted; they speak of agency and power, of selves and others that want to be *understood*. Hence, they call for interpretation. To interpret identity in Caribbean literary texts, I engaged with postcolonial theories of identity, such as creoleness, hybridity, cosmopolitanism, the Black Atlantic and diaspora, as well as with nationalist notions of identity, but I also included a psychological perspective. In the next section, I will provide an overview of the methodology that was employed in the analyses.

Chapter 3

Methodology: Narratology and Critical Discourse Analysis

1. Methodology for an Interdisciplinary Approach?

As a literary scholar, I will use analytical tools associated with narratology and the usual toolkit for the analysis of verse. My interest in literary texts, however, is not purely narratological in the classical structuralist sense. Generally, I think of ‘text’ in terms of Chatman’s *Contextual Narratology* (1990): the written text¹ is a culturally and historically specific product that engages with specific ideologies and discourses.² As a postcolonial scholar, my understanding of texts is close to notions of text and narrative found in cultural studies – which makes sense, considering that postcolonial studies is concerned with challenging the remainders of colonial power structures and mindsets in discourses and texts (Döring 2008, 1-14). Therefore, I will not only analyse literary narratives on the level of *story* (content) and *discourse* (mode of expression) (Chatman 1978, 19), but also in relation to the social, cultural, and political discourses which determine the meaning of the text (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733; Mills 1997, 8-9).

1 Although ‘text’ does not necessarily need to exist in written form, but can also be oral, cognitive, visual.

2 I understand *discourse* in the Foucault’ian sense, as a quantity of statements that belong to the same formation system and which determine the meaning of language (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733), e.g. summarised by Sarah Mills as: “discourse is the general domain of the production and circulation of rule-governed statements” (Mills 1997, 9).

In addition, I assume that narratives are not merely found in the cultural, but also in the cognitive domain. Thus, my notions of text and author tie in with the epistemological perspective of *cognitive narratology* (Alber and Fludernik 2010; Herman 2013a; 2013b; Noë 2009). Incorporating psychological theories and perspectives in my approach, I embrace the notion that psychic constructs, such as identity, follow a narrative structure – and that this narrative structure weaves the discontinuity of human experience together with visions of past- and future-selves into an allegedly undisrupted experience of self-sameness, i.e. identity. Moreover, I assume that literary texts are the product of motivate human action, and as such, they are saturated with psychological needs that drive human motivation. Hence, pertaining to literary narratives of identity, I presume that literary articulations of identity involve discourse-dependent and cognition-dependent narrative structures as well as motivational aspects that result from identity-related psychological benefits.³

This perspective fruitfully combines structural, linguistic theories of narratology and poetic form with social and cognitive psychology as well as the historicist, post-structuralist perspective of postcolonial studies. Accordingly, I will resort to structuralist narratology, poetic analyses, as well as to *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) for the analysis of Caribbean short stories, essays, and poems.

2. *Narratology*

Although Wayne Booth's notion of the *implied author* who "chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read" (Booth 1961, 74f) seems outdated, the author should not be considered 'dead' (Barthes 1967) either – particularly in relation to narrations of identity. Combining narratology with psychology, I assume that the cognitive construct of identity and the way it is presented in texts follows a specific cognitive-narrative structure. In line with this argumentation, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou point out that the analysis of texts and speech is a suitable method for identity research (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008, 377). They maintain that the "referential world" depicted in a story indicates towards how

3 A more detailed description of this perspective will be provided in the theory chapter of this study.

“the teller *wants to be* understood” and “what sense of self they index” ([emphasis in original] Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008, 380). Thus, as a narrative that creates a specific sense of self, articulations of identity need to be considered in relation psychological motives or needs. In particular, the narrative structure of identity serves psychological motives related to (self-) understanding and self-esteem. Although author and narrator are not to be confused, the author’s cognitive schemata and emotional states influence the narrative strategies and meanings of the text. Although the non-literary reality and the reality described in the text are not mimetic, the specificities of the psychic reality of the author should be considered to have had a significant impact on the described reality of the text (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). Although the characters in the text should not be mistaken for ‘real people’, the text is written by a person who (most likely) designed the fictional characters in the text analogous to real people (Nünning and Nünning 2010). Accordingly, the analysis of these characters provides an insight in the psychic reality of the author – and the discourse which interacts with his notions of self and other (see also Hacking 2007).

Considering the specificities of narrations and literary texts, (classic structuralist) narratological theories can be used to identify *what* kind of topics are salient in identitarian narratives and *how* the story line is constructed (Chatman 1978, 19). The narratological appraisal of narrative patterns and isotopies (Greimas [1966] 1971), as well as modes of meaning and speech (Booth 1961; Genette [1972] 1980; Stanzel [1979] 1984) can help to analyse the cognitive-narrative structure according to which identity is constructed.

3. *Analysis of Poetic Form*

For the analysis of poetry, I will take a conventional approach. I will look at form, metric, rhythm, diction, tropes and other rhetorical figures (see Antz 2007). In the Caribbean, form and diction are of a particular cultural-political significance. Although creolisation of form and content has always played a role in Caribbean literature, there is a difference in the degree of creolisation depending on the time and place of production (Nowak 2007). On the one hand, particularly in the pre-independence decades, many Caribbean poets used conventional European poetic

forms. Mastering sophisticated European verse forms and diction was related to “writing back” to a colonial centre (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 1). The use of European poetic forms – such as the sonnet, the ode, or the villanelle – and ‘proper’ British English were interpreted as emancipatory acts which challenged the notions such as “nothing was created in the West Indies” (Naipaul [1962] 2002, 20) or a supposedly general inferiority of Caribbean cultural productions (Nowak 2007). On the other hand, a more recent tradition of Caribbean verse is related to breaking with conventional European traditions. As Edward Kamau Brathwaite aptly said, “[t]he hurricane does not roar in pentameters” (Brathwaite [1979] 1993, 567). Thus, in the 1960s, a Caribbean poetic tradition emerged which combined modernist poetics with references to local history, norms, and culture. Specific poetic characteristics of this tradition are free verse as well as the use of *nation language*, for example local vernaculars, creole English, and other local modes of expression (Brathwaite [1979] 1993, 560; Nowak 2007). Of course, not all poetry written in the Caribbean can be classified as an example of one tradition or the other. There are poems which use conventional forms to express local, unconventional content or which can be seen as *appropriations* of traditional European poetic forms. Hence, there are poems that present a mix of local and conventional traditions of form and expression. While some of these poems can be described as *transitional*, there are others that deliberately use conventional forms to accentuate a specific content or agenda (Nowak 2007).

However, in this study, I will not only consider formal or content related aspects from a purely literary perspective. As mentioned in the section on prose, my interest is also concerned with the specific ways in which tropes or other form related characteristics are related to specific cognitive or other psychological aspects. Thus, in my analysis, I will also take a cognitive and social psychological perspective. In addition, the socio-historical context of the texts will also play a role.

4. *Critical Discourse Analysis*

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical tool to identify topics and social issues in contexts and texts. According to Teun van Dijk, CDA “is a type of

discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk 2001, 352). Although CDA is explicitly “sociopolitically ‘situated’” (van Dijk 2001, 352), it can be fruitfully combined with linguistic theories and cognitive theories in psychology. As Wodak and van Dijk have suggested, CDA might be suitable, not only to bridge the gap between the social and the linguistic, but also to reconcile the social and linguistic with the cognitive (van Dijk 2001; Wodak 2006). Social and linguistic meanings shape the “*mental representations*” ([emphasis in original], Wodak 2006, 182) and cognitive schemata of our reality; they influence our understanding of self and others. Wodak maintains that this link between discourse and cognition is particularly seminal in relation to the understanding and production of texts. Despite the fact that “we are all aware that nobody can actually ‘look’ into somebody’s or one’s own brain (‘black-box’)”, cognitive theories should be considered as crucial for literary analyses, because “some mental processes must exist which link text production and text comprehension to both explicit utterances, text and talk, as well as to social phenomena” (Wodak 2006, 180). Wodak also points out that, due to this connection, CDA is also particularly important “when studying identity constructions or narratives of the past” (Wodak 2006). Referring to Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006) and Maurice Halbwachs (1992), she suggests that “all these notions (such as ‘collective memories’ or ‘imagined communities’) inherently label cognitive processes which need to be spelled out” (Wodak 2006, 180). Correspondingly, I will pay attention to the connection between the cognitive and the socio-political domain and their relation to discourses. However, the social, the linguistic, and the cognitive are not mimetic. Therefore, they all need to be considered to play a joint, but not the same role in articulations of identity.

Accordingly, I will use CDA as a perspective to identify specific historical and cultural circumstances in which texts are embedded and their influences on the topics and themes within these texts. In addition, I will link CDA with psychological assumptions about motivation and cognition.

5. *Summary*

Assuming a link between narration, discourse, and psyche, literary studies can be considered to function as a connection between cultural studies (Nünning and Sommer 2004) and psychology. The intelligibility and interpretability of the text depends on the meanings and conventions that author and reader share, i.e. the discourse.⁴ Based on Vera and Ansgar Nünning politicised notion of literary studies in relation to socio-political discourses, such as gender and postcolonial issues, literary identity research provides a means for an understanding (and potential for subversion) of discriminating discourses (Nünning and Nünning 2010). Taking this notion of literary research as a basis, I will integrate narratological and discourse analytical tools with concepts specifically related to postcolonial studies. Considering the themes, topics, and context of my object of research, I will critically engage with hybridity, creoleness / creolisation, national identity, cosmopolitanism, the Black Atlantic and diaspora. Taking all these factors into account, critical analyses of texts have a certain potential to contribute to the accumulation of further knowledge on the socio-linguistic-cognitive underpinnings of identity and discrimination.

4 Here, both notions of *discourse*, as mode of expression (Chatman 1978, 19), and as mode of meaning construction (Foucault [1975] 2008, 733), are applicable.

Part II:

Common Grounds

Suriname and Guyana: Common Historical Background

1. Common Historical Background: Pre-Colonial History

Around 9,000-10,000 BC, long before the arrival of the Europeans in the 16th, the area between today's Venezuela and Brazil's *Mato Grosso* was populated by consecutive waves of different indigenous people, coming from Africa and Asia via the Bering Strait (van Kempen 2002 II, 133). Approximately 500 AD, the Arawak-speaking *Locono*¹ settled in the Guianas (van Kempen 2002 II, 163). Another 500 years later, the *Kalinago* or *Kari'na*², tribes from the coastal regions, invaded the area (Hyles 2013, 11; van Kempen 2002 II, 133). Although the tribes became, in the words of Joshua Hyles, "mortal enemies", both tribal groups remained in the area (Hyles 2013, 13). Due to their geographical specificities, the Guianas provided a rather secluded basin³ in which a more or less shared culture emerged among the tribes. Thus, eventually, the groups and cultures mixed through inter-tribal marriages and migration. For example, the *Taíno* or *Trio* are a third major group that probably emerged from an amalgamation of various sub-tribes (van Kempen 2002 II, 133). Hence, despite occasional quarrels and animosities, the different tribes of the area were more alike than dissimilar. By the

1 Often referred to as 'Arawaks'; but the use of the term Arawaks is debatable (Hyles 2013, 11; van Kempen 2002 II, 133).

2 Often called Caribs, but the use of the term Caribs is debatable (Hyles 2013, 11; van Kempen 2002 II, 133).

3 In fact, it was so secluded that the area was referred to as the "Island of Guyana" (Hyles 2013, 15).

arrival of the Europeans, some sort of *Pan-Guianese* culture had developed (Hyles 2013, 12). In the wake of the European trade, another group of tribes migrated closer into the area, the *Tupi-Guarani* who originally came from Venezuela and Brazil. These latecomers also influenced and were influenced by the Locono, Taíno, and Kalinago.⁴ The tribes that populated the area during European contact included the Kalinago descended Akawoi, Arekuna, Macushi, Patamona, Wai-Wai and Wayana, the Taíno (or Trio), the large tribe of the Arawak-speaking Wapishana, and the culturally similar, but linguistically unrelated Warrow (or Warau). These tribes exist in the Guianas until today, and they still share many cultural characteristics (Hyles 2013, 12-14; van Kempen 2002 I, 133-135). However, they play a minor role in the literary culture of Guyana and Suriname.

2. *Common Historical Background: Colonial History*

The first serious expedition to the Guianas was undertaken by Sir Walter Raleigh between 1594 and 1595. Inspired by stories about the abundance of gold found in Peru, Raleigh explored the Guianas in search of the mythic chief *El Dorado* and the golden city *Manoa*; an enterprise which, of course, turned out to be futile. Notwithstanding the non-existence of Manoa, Raleigh's explorations aroused European interest in the area as potential colony and trading post material. A competition for economic hegemony among the Spanish, English, Dutch and French led to various attempts to claim and colonise the region: In 1604, the English built a settlement on the river Oyapock. First evidence of Dutch presence was found in records which state that, in 1613, Spanish troops raided Dutch trading posts near the rivers Essequibo and Corantijn. The Dutch rebuilt their posts in 1615, and by 1621, they set up a small fort, *Kykoveral*, where the Essequibo, Cuyuni, and Mazaruni rivers met. In 1650, the former British governor of Barbados established a colony in the area of today's Suriname – hence, the initial colonial affiliations are exactly opposite of the long-lasting colonial influence in the area. The territory around the Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice

4 Interestingly, despite the persistent association between Caribbean tribes and cannibalism, neither of these tribes originally engaged in the practice of eating people. However, the ritual consumption of human flesh seemed to have been introduced after the arrival of the Europeans by the Tupi-Guarani, a Venezuelan-Brazilian tribe. Nevertheless, incidences of cannibalism were rare and entirely ritual (Hyles 2013, 13).

should eventually become British Guiana, while the land around the river Suriname would come under Dutch rule. The French had set up posts in Cayenne (today's French Guiana) which, after the Dutch had shortly conquered the region in 1664, remained French (Hyles 2013, 15-22).

The Treaty of Breda (1667) did not only bring an end to the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667), but also (temporarily) settled territorial issues between the French, Dutch, and English in the Guianas. The English returned the colonies Essequibo and Berbice, which they had briefly occupied, to the Dutch, and they also recognised Dutch hegemony over the colonies at the river Suriname. In exchange, they received *Nieuw Nederland*, i.e. the colony including the area of today's metropolis New York. Cayenne was returned to French rule. The English, however, never fully withdrew their economic influence in the Dutch colonies, and when the Dutch Commander Gravesande opened Demerara for foreign settlement in 1738, the English saw an opportunity to regain power and settled in the region. In the course of the American Revolution, when the Dutch joined Russia, Sweden, and Denmark in the Armed Neutrality Agreement, the English took their chance. First, they declared war on the Dutch in 1777, and in 1781, they seized Demerara and Essequibo. However, with French help, the colonies were returned again to the Dutch in 1782. Nevertheless, the British planters continued their influence in the region, and from 1803 onwards, after further (armed) quarrels, Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice remained under British rule. The division of the Guianas between the Dutch, British, and French was finally settled in 1814 with the Convention of London. The British official governed the colonies Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice, and the Dutch were allowed to keep their settlements in Suriname (Hyles 2013, 30-38; van Kempen 2002 III, 17-22).

Accordingly, Guyana and Suriname seem to be connected by a shared history of colonisation by the Dutch and the British. However, after the territorial affiliations had finally been settled, Guyana and Suriname drifted culturally apart – particularly due to the different strategies of colonisation adopted by the British and the Dutch. While British Guiana was held together by the assimilatory cultural practices of the British, the Dutch had practiced a hegemonic policy of cultural indifference. Hyles notes that due to the lack of cultural policy in Suriname, cultural processes of mixing and creolisation were much more pronounced. Therefore, he claims, “Suriname's identity is elusive” (Hyles 2013,

149). Although it would be inaccurate to present Guyana as 'British' and Suriname as a loose creole society without a real identity, the cultural policies of the colonisers had different impacts on the discourses of national identity in the two states. Therefore, one goal of this study is to identify the similarities and differences between the two discourses of nationality and identity in literary texts from Guyana and Suriname.

Chapter 5

The Object of Research in the Context of Common Caribbean Literary Traditions

1. *Caribbean Literary Traditions*

In his anthology of Caribbean short stories, editor Stewart Brown maintains that

Caribbean literature has grown in both volume and stature through [the 20th] century from something that hardly existed – at least as far as the literary mainstream was concerned – into a body of word-culture (embracing both oral and written dimensions) that is generally acknowledged to be one of the richest, most accessible, and yet technically adventurous libraries of contemporary world literature (Brown 2001, xvi).

Thus, a pronounced written Caribbean literary tradition is a rather recent phenomenon. Although there had been literary productions in the region before the 20th century (which certainly need to be taken into account), a real production ‘boom’ could only be perceived at the beginning of the 20th century during and after the independence of the Caribbean states. With the increasing awareness of Caribbean cultural traditions in the course of nationalist and anti-colonial movements, there were several writers and groups who sought to contribute to the formation of an independent literary culture. Thus, anti-colonial and nationalist discourses went hand in hand with the development of a written literary tradition in the Caribbean (Rosenberg 2007).

However, a comparably late development of a written tradition does not imply that an alternative word-culture did not exist before the 20th century. On the contrary, a vivid oral tradition of songs, stories, prayers, performances and mythologies emerged and asserted itself by being passed down over centuries from one generation to the next (Childs et al. 2006, 179; van Kempen 2002b, 545f). Particularly in political struggles, first for the abolition of slavery during the 19th and then for democracy and independence during the 20th century, the spoken word was a powerful tool to galvanise the still largely illicit population. Hence, the oral culture of the Caribbean is strongly associated with political and emancipatory tendencies.

This trend is also discernible in Caribbean folklore characters. For example, one of the most salient figures in Caribbean tales is a spider called *Anancy*. Anancy is a trickster, and due to his talent to escape from the most hopeless situations, he has become an emblem of (Afro-)Caribbean resilience and anti-colonial resistance (Brown 2001, xvii; Tiffin 2001, 56; van Kempen 2002b, 547). This strong oral tradition is still palpable today, and many particularities of Caribbean literature are predicated on this rich oral culture.

1.1 *The Short Story*

The Caribbean short story seems to be firmly linked to these oral forms of narration – not only in relation to its brevity, but also in terms of topics, themes, and narrative structure. Comparable to oral narrations, the short story focuses on a single incident, an elemental human experience or a situation of crisis (Korte 2003, 6). Many Caribbean short story writers have been influenced by these oral forms of narration (Brown 2001, xvii). In the context of anti-colonial, nationalist movements and the attempt to form an autonomous literary tradition, the short story was valued for its link to oral narrations: “[t]he device of the literary short story pretending to be a ‘told tale’ has real political and cultural resonance in the Caribbean context” (Brown 2001, xvii). Thus, its association with the formation of an independent literary culture makes the short story a salient genre in the Caribbean, and many anthologies of Caribbean short stories vindicate their selection on the basis of a distinct *Caribbeanness* that the stories are assumed to possess (Brown 2001, xiii-xxxiii). However, it would be precarious to equate the

Caribbean short story with the local oral tradition of story-telling. Michiel van Kempen has pointed out that it is important to distinguish between short stories, that have been written in a specific contemporary literary style, and transcripts of oral tales, which mime specific makers of oral narrations (van Kempen 2001b, 545). Local languages, for example, played less of a role in prose because there was no standardised orthography and people had difficulties with reading texts written in local languages (van Kempen 2001b, 543). Therefore, it is important to consider both the influence of oral traditions on short stories and their literary specificities.

As a genre, the short story emerged in the USA, modelled on the writing of Edgar Allen Poe who is often depicted as its *Übervater* (Korte 2003, 4). According to Poe, a short story should be readable in “one sitting” (Korte 2003, 4). The defining characteristics of the short story are indeed its “calculated brevity” and its ability “to make maximum use of its restricted scope” (Korte 2003, 4). However, the actual length of the text can vary enormously. Hence, the attempt to define the ‘genre of the short story’ faces certain difficulties:

The short story can be anything the author decides it shall be [...] from the static sketch without a plot to the swiftly moving machine of bold action and climax, from the prose poem, painted rather than written, to the piece of straight reportage in which style, color and elaboration have no place, from the piece which catches like a comb the light subtle iridescence of emotions that can never be really captured or measured to the solid tale in which emotion, all action, all reaction is measured. [...] In that intimate flexibility, indeed, lies the reason why the short story has never been adequately defined (Bates 1965, 7).

Accordingly, the short story, as a genre, appears to defy a clear and universal definition (Korte 2003, 4), and maybe due to the lack of it, the short story is often considered inferior in comparison to poetry or the novel (Ramraj 2001, 199; van Kempen 2001a, 487) – in prose, it seems to be “difficult to be brief without being trivial” (Korte 2003, 8). The genre is deemed less sophisticated, requiring less skill on both sides, that of writer and recipient (Korte 2003). This notion is reflected by the comparatively few comprehensive publications on Caribbean short story criticism (Smith 2011, 7).

Despite its neglect, the short story played a significant role in the

development of an independent literature in the former colonies (Ramraj 2001, 199; van Kempen 2001a, 387). The possibilities for publication were meagre due to a lack of publishing houses (Ramraj 2001, 199; van Kempen 2001b, 543; van Kempen 2002 IV, 259). Authors who wanted to build a reputation outside the Caribbean (or at least make a living out of writing) were well advised to publish novels – and publish them outside the Caribbean (Ramraj 2001, 199). In some countries, among them also Suriname and Guyana, it was not uncommon for writers to print a small amount of copies of their work and sell them directly to bookshops and private customers (Benjamin 1984; *Kyk-Over-Al* 33/34, 144; van Kempen 2001a, 387). Accordingly, publishing was a rather tedious business in the Caribbean, and it was difficult for authors to earn their money with writing as their only income (Benjamin 1984; van Kempen 2001a, 389).

Short stories, however, could be easily and independently distributed, despite the lack of publishing houses that prevailed in the Caribbean in the first half of the 20th century. Short stories were published in newspapers and magazines, thus, the expenses of production and purchase were relatively low in comparison to novels that had to be printed by larger publishing houses (Ramraj 2001, 199). Consequently, the short story was a form of literary expression that was comparably independent from the European literary market (Korte 2003, 8). Therefore, Lucy Evans argues that the relevance of the short story in the Caribbean should not only be acknowledged for its aesthetic value, but also for its role in shaping an independent literary culture (Evans 2011, 11). Hence, the short story can be considered typically Caribbean – not only in relation to its topics and themes, but also as a genre.

The other two genres which will be used in this study are essays and poetry. However, due to the fact that poetry has been largely debated in Caribbean contexts and since essays only play a minor role in my analyses, I will only provide a short generic introduction; particularly because many aspects related to the short story in terms of publication and accessibility also apply to poetry and the essay: essays and poems were also published in newspapers and magazines (Baugh 2001; Yow 2001). Accordingly, they also contributed to the formation of an autonomous literary culture.

1.2 *The Essay*

As a genre, the essay has been equally hard to define as the short story, and specificities concerning its form, style, and content remain debatable (Yow 2001, 329). One aspect that seems to define the essay is its association with the expression of a critical opinion or the demonstration of a specific personal worldview (Adorno [1958] 1991, 3; Yow 2001, 330). Theodor Adorno has called the essay “the critical form par excellence”, providing room to accommodate alternative perspectives deviating from the mainstream (Adorno [1958] 1991, 3). Correspondingly, in the Caribbean, the essay has had a long tradition as a medium for voicing critical notions and ideas (Tiffin 2001, 58). Embracing travelogues, political pamphlets, and literary criticism, the essay has enjoyed certain popularity in the Caribbean (Tiffin 2001; Yow 2001). Some scholars trace back the beginnings of the Caribbean essay to Francis Bacon’s “Of Plantations” written in 1625; yet, the definite emergence of the genre as a means for socio-political criticism can be found in the late 19th century (Yow 2001, 330). With *Froudacity: Or, West Indian Fables Explained* ([1989] 1969), a collection of essays, the Trinidadian John Jacob Thomas responded critically to the erroneous depictions of the Caribbean in *The English in the West Indies: Or, the Bow of Ulysses* (1888) by the aforementioned James Anthony Froude (Yow 2001, 331). In the 20th century, with the emergence of the ‘little magazines’, including *Kyk-Over-Al* and *Moetete*, the essay became a popular form of cultural and social criticism in the Caribbean. Many literary magazines, newspapers, and weeklies included essays and literary criticism, sometimes even authored by writers of fiction and poetry (Tiffin 2001, 58; Yow 2001, 331). Laura Yow describes the Caribbean essay as a “curious, exploratory genre with a decided disrespect for established boundaries”, and therefore, it seems perfect for the expression of the multiplicity of voices and opinions in Caribbean discourses: “[a]s a public site for personal reflections, the essay can be seen as a space for the assertion of voices or alternative histories that have been suppressed or marginalized” (Yow 2001, 329, 330). However, of course, it also provided a platform for the dissemination of the norms and opinions of those in power.¹ Thus, essays are informative in relation to specific

1 For example, although the essays of Roy Heath, Wilson Harris, and Jan Carew on the fusion

opinions held by writers and cultural critics, including the aesthetics of production and reception. Therefore, essays provide a deeper insight into the different discourses of the time.

1.3 *Poetry*

From its beginning, poetry in the Caribbean has been divided between two literary traditions separated by class lines. During the colonial era, the higher educated classes, i.e. initially the White master class sought to affiliate their poetry with European traditions in terms of verse forms and style; and they preferably depicted an idealised version of Caribbean geography, history, and societies in either pastoral, Georgic, quasi-epic, and polemic fashion (Baugh 2001, 227; Nowak 2007). Topics ranged from slavery apologetics to the praise of colonialism (Baugh 2001, 228-30). Thus, a good deal of poetry in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries was written to vindicate colonisation. Many poets continued the tradition of praising the beauty of the Caribbean in pastoral fashion even when a new and mainly creole elite came up in the mid-20th century. Even though the creole elite had formed through acculturation and exposure to colonial education, their poetry turned to be increasingly anti-colonial, and shorn of poetic conventions, so that (politically as well as in its politics of representation) their poetry can be seen to point to a second tradition of Caribbean verse (Baugh 2001, 232; Nowak 2007).

This other tradition emerged from the African slaves – and this tradition is critical, blunt, and emancipatory. Although simple in their expression, the poetry of the slaves was “comparatively vigorous, fresh, and witty in its [...] uncluttered style”, and local creole idioms were frequently used (Baugh 2001, 232, 236). This tradition of poetry fed on folksongs and lore, and this influence is still palpable in current forms of Caribbean poetry. Caribbean poets have frequently used local and vernacular language in their work (van Kempen 2001b, 543). The topics range from critical notions on colonial history and open anti-colonialism over the proposed recuperation of Africa to critical estimates of contemporary post-colonial societies (Baugh 2001; Nowak 2007).

of Afro-Guyanese and Amerindian folklore acknowledge the African influence on Guyanese culture, they do not consider the Indo-Guyanese role for Guyanese folklore (see pages 334ff).

In sum, it can be claimed that poetry in the Caribbean is specifically related to oral culture, emancipation, and politics in general. Many poets have used their work to express their political opinions, and poems were often published in newspapers and magazines to spread their subversive power or to consolidate the status quo. Accordingly, poets in the Caribbean engaged with and contributed to political discourses through their poems. Hence, considering the subversive potential of poems as well as their consolidating engagement with existing power structures, Caribbean poetry can likewise be relevant in relation to an analysis of Caribbean notions of identity.

2. *Choice of Genre*

Faced with a lack of publishing houses, the illiteracy rate, and the costs involved in publication, it seems obvious that the literary culture from the 1950s to the 1970s in the Caribbean mainly produced shorter pieces of literature, i.e. short stories, poems, novellas, essays (Ramraj 2001, 199; van Kempen 2001a, 387; van Kempen 2001b, 543). Poems and short stories could be published in magazines and newspapers, or easily distributed through self-publication (Ramraj 2001, 199; van Kempen 2001a, 387). Poetry assumes a peculiar position, because this many poets used local idioms and vernacular language in their poems which was more difficult in prose (February 2001, 568; van Kempen 2001a, 387). Acknowledging the importance of poetry in the Caribbean, a greater number of postcolonial literary scholars have drawn their attention towards the analysis of poems. By contrast, the analysis of Caribbean short stories has been neglected in academic research, despite their relevance for the development of an independent Caribbean literary tradition (Ramraj 2001, 199; Smith 2011, 7; van Kempen 2001b, 543). Emma Smith criticises that, although the Caribbean short story has received greater attention in the last decade, there are still plenty of deficiencies concerning a thorough academic contemplation (Smith 2011, 7). Furthermore, there appears to be a bias in favour of Anglophone literatures, neglecting Dutch, French, and Spanish short stories coming from the region (Smith 2011, 9). In particular, comparative studies involving the Dutch Caribbean are scarce (Smith 2011, 9). Thus, in order to address those deficiencies, I tried to include both the short story

as a genre and Dutch Caribbean prose as a largely unexplored part of the region in my research. Yet, for quantitative reasons,² I also included poems and essays in my analysis; and, as a scholar with an educational background in English literature, I also included an English-speaking region in the comparison.

3. *Regional Choice*

Addressing the lack of comparative studies including short stories and the Dutch Caribbean, I decided to focus on Dutch-speaking Suriname and English-speaking Guyana.³ Due to their historical and cultural similarities, these two Caribbean states are quite suitable for a literary comparison. Both Suriname and Guyana are located directly next to each other on the Caribbean mainland, and they are former colonies, but with a different European motherland and metropolitan languages. In contrast to other parts of the Caribbean, they were two of the main targets of indentured labour, and a considerable part of their population descended from people from India – in addition to the descendants of African slaves. Today, both countries are independent states, and they both gained independence within a similar time period: Guyana in 1966, Suriname in 1975. Sadly, cultural-political tensions between Afro- and Indo-Caribbean people arose. These tensions were intensified and instrumentalised in the national discourse that led to independence. Despite the proportionate majority of people with Indian roots in the population, African cultural heritage and subjectivity assumed an over-dimensional part in national discourses (Kutzinski 2001). A literary comparison of short stories, essays, and poetry from both Caribbean countries can therefore be expected to

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- 2 In *Moetete* and *Kyk-Over-Al*, the majority of texts published were poems, not short stories. As I want to gather together a sample of texts which are representative of the discourses of their times, I therefore decided to include further genres as well. My main focus, however, will lie on short stories, for the reasons pointed out in my text.
 - 3 Although I could possibly have included the third of the 'Guianas', namely French Guiana, I decided against it, and for four reasons. 1) French Guiana did not become an independent state, but remains a French overseas department. 2) The historical development (French and Portuguese colonisation occurred late) as well as the cultural influences (throughout the country, the affiliation with French culture is dominant today) make French Guiana considerably different from the further neighbouring two Guianas. 3) As a consequence of internal political circumstances, the particular manner of national discourse in French Guiana only emerged in the 1980s. 4) The ethnic composition of the population is different from Guyana and Suriname. In French Guiana, the great majority of the population (66 per cent) was always made up by Afro-Caribbeans, while the proportion of Indo-Caribbeans is lower than four per cent (Burton and Réno 1995, 56f).

gather new insights concerning the function of identity for political as well as psychological objectives and its role in relation to the socio-political and ethnic tensions that still prevail in these societies.

4. *Demarcation of Time Frame*

To make the comparison more feasible, a time frame of approximately fifteen years before and after independence was chosen for each of the two selected literary areas, i.e. the period 1945 to 1989 for the Anglophone Guyana, and 1965 to 1985 for the Dutch-speaking Suriname. This period of time is interesting for research on national identity. In the wake of the great depression, the decline of colonial power, and the expansion of the economic influence of the United States, nationalist tendencies emerged in the 1930s in the Caribbean (Rosenberg 2007). In the following decades, the role of literature in the Caribbean was fundamentally re-defined – it became a vehicle for the expression of identity and the dissemination of political opinions. Hence, in the two decades before and after independence, literary groups in both countries actively engaged in shaping the national discourse and in creating an independent national culture. Accordingly, discourses of identity were particularly salient in this period.

The political climate of this time also laid the foundations for postcolonial studies. Leftish political ideologies gained more importance and grew together with a spirit of anti-colonial resistance. The academic climate of the time (in and outside Guyana and Suriname) produced several prominent works that initiated the emergence of postcolonial studies, e.g. Frantz Fanon's manifestos *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 1967) as well as *The Wretched of the Earth* ([1961] 1963), Jean-Paul Sartre's *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* ([1964] 2001), Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* ([1957] 1972) and Edward Said's *Orientalism* ([1978] 1979). Therefore, the discourses of identity over the period from the 1950s to the 1980s are very specific: they include notions of nationalism on the one hand; while they are already being influenced on the other hand by structuralism, semiotics, and the critical foundations of cultural studies. Thus, special attention will be paid to identity –and its literary representations in texts from this period.

Furthermore, the demarcation is also related to the political and social

developments in Suriname and Guyana after this time frame. For both and Suriname, the 1980s introduced a fundamental change: in Guyana, president Forbes Burnham's death in 1985 led to a small moderation of the dictatorial political climate that dominated the 1970s; in contrast, after Desi Bouterse's military coup in 1980, Suriname became a military dictatorship. Hence, in both countries, the national discourses waned or changed significantly in the 1980s.

In addition, the demarcation of the time frame is also related to the literary magazines and the writers featured in them. In *Moetete*, all important and influential writers were involved – unfortunately, the literary magazine only lasted for two issues. The contributors, however, were still involved in the literary project that was initiated with *Moetete*. They continued to shape Suriname's literary culture as writers, journalists, and editors. Unfortunately, with Bouterse's military coup in 1980 and finally with the assassination of Jozef Slagveer in 1982, the group's influence was shattered. Many left for Europe.

In contrast to *Moetete*, the Guyanese literary magazine *Kyk-Over-Al* can look back upon several decades of publication.⁴ Hence, for Guyana, I did not only focus on publications that appeared in this magazine, I also chose *Kyk-Over-Al* editor Arthur J. Seymour's death in 1989 as a final demarcation of the time frame for Guyana. Seymour had always had a very strong influence on the magazine and on literary culture in Guyana in general. Hence, his death was certainly the end of a literary and cultural era in Guyana. Officially, *Kyk-Over-Al* is still published, but due to its declined publication frequency, its literary significance has not retained the same power and impact which it had under Seymour.

In addition, there is another reason for choosing the 1980s as a demarcation of the time frame. Due to Bouterse's and Burnham's economic policies, the increasingly desperate political and economic situation in the 1980s led to more and more massive waves of migration – particularly for Guyana (CCDP 2002, 2; Heemskerk and Duijves 2015, 26-7). Many writers and intellectuals left Suriname and Guyana to find more promising conditions. Correspondingly, nationalist notions of identity were eclipsed by more transnational discourses, and the experience of migration became a dominant aspect in relation to discourses of identity. Considering the complexity of the literary representations of (national)

4 Despite the 'short break' between 1961 and 1981.

identity and the abundance of texts from the selected time periods, a detailed analysis of a longer time period including the years after the 1980s would have exceeded the scope and feasibility of this study.

5. *Demarcation of the Text Corpus*

Considering the importance of shorter genres for the development of an independent Caribbean literary culture, this study will focus on short stories and poems while also taking note of some journalistic work and essays. The lacking infrastructure of local publishing houses entailed that most shorter literary texts were first published in “little magazines” (Ramraj 2001, 200). By comparison, collections of short stories or poems published by one single author were rare (van Kempen 2001b, 543). Therefore, several of the texts that I included in this study derive from these small literary magazines. Due to the prominence of the contributors as well as the time frame of its publication, I chose to focus on the Surinamese magazine *Moetete* (Ramraj 2001, 200; van Kempen 2001a, 392). For Guyana, a substantial part of the texts were taken from the literary magazine *Kyk-Over-Al*. More details about these three literary magazines as well as other sources will be found in the respective chapters on Suriname and Guyana.

Due to the fact that the publication of short stories was still comparatively scarce in comparison to the abundance of poems found in these magazines, I also included short stories which were frequently listed in mono- and multilingual anthologies of Caribbean short fiction. Hence, I relied also on stories that in some way have been canonised. Remaining within the time frame mentioned above, for Suriname, I chose stories and essays from renowned anthologies published by Surinamese authors, such as *I sa man tra tamara!?* (1972), *Kri! Kra! Proza van Suriname!* (1972), and *Creole Drum* (1975), but also from the collection of short stories published by ‘Surinamist’ Michiel van Kempen, *Verhaalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers* (1989). For Guyana, I chose stories from the anthologies *Stories from the Caribbean* ([1965] 1972), *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories* (1996), and *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories* (2002). Furthermore, I selected some Guyanese essays from *Caribbean Essays: An Anthology* (1973).

In terms of selection criteria, I chose stories according to their relation to identity. To avoid ‘cherry picking’, I assured a certain representativeness of my choice by analysing approximately 30 texts for each region. Furthermore, identity *did* feature saliently in these stories, and I did have less of a problem in finding relevant stories than in selecting the most interesting and representative examples and bundling them together.

6. *Summary and Outlook*

Based on the selection criteria, the following two case studies are supposed to contribute to the discourse on Caribbean identity with several novel aspects:

1. Shifting the focus on analysis of Caribbean literature which did not receive a lot of academic attention before – *a)* short stories and *b)* comparisons between the Dutch and the Anglophone Caribbean.
2. Taking a non-normative perspective which perceives notions of identity as complex that adopt, mix, and appropriate primordialist, creole, and transnational notions of identity.
3. Introducing a psychological perspective on identity which considers the psychological mechanisms and functions of identity.

By taking an interdisciplinary approach, this study hopes to contribute to deeper understanding of representations of identity in Caribbean texts. Supplementing postcolonial theories with psychological theories, this study hopes to generate new insights in the research on postcolonial identities. The main objectives and the anticipated gain of new knowledge can be summarised as:

1. Challenging the prevailing theoretical perspective on national identity in postcolonial studies by offering an epistemological alternative.
2. Focussing on the appropriation and intersections between discourses.
3. Gaining new insights concerning the narratological aspects of representations and articulations of identity.
4. Providing a deeper insight into the psychological functions and cognitive mechanisms of identity.

Part III:

Case Study Suriname

Chapter 6

Suriname: Historical, Social, and Political Background

The nationalist discourse in Suriname presents a suitable case for the analysis of psychological aspects of identity. In his dissertation, Michiel van Kempen calls for a consideration of psychological functions of identity in research on Surinamese literature. With regard to Hans Henkemans's analysis of the artwork as a sublimation of drives that are transformed qua content (van Kempen 2002 IV, 567; Henkemans 1981, 68f), Michiel van Kempen maintains that a psychological perspective might be suitable to provide new and important insights, since

juist in het geval van de sensitieve Surinaamse kunstenaars [zijn] de sublimatie als die identificatie extreem complex [...], omdat hun 'meerzijdige culturele gebondenheid' de richting van het reageren op een impuls onduidelijk kan maken, en de keuze van [identificatie] op zich al uiterst verwarrend kan zijn in een postkoloniale situatie (van Kempen 2002 IV, 567).¹

Despite the interesting impetus provided by van Kempen, I will not regard literary texts as sublimations of drives or as expressions of an "it[d that] speaks" as proposed by some psychoanalytical positions (Lacan [1977] 2008, 138). I also doubt the (sexist) psychoanalytical account of identity formation as a resolution of

1 'Especially in the case of these sensitive Surinamese artists, sublimation as well as identification are particularly complex. Their multilateral cultural commitment can result in ambiguities concerning the decision of how to react towards an impulse, as the choice of identification as such can be extremely confusing in postcolonial situations' ([my translation] van Kempen 2002 IV, 567).

the *Oedipus Complex* (Freud [1917] 1957; Freud [1923] 1961; Lacan [1977] 2008). Nevertheless, I do think that a combination of postcolonial theories and psychological theories can offer a beneficial theoretical position for the analysis of (national) identity in Suriname. As I already suggested in the theory chapter,² this combination has the potential to provide a deeper insight to the dynamics of identity which are influenced by cultural-political discourses as well as psychological functions and needs.

1. *Overview of the Historical Background, Demography, and Political Climate*

Suriname is a presidential republic in South America located between Guyana and French Guiana, and it constitutes the lower rim of what can be called Caribbean in a cultural sense (Girvan 2001). As a former Dutch colony the official language is Dutch. The capital, Paramaribo is located at the coast. Suriname covers 163,820 km², it is currently populated by 566,846 people (CIA 2013). In addition, approximately 350,000 people with Surinamese roots live in the Netherlands (CIA 2013).

1.1 *Population*

Suriname's population is constituted by people from various ethnic backgrounds. Indo-Surinamese people or people from Indian descent are called *Hindoestanen*,³ i.e. 'Hindustani'.⁴ A person from African or mixed-African descent is called a *Creool*,⁵ i.e. a 'Creole'.⁶ *Creole* was, and still is, used widely as a denomination for Afro-Surinamese people. Hence, in Suriname, *Creole* is not used in the etymological sense of the word which referred to Europeans born in the 'New World', nor as simply denoting 'mixed origin' of any sorts (Knörr 2008, 2-3).

2 See page 77ff.

3 *Hindoestanen* is a plural noun that can be translated as 'Hindustani'; singular *Hindoestaan*; adjective *hindustaans*; in addition to the official language (Dutch), the *Hindoestanen* speak Hindi or their own creole language, *Sarnami*.

4 I will use this English translation of *Hindoestanen*.

5 *Creool* is a singular noun that can be translated as 'Creole'; plural *Creolen*; adjective *creools*; in addition to the official language (Dutch), the *Creolen* speak their own creole language, *Sranan* or *Sranantongo*.

6 I will use this English translation of *Creool*; I will use this spelling with a capital 'C' because in Suriname Creole denotes a specific ethnic group or identity.

Creole refers to the ‘ethnic group’ of *Creoles*, i.e. people with an African ethnic origin,⁷ comprising both people from purely African descent and people from mixed origin who mainly identify with their African roots (van Kempen 2002 II, 191-4).

Furthermore, Suriname recognizes another group of African descent: *bosneger*,⁸ or *Maroons* (van Kempen 2002 II, 194). To escape the horrendous conditions on the Dutch plantations, slaves ran away into the jungles and formed local communities. In the 18th century, the Maroons led many revolts against the Dutch, and records report rebellions in Demerara, Essequibo, Berbice, and the Dutch settlements around today’s Paramaribo. However, due to the cruelty with which the revolts were handled by the Dutch, the Maroons eventually retreated into the jungles and lived in separation from Dutch settlements (Hyles 2013, 36). In Suriname, as in many Caribbean states, Maroons are often regarded as the symbol of anti-colonial resistance (e.g. Glissant [1981] 1989). The main Maroon groups (descendants of run-away slaves) are Ndyuka, Saamaka, Paamaka, Matuari, Boni and Kwinti (van Kempen 2002 II, 194-6). In addition, there are people from Indonesian descent who are called *Javanen*,⁹ i.e. ‘Javanese’, and a small percentage of people of Chinese descent. As mentioned in the introduction, the main indigenous tribes, or Amerindians are Kari’na, Locono, Wayana, Trio, Wayana, Akuriyo, and Warau (van Kempen 2002 II, 133, 146-186).

In 1972, there were 384,000 people registered in Suriname, half of them were under 15 years old. At this time 30.8% were Creoles, 37% were Hindustani, 15.3% were Indonesians, 10.2% were Maroons and 2.6% were Amerindians (Speckmann 1975, 6). The rest was constituted by equally small groups of Chinese, Lebanese, and Europeans (Amersfoort 2011, 4). Today, Suriname recognizes the following groups: 37% Hindustani, 31% Creoles, 15% Javanese, 10% Maroons, Amerindian 2%, Chinese 2%, Caucasian 1%, other 2% (CIA 2013). Hence, although Suriname’s population increased by almost 50%, the demographic constitution remained more or less the same.

7 As Jacqueline Knörr suggests, here, ‘Creole’ is also used to denote “indigenization and ethnicization” (Knörr 2008, 4).

8 Despite the derogatory overtone of this term, it is still used in Suriname and literature about Suriname (e.g. van Kempen II 2002, 194). However, I will refrain from using this term.

9 *Janaven* is a plural noun that can be translated as ‘Javanese’; singular *Javaan*; adjective *javaans*.

1.2 *Dutch Colonial History: Commerciality, Colonial Cruelty, and Cultural Indifference*

With the Convention of London regulating the colonial division of the Guianas between the British and Dutch in 1814, the Dutch settlements around the Suriname river should eventually remain Dutch (Hyles 2013, 38). In comparison to the British, the Dutch interest in their colonies was solely economic. They did not intend to spread Dutch culture, and they had little ambition to acculturate the different ethnic groups to anything else but the Dutch sense of commerciality (Hyles 2013, 73). In 1813, 80 per cent of the plantations belonged to Dutch people not living in Dutch Guiana (Hyles 2013, 74). Correspondingly, they had no real concern for societal and cultural issues, but their main interest was commercial.

Suriname constituted a substantial basis for the Dutch share of the world market, as its plantations produced sugar, coffee, and cacao. To satisfy their need for labour force, the Dutch purchased African slaves who came from the regions of today's Senegal, Gambia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Angola and St. Helen (Estimates Database 2009c;¹⁰ van Kempen 2002 II, 191). Approximately 300,000¹¹ slaves were shipped over to Dutch Guiana between 1668 and 1842 (Hyles 2013, 76). *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* estimates that a total of 294,652 African slaves arrived¹² between 1658 and 1842 (Estimates Database 2009b).¹³ The Dutch plantation system was harsh. The Dutch had gained a reputation for being particularly cruel and selfish towards their slaves and colonial employees. Slaves were considered as commodities, not as humans. The mortality rate was devastating – even in comparison to other slave-owning colonies. Violent resistance and slave revolts were a common occurrence (Hyles 2013, 36, 76). Similar to other Caribbean colonies, e.g. Martinique (see also Glissant [1981] 1989, 87), there were slaves that ran away from the atrocious conditions of slavery – the *Maroons*. For practical and strategic reasons, the

¹⁰ See also Table 3 in appendix 1, page 518.

¹¹ Other sources give an estimate of 325,000 or 250,000, not including the 300,000 slaves that were illegally brought into the colony after the abolition of the slave trade in 1814 (Hyles 2013, 76-7).

¹² Of the 340,988 who embarked (Estimates Database 2009b; Table 2 page 518).

¹³ See also Table 2 in appendix 1, page 518.

colonisers mainly populated and cultivated the coastal part of Suriname; therefore, the eastern part became an area of retreat for Maroons. They settled in tribe-like communities which were socially organized similarly to the African communities they originated from (van Kempen 2002 II, 194-5; Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 1-4).

In 1863, slavery was abolished in the Dutch Caribbean. However, in the spirit of Dutch commerciality, slaves were granted freedom only after a prolonged period of increased productivity or hard labour. Although emancipated slaves also had to work on their former owner's plantation in British Guiana (but mainly part-time), this large scale form of *manumission* was mainly practiced in Dutch Guiana (Hyles 2013, 78). In 1863, 32,000 slaves and 21,000 free coloured people were registered in the colony (Amersfoort 2011, 4).¹⁴

With the abolition of the slave trade in the Netherlands in 1814 and the subsequent emancipation of slaves, the supply of workforce for the plantations became shorter. Thus, the end of the colonial slave trade marked the beginning of the colonial indentured labour system. The Dutch began to transfer indentured labourers from China, Java, and Portugal (Madeira) to their colonies after 1853. Furthermore, they purchased indentured workers from the British. In 1873, the freighter *Lalla Rookh* arrived with the first 410 Indian immigrants from British India (Hyles 2013, 87; van Kempen 2002 II, 279). Between 1873 and 1916, approximately 34,304 men and women, together with an unclear number of children were brought to Suriname, mainly from the poor and densely populated West Provinces (later United Provinces or Uttar Pradesh), Bengal, Oudh, and Bihar in India (Fokken, unpublished conference paper, 3; van Kempen 2002 II, 279).

The conditions within the colonial indentured labour system resembled those during slave trade. The labourers had to work for a wage that hardly paid their living. Hence, by introducing the indentured labour system, the Dutch kept the plantation wages low, also among the Creoles (Fokken, unpublished conference paper, 3). Furthermore, although slavery had been abolished, the indentured labourers could be severely punished for not fulfilling the conditions

14 In the face of the 300,000 slaves that were brought into the colony (plus the 300,000 that were allegedly illegally imported), these figures mark the horrendous degree of slave mortality in Dutch Guiana (Hyles 2013, 76).

of their work contracts. For many of them, their status and life on the plantations were a total and utterly horrible shock. They had not foreseen the ruthlessness they would be treated with (Fokken, unpublished conference paper, 3; van Kempen 2002 II, 279). Officially, their contracts should run for five years. Nevertheless, most of them stayed after their contract had ended (Amersfoort 2011, 4); only one third of the Indian indentured labourers re-immigrated (van Kempen 2002 II, 279).

Between 1890 and 1939, further contract workers, mostly from Java, were brought to Suriname from other Dutch colonies (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 8). Eventually, a total of 24,000 people from Java stayed in Suriname (Amersfoort 2011, 4). These various cultural and ethnic backgrounds are still palpable in Suriname today.

1.3 Languages

Suriname is the home of various spoken and written languages; the most important are certainly *Sranan(tongo)*, *Sarnami*, and Dutch. Initially, the way of communication, not only between Europeans and Africans, but also between the various African groups and within Maroon communities, was considerably shaped by English and Portuguese. The indentured servants responsible for the slaves before 1668 spoke English (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 3). An Afro-Portuguese pidgin seems to have had existed at the West Coast of Africa during the 17th century (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 3). Further influences derived from various West-African languages brought by the African slaves (van Kempen 2002 II, 235). From 1864 onwards, after the abolition of slavery, other people from the Caribbean, mainly Barbados, migrated to Suriname who also brought their varied and mixed linguistic influences (Gobardhan-Rambocus 2008, 55). Dutch, formerly the language preserved for the elite, became the medium of education from 1877 onwards. Thus, it also began to have a stronger influence on the language use of the rest of the population (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 8).

From these various linguistic elements, a creole language¹⁵ emerged: *Sranan(tongo)*. *Sranan* is spoken by most people in Suriname until today.

¹⁵ Here, 'creole language' refers to a nativised language with distinct linguistic features (Wardhaugh 2002, 61). *Sranan(tongo)* is a creole language which developed specifically in

Although Sranan is considered as the language of the Creoles, it is not only spoken by people from African descent, and it can be considered as some kind of *lingua franca* in Suriname (van Kempen 2002 II, 235).

Furthermore, an additional, somewhat separate linguistic branch developed. The indentured labourers also brought their culture and language. Hence, with the arrival of the Indian indentured workers, a substantial (and growing) part of Suriname suddenly communicated in Hindi. After some time, a new creole language had developed among the Hindustani: *Sarnami* (van Kempen 2002 II, 280). Sarnami became an important means of communication in Suriname and its importance grew. Already in 1975, approximately half of the population was of Asian descent, mainly from India, who used Sarnami as their means of communication (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 8).

Nevertheless, Dutch has remained the official language in Suriname – and with it the colonial notion of European (Dutch) cultural supremacy persisted (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 8). In the education system, not only Dutch, but also Dutch cultural norms and ideologies were disseminated. Thus, Dutch remained the language of the elite in Suriname – even if its members were no longer exclusively of European descent. The other languages, Sranan and Sarnami, became markers of low social status and a lack of proper education (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 9).

1.4 Religion

Officially, today, 27.4 % of Surinamese people are Hindus, 25.2 % are Protestants, 22.8 % are Roman Catholics, 19.6 % are Muslims and 5 % practice indigenous beliefs (CIA 2013). However, there is another popular belief that is more unofficially important: *Winti*. Similar to *Santaría*, *Vodou*, *Obeah* and *Orishas* that are practiced in the other Caribbean regions, *Winti* is a syncretic religion that is mainly shaped by African influences (van Kempen 2002 II, 237). According to C. J. Wooding, *Winti* is tightly connected to the culture of the Creoles. In the heydays of slavery, the African slaves were excluded from church service, and therefore, they created their own religious belief. *Winti* literally means ‘wind’, and refers to swiftly wandering, (mostly) benevolent gods or spirits. Other references

to these gods are *gado*, *jeje*, and *wenu*. There are air gods, or *Tapu Kromanti*, led by the god *Opete*; earth gods, or *Gronwinti*, whose main gods are *Mama Aisa* or *Gronmama* together with her husband *Tata Loko*; forest gods or *Busi-wenu* (their leaders are *Busi Mama* and *Tata Busi*); and water gods or *Watra-wenu*, led by *Watra Mama* or *Mama Bosu* and her husband *Tata Bosu*. The main villain among the gods is *Apuku*, one of the *Busi-wenu*. According to the *Winti* belief, human beings possess two spiritual elements: *kra* and *jorka*. After the person's death, the *kra* is reunited with the person's spiritual parents, the *djodo* (a term from the language Dahomey); the *jorka* goes to the land of the dead or *jorka kondré*. During *Winti* rituals people become possessed by *wintis* and then speak in divine voices. The rituals of *Winti* shape a strong sense of community, and therefore, it played a crucial role in the emergence of a Creole culture and identity (Wooding 1972). Furthermore, (in contrast to Guyana), the syncretic, hybridised African roots of *Winti* are very pronounced in Surinamese culture.

1.5 Social Structure

During colonial times, governance in Dutch Guiana was not very sophisticated. Dutch Guiana was a mere export colony in which money ruled: the colony was managed by a court which consisted of the largest plantation owners, the *Hof van Politie*. In 1866, the *Hof van Politie* was replaced by the *Koloniale Staten* a quasi-representative government. However, membership remained depended on money and origin. Although, from 1901 onwards, access was not restricted to plantation owners anymore, only taxpayers with an annual income of 1,400 guilders and more could claim a position in the *Koloniale Staten*. Correspondingly, little else but financial matters were discussed. In Hyles words: "Dutch involvement in the day-to-day activities and cultural development of the colony was nil" (Hyles 2013, 75). In contrast to the British, who enforced assimilation, the Dutch had practiced an *apartheid* approach. Thus, initially, Dutch norms had a minor influence on Creole culture. Due to the Dutch indifference concerning cultural developments in their colony, the African slaves as well as the Maroons could practice and develop their own culture. Furthermore, the Dutch kept slaves from different linguistic origins together; therefore, a hybrid African / Creole culture developed (Hyles 2013, 85). The Dutch disinterest in uniting their colony culturally led to a more or

less strict cultural segregation between Europeans and Africans. Correspondingly, the African influence on Creole culture was (and still is) much more pronounced in comparison to British Guiana / Guyana (Hyles 2013, 79). However, after the abolition of slavery, the freed slaves gravitated to the cities at the coast. There, they were strongly exposed to European cultural influences (Hyles 2013, 83-2). Hence, the culture of the Creoles (particularly the Creole elite) became considerably influenced by European culture and education.

In addition, there was another separate cultural branch. The ethnically diverse immigrants, who were brought to Dutch Guiana from the middle of the 19th century onwards, also lived more or less separately from the other groups (Hyles 2013, 91) – and the Dutch had no intention to change this condition. Legally, the Hindustani even were British subjects until 1927. In the early 20th century, the majority of the Hindustani lived at the plantations. Hence, ethnic mixing was scarce, and immigrant cultures were particularly well preserved in Suriname (Hyles 2013, 83-2).

As a consequence of the Dutch cultural colonial policies, or the lack thereof, in the early 20th century, pre-independence Suriname was still shaped by a hierarchical, pyramidal social structure. Although an increasing literacy rate, a decreasing importance of the plantation system, and the growing interest in obtaining different and better paying jobs had led to more diversity in the social strata, the colonial hierarchies persisted. The (White) social top lived up to Euro-Christian and Jewish ideologies (Breeveld 2008, 115). The Afro-Surinamese, particularly light coloured Creoles, had established themselves in the upper part of the social hierarchy (Speckmann 1975, 6). Colour still structured the possibilities to attain social respect and power. However, the Creole elite could afford to send their children to university in the Netherlands (Breeveld 2008, 115). The young intellectuals, who had been brought up in a Surinamese society still significantly shaped by colonial ideals, did not only receive a higher education in the Netherlands, they also became aware of their differences to ‘other’ Dutch people and, consequently, of their specific cultural background (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 10). It is not surprising that debates on cultural independence actually started among Surinamese students in the Netherlands. The vivid discourse resulted in the formation of two important cultural-political groups in

Amsterdam: *Ons Suriname* (1919) and *Wie Eegie Sanie* (1951). The groups attracted many Surinamese students, among them Eddy Bruma, Eugène Gessel, Hein Eersel and Jules Sidney (Breeveld 2008, 118). In this context, it is also not surprising that the emerging *Creole elite* played a significant role in the cultural and political developments which finally lead to Suriname's independence in 1975.

1.6 *Call for Independence*

During the first half of the 20th century, the call for an independent nation grew loud in Suriname. Growing financial and economic hardships, protests, and social turmoil that spread all over the Caribbean also affected Suriname, and nationalist movements emerged with a major goal: self-government (Rosenberg 2007, 1). When independence was finally achieved, it was the result of a rather peaceful political movement. However, the struggle for independence was prolonged by ethnic tensions between Hindustani and Creoles (Speckmann 1975, 14).

The tenacious negotiations for independence evolved in three stages. The 1940s brought forth the Creole parties *Unie Suriname* (Slogan “Baas in eigen huis”) in 1943, *Nationale Partij Suriname* (NPS) in 1946, and *Progressive Surinaamse Volkspartij* (PSV) also in 1946. In 1949, the Javanese as well as the Hindustani community founded their own political parties, *Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia* (KTPI) and *Verenigde Hindostaanse Partij* (VHP). Despite various differences in their political orientation, they all shared a common goal: freedom for Suriname and / or civil status for Surinamese people (Breeveld 2008, 118). Towards the end of the 1940s, the aspiration for independence became more concrete. Under the leadership of NPS leader Jopie Pengel (NPS), Suriname, together with the Dutch Antilles and the Netherlands, participated in three *Ronde Tafel Conferenties* (RTCs) in 1948, 1954, and 1961 (Breeveld 2008, 119). During these conferences, independence from the Netherlands was negotiated. Although Suriname was granted limited self-government in 1955, the RTCs did not result in full independence. Unfortunately, NPS (Nationale Partij Suriname) leader Jopie Pengel was unsuccessful in his last negotiations for full independence, and internal ethnic tensions slowed down new attempts to negotiate for self-government (Breeveld 2008, 119). Although in 1959, Suriname got its own flag,

coat of arms, and national hymn (written by Trefossa), the last of the RTCs in 1961 failed (Breeveld 2008, 119).

In the media, this failure was interpreted in ethnic terms. Supposedly, independence was mainly supported by young Creoles. The Hindustani were considered less eager for full independence. They were perceived as wanting to achieve full Dutch citizenship, rather than creating an autonomous Surinamese nation. Thus, the failure to gain independence was ascribed to a lack of support of the VHP (Breeveld 2008, 119). The initial “verbroederingspolitiek” or fraternization policy of the Hindustan Jagernath Lachmon (VHP) and the Creole Jopie Pengel (NPS), whose parties formed the majority of the coalition-cabinet between 1958 and 1967, was overshadowed by the failure of the last RTC and frictions between the two parties arose (van Kempen 2002 IV, 219-20). Still, more tensions followed. In the 1960s, the political orientation was directed towards social stabilization. The discords, not only between Pengel and Lachmon, but also between Pengel and his own party, led to a growing social discontent and uneasy years with e.g. strikes in the educational sector (Breeveld 2008, 119). Pengel, who had initially been considered as a role model for poor and ‘dark’ Creoles, lost great numbers of his supporters as he became more avid for power (he became minister-president in 1963 and lasted until 1969) and more restrictive concerning censorship (Breeveld 2008, 119).

However, Suriname had not been granted independence yet. Not only through the populist press of Jopie Pengel, but mainly through the nationalist ideas of the Creole Eddy Bruma, nationalism experienced a surge of support. Bruma, a Surinamese lawyer who had studied in the Netherlands, had been active in the political intellectual associations *Ons Suriname* and *Wie Eegie Sanie* (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 164). There, different notions on an independent Surinamese national and cultural identity were shaped and discussed, mainly among young Afro-Surinamese (Breeveld 2008, 118). Bruma returned to Suriname in 1955 where he continued the political-intellectual agenda of *Wie Eegie Sanie*. Next to working as a lawyer, he also became more politically involved in the PNR, the *Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek* (Breeveld 2008, 118). Furthermore, Bruma’s political-intellectual journalistic writing and his focus on shaping an independent Surinamese literary culture gained more support in the

population. The cultural-political climate that Bruma created, significantly contributed to smooth the way into Suriname's independence. Finally, independence was achieved on 25 November 1975 under Henck Arron who had taken over the NPS leadership after Pengel's death in 1970 (Breeveld 2008, 118f; Menckeberg 2008).

1.7 *Military Dictatorship*

However, the initial enthusiasm that accompanied the nationalist movements and the newly won independence quickly ebbed away. Suriname entered a period of economic and social instabilities, and the discontent of the population grew. On 25 February 1980, the government of Henck Arron was suspended by a military coup led by Dési Bouterse. From 1980 to 1987, Suriname was subject of a military dictatorship under Bouterse. In the beginning, the population supported the coup, because they hoped for better living conditions and a decline in corruption. However, with the *December Morden*, the killing of 15 prominent citizens who had criticised the regime in 1982 and other assaults, the support of the population decreased. Although democracy was officially restored in 1987, the new democratic freedom was tainted by a guerrilla war that lasted from 1986 to 1992 (Meel 1993; Ramcharan 2008).

1.8 *Contemporary Political Climate*

Although the country's political climate has been less violent since 1992, many of the people responsible for the military coup never truly lost their power. This claim is reflected by Dési Bouterse's official election as president of Suriname in 2010. Although, from 2007 onwards, a trial was held that accused Bouterse and other military officials to be responsible for the *December Morden* in 1982, Suriname granted them amnesty in 2012, shortly before the trial was closed.

2. *Issues of Identity*

Due to its colonial history, the population of Suriname is composed of people who originated from various (and mixed) ethnic and geographical origins. The linguistic diversity is as rich as its cultural-ethnic basis. In this context, as in other

parts of the Caribbean, the discourse of identity in Suriname cannot rely on simplistic notions of identity such as one common ethnicity or language. Nevertheless, in the context of the ramifications of colonialism and the arising anti-colonial discourses, not only among Surinamese people, but also in the rest of the Caribbean, the discourses on an identity of one's own became more and more prominent. Influenced by *negritude* and *Ethiopianism*, the African element in these societies assumed a significant part of what was considered an identity of one's own (Césaire [1972] 2005; Senghor [1964] 2005). Particularly in the pre-independence decade with the call for an independent nation, the discourse of identity assumed a substantial role in the formation of a national narration. Consequently, political, cultural, and individual identities were 'streamlined', as the main objective was to achieve political and cultural independence from former colonial powers. Hence, the discourse of identity in the period shortly before and after the 1970s is intermingled with the predominantly national discourse of that time.

2.1 *Surinamese National Culture = Surinamese Creole Culture?*

In a way, the nationalist discourse in Suriname was also a struggle for ethnic and cultural hegemony. In the beginning of the 20th century, social hierarchies were still largely influenced by old colonial structures in which the different ethnic groups in the country had rarely mixed. After the abolition of slavery, many Creoles (i.e. Black, Afro-Guyanese) had moved away from the plantations into the cities where they were more strongly influenced by European cultural norms; while the newly arrived Hindustani and Javanese tried to maintain their own cultures and kept to themselves (Speckmann 1975, 7). As a result, at the end of the 19th and the early 20th century, Creoles lived mainly in the cities, while Hindustani still largely settled in rural areas (Speckmann 1975, 12).

This social constitution changed considerably in the course of the first half of the 20th century, and Hindustani were found in rural areas as well as in the cities where they came into more contact with European-Creole culture (Speckmann 1975, 9). However, there had been a conspicuous initial hostility between Creoles and Hindustani that unfortunately survived way into the 20th century (Speckmann 1975, 6-7). In a survey from 1963, only 9.3% of the

Hindustani who participated in a study on racial attitudes said that they held positive attitudes towards Creoles, whereas 63% answered that they felt negatively about them. Similarly, only 2.8% of Creoles held a positive stance towards Hindustani, while 83.3% claimed that they had negative feelings towards them (Speckmann 1975, 12). In the same survey, the Hindustani frequently mentioned the “authoritarian and aggressive behaviour” of the Creoles, “their presumed position of privilege, their laziness and parasitic behaviour”, whereas Creoles criticised the Hindustani’s “aggressive economic behaviour, their stinginess, and their objection to assimilation” (Speckmann 1975, 12). Thus, the racist stereotypes of colonial discourses persisted.

With criticism against European culture and nationalism flourishing among Creole intellectuals from WWII onwards, the Creoles sought to establish a homogenous Surinamese culture, and they urged other ethnic groups toward cultural assimilation, i.e. assimilation towards Creole culture which they deemed the new national culture. However, the Hindustani recoiled from these appeals and re-oriented towards their own culture. Hence, the political controversy among the different parties who struggled for political influence was accompanied by ethnic and cultural dissonances (Speckmann 1975, 10-1).

The alleged lack of nationalist support from the Hindustani’s VHP during the RCTs resulted into more open political and cultural tensions between the Creoles and Hindustani (Breeveld 2008, 116). These discrepancies influenced the kind of identity that was shaped and promoted during the struggle for Suriname’s independence. The most assertive group were certainly the Creoles, and eventually, a national culture became associated with Creole culture. This predominance was strengthened by the nationalist press in the 1960s which was significantly shaped by the Creole lawyer Eddy Bruma. He did not only actively advocate a political agenda, but also promoted the assertion of an independent Surinamese culture – which for him meant ‘Creole culture’ (van Kempen 2002 IV, 219).

This ethnic division was also palpable in cultural clubs and associations. Various politically (nationalist) orientated groups were founded in intellectual and university circles (Breeveld 2008, 135). As mentioned earlier, these groups did not only develop in Suriname itself, but also in diasporic groups, particularly

among young Creoles who studied at Dutch universities. Many of the prospective influential and successful writers were affiliated in one way or the other to one of the following groups during their education in the Netherlands or afterwards. The most important groups were: *Vereniging Ons Suriname* (Association Our Suriname), founded in 1919; *Wie Eegie Sanie* (Our own Business), founded by Eddy Bruma in 1951; KRA (Soul) founded in 1958 (Breeveld 2008, 118f, van Kempen 2002 IV, 233f). Despite their reputation of lacking the right support for nationalism, the Hindustani also founded similar groups: *Hindustani Nauyuwak Sabha* and *Barhantie*, student groups similar to KRA, founded in 1958. However, the influx into Hindustani groups and their influence decreased soon after 1960 (van Kempen 2002 IV, 235). Furthermore, the perception of the formation of Hindustani groups was not entirely positive: within KRA many held the opinion that the Hindustani groups could not be called ‘nationalist’, because they did not experience the ‘colonial scourge directly’ (van Kempen 2002 IV, 235). Those and similar opinions reflect the persistent stereotypical depiction of the relationship between the Creole and Hindustani. Hein Eersel even talked about a Hindustani separatism that would endanger Suriname’s independence (van Kempen 2002 IV, 235). Although later, the concept of ‘unity in diversity’ became more popular, the initial political independence movements and the nationalist discourse of identity was explicitly coined Creole.

This is also reflected in the popularity of a conceptual and ideological ‘looking back to Africa’ manifested in transnational movements such as *negritude* (Senghor [1964] 2005) which inspired writers like R. Dobru, Kwame Dandillo, Julius Defares, Guillaume Pool, Eugène Rellum, Jozef Slagveer and Michaël Slory (van Kempen 2002 IV, 233). In the course of cultural nationalist debates, the recovery and appreciation of ‘national heroes’ also received greater interest. However, in the spirit of Édouard Glissant (Glissant [1981] 1989), only a certain type of national heroes received greater attention and appreciation – the Maroons. The *Comité Vrijheidsmonument Boni*, an initiative of Jozef Tam and Emilio Meinzak, called for a monument for Maroon leaders – which was actually built in 1963 (van Kempen 2002 IV, 231). Accordingly, the discourse concerning national and cultural Surinamese identity was primarily concerned with and debated by the Creole, i.e. Afro-Surinamese. Hence, the rising awareness of national history,

which was shaped and created by the Creole discourse, did not ignore, but definitely neglected the history of Hindustani and other parts of the population. Although the Creoles did not form the majority of the population with 30.8% – the Hindustani did with 38% – they could definitely claim cultural predominance in the 1960s and 1970s.

A further indication of a Creole hegemony in relation to Surinamese nationalism is reflected by the little influence Javanese and indigenous groups and movements had on the nationalist discourse of identity of that time (van Kempen 2002 IV, 236f). Breeveld as well as van Kempen emphasise the influence of Eddy Bruma who, after his return to Suriname in 1955, became the new unofficial leader of the nationalist movements. Although the leftish, intellectual influence of Bruma is reflected by most politically oriented groups founded in the 1950s and 1960s (Breeveld 2008, 118), the discourse of nationalism and identity as it was presented in the press and literature was and remained predominantly Creole.

3. *Surinamese Literary Culture*

Under the auspices of Bruma, a special item on the national agenda of the 1960s and 1970s was the establishment of a national literary culture (van Kempen 2002, IV 342). Bruma himself wrote plays, poetry, and short stories in Dutch and ‘the national language’ Sranantongo (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 166). The creation of a national literature was one of the major goals in the struggle for cultural independence. Michiel van Kempen argues that the literature of that time, and particularly

poetry was first and foremost a medium for nationalist ideologies, for raising political awareness, for an idealistic, misty-eyed feeling of national community. The aesthetic, poetic musings on the beauty of country and other topics like love that can be found in these literary productions only came second ([my translation] van Kempen 2010, 1).

Furthermore, also the notion of what a Surinamese writer is and what they can achieve was saturated with nationalist ideologies. The articulation of an autonomous Surinamese identity was not only a political goal, but the leading literary topic of the years to come (van Kempen 2002 IV, 328). The writer was

assumed to be a spokesman /-woman of cultural identity, and their texts were considered an expression of a distinct Surinamese identity. In the 1960s and 1970s, nationalism and literary production seemed to go hand in hand. However, nationalism in Suriname had a specific ethnic colouring. With the influence of Bruma, the nation's interests were equated with the political interests of the Creoles, and national culture became synonymous with Creole Culture (van Kempen 2002 IV, 9-10, 444,). Considering the importance and accessibility of newspapers, journals, and magazines, literature was mainly produced for and received through the printing press which involved a network of literary associations, printing presses, and literary journals. The following survey will try to depict how literature was produced, assessed, and received – and who produced, assessed, and received literature – in Suriname from the beginning of the 1960s onwards and which role these factors assumed in the discourse of identity.

3.1 *The Institution of Literature*

In the 1960s and 1970s, literary and cultural production was flourishing (Breeveld 2008, 130). Newspapers, literary magazines, radio programs, literary prizes, and theatre-groups were stimulated by subsidies by the *Sticusa* (*Stichting voor Culturele Samenwerking*), an initiative by Dutch authorities that was also involved in setting up the *Cultureel Centrum Suriname* (CCS) (Rutgers 1996, 260; van Kempen 2002, 245, 248f). The nationalist discourse formed a stimulating literary and cultural climate, and writers, critics, and cultural institutions considered literature an important factor in the formation of a national culture.

3.2 *Writers' Associations*

In this nationalist spirit, writers' associations and literary circles were formed. After *Oefening Kweekt Kennis* (literary organization, 1834 – 1858) ceased to exist towards the end of the 19th century (van Kempen 2002 III, 189f), there had been no literary organization in Suriname until 1959 when *Jonge Lettervrienden van Suriname* emerged (van Kempen 2002 IV, 275). Surinamese writers and artists living in the Netherlands also felt the need to organize themselves, but the cultural influence of the *Kollektief van Surinaamse en Antilliaanse Kunstenaars in*

Nederland and the *Surinaams Antilliaans Schrijvers Kollektief* remained humble (van Kempen 2002 IV, 278).

In 1967, the first step towards the formation of an organised literary circle was made by the writers Thea Doelwijt, R. Dobru, Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout, Shrinivāsi and Jozef Slagveer who showed up as a group and organised a booth at the ‘Nationale Kunst Beurs’ (van Kempen 2002 IV, 275). In 1968, the same authors were involved in the formation of the group *Moetete* which organized regular meetings for literary and cultural discussions and readings. In the same year, the group also published a literary magazine.¹⁶ The group had ambitious aims: they sought to fuel the literary life in Suriname by the call for an inclusion of Surinamese texts in schooling; they announced an introduction of a literary prize, a greater network with other Caribbean authors and an information-centre (Ooft 1968c; Ravales 1968; Slagveer 1968c). However, the group scattered in the very same year (van Kempen 2002 IV, 277). Although their literary impact on mainstream culture was rather small, the group should be considered influential – also due to their various journalistic involvements.¹⁷

3.3 *The Literary Market*

Selling books was a rather tedious endeavour in Suriname. In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the infrastructure concerning publishing houses and print offices was relatively underdeveloped. The publishing houses had to grapple with several difficulties. The infrastructure concerning the distribution and reception of books was rudimentary. The market for books was still small, as buying books was still a relatively new habit, and the possibilities for their distribution were limited (van Kempen 2002 IV, 259).

Being a writer in Suriname at this time did not really pay off. Novels sold poorly due to the reading culture and lack of financial possibilities (van Kempen 2002 IV, 363). With the little money that could be made from writing short prose and poetry, no living could be made. Of all the writers that are mentioned, only Thea Doelwijt and R. Dobru were able to live from their writing – and only because they were also involved in journalistic writing (van Kempen 2002 IV,

¹⁶ See section about literary magazines.

¹⁷ The journalistic activities of the group are elaborated in the following sections.

277). Furthermore, the relation between publishers and writers was an uneasy one, as the quality of the work varied that the writers offered. In addition to the difficult situation, Surinamese publishing houses had to face in their own country, they also had to compete with well-funded, considerably bigger, and more established publishing houses in the Netherlands (van Kempen 2002 IV, 259). Prose writers who wanted to seriously establish themselves internationally needed to publish novels, as the world market was / is much more open to novels in comparison to poetry and short fiction. Most novelists tried to find a publishing house in the Netherlands as the conditions in relation to the amount of readers and hence financial profitability were far better. Edgar Cairo and Bea Vianen are two prominent examples (van Kempen 2002 IV, 277-8). Nevertheless, literary production and eagerness for literary expression flourished in the 1960s – mainly owing to the printing press.

3.4 *Printing Press*

An important factor in the development of a literary culture was the printing press. In addition to the formation of literary associations, several literary magazines were published. The daily or weekly newspapers contributed to the development of a literary culture by including columns, articles, and specials for literary texts and literary criticism. They also published prose or poetry. Newspapers and magazines provided the most important and most effective possibility to publish and read literature in Suriname between the 1950s and 1970s. Poetry and short prose became popular genres for Surinamese writers, as they could be easily published and distributed through print media. The book market was still rather underdeveloped. From 1969 onwards, kiosks established themselves in Suriname which became a popular joint in the distribution of newspapers and magazines (van Kempen 2002 IV, 264). Soon a vivid literary culture was generated from which particularly young or new writers benefitted, and many debuted in one of the literary magazines or newspapers of that time. Furthermore, daily and weekly newspapers were not only the main vehicle for short stories and poems, but also offered a platform for writers and readers to engage in the literary discourse.¹⁸

18 A full overview of the most important newspapers and magazines, as well as their editors and writers is provided in figure 1.

3.5 Newspapers

In the 1960s and 1970s, under the influence of the intellectually, nationally oriented Bruma, the press became more diverse in voices and opinions: more politically left, more critical, and better trained journalists improved the general quality of reports, research, and texts (Breeveld 2008, 138). According to van Kempen the most important newspapers of the 1960s and 1970s were *Suriname*, *De West*, *De Vrije Stem* and *De Ware Tijd* selling between 5,000 and 10,000 copies each (van Kempen 2002 IV, 270). Breeveld also lists *Nieuw Suriname* due to its strong affiliation to Jopie Pengel (Breeveld 2008, 120). In terms of publication of literature *Suriname*, *De Vrije Stem*, and *De Ware Tijd* assumed prominent positions.

For many Surinamese writers, newspapers offered an attractive possibility for a supplementary income. Various writers were employees at newspapers as editors and journalists. The writers Eugène Gessel, Henk Herrenberg, and Benny Ooft (years after 1969) worked for *De Vrije Stem* (Breeveld 2008, 131). In 1961, after finishing her journalistic training in the Netherlands, Thea Doelwijt applied for a vacant position as editor at *Suriname*, and chief editor Percy Wijngaarde was happy to hire her. After the columns ‘Tieners.. Af dat masker’ and ‘Tiener Pagina’, Doelwijt started the literary orientated supplement, ‘Wi foe Sranan’ (1967-1969) which became an important platform for young writers and readers to engage in the cultural and literary discourse (Breeveld 2008, 135). Many important writers debuted in ‘Wi foe Sranan’: R. Dobru and Jozef Slagveer published their first short stories, and also Edgar Cairo, Leo Ferrier, Paul Marlee Ruud Mungroo, Rodney Russel, Sombra and also Thea Doelwijt herself provided the literary content (van Kempen 2002 IV, 269).

Other writers like Rudi Kross and Jozef Slagveer worked as journalistic freelancers. Kross and Slagveer even opened the first news agency in Suriname in 1971, *Informa* (Breeveld 2008, 136). Kross and Slagveer also published their own critical pamphlets and small newspapers: *Informa-Bulletin* (1971-1981), *Aktueel* (1973-1979), and *Het Front* (1972-1973) (Breeveld 2008, 136). Together with Leo Morpurgo, chief editor of *De Ware Tijd*, the Kross and Slagveer were the leading figures in the fight for freedom of the press (van Kempen 2002 IV, 271).

They also contributed to the enrichment of the literary landscape. In 1971, Kross, Morpurgo, and Slagveer launched *De Ware Tijd Extra*, a literary orientated, cultural supplement to the newspaper.

3.6 *Literary Magazines*

In addition to the existing newspapers and magazines, several literary magazines were founded. Most of them had a similar agenda: to present the literary production of their time and provide a platform for discussion. They did neither focus on a particular genre, nor on literary criticism, but rather provided a collection of contemporary literary texts (van Kempen 2002 IV, 352). Although the texts were published almost exclusively in Dutch and Sranantongo – and these two languages fail to represent the whole linguistic spectrum of Suriname – literary magazines (and also other papers that published literature) played a crucial role the development of a written literary culture in Suriname.

In 1958 and 1959, the magazine *Vox Guyanae* brought out two special editions under the name *Tongoni* ('Start telling!') which were dedicated to literature from Suriname. Between 1962 and 1964, seven editions (no other literary magazine in Suriname had more than seven editions) of the literary magazine *Soela* ('current') were published. All important authors of the 60s were published in *Soela*, except René de Rooy, Michaël Slory, and Trefossa (van Kempen 2002 IV, 391). Other important literary magazines were *Kolibri*, *Mamjo*, and *Djogo* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 272).

In 1968, the literary magazine *Moetete* ('baby-bowl' or 'feeding-bowl') was published. The magazine featured all important names of that time: in the poetry section the magazine contained renowned poems of Bhāi, Thea Doelwijt, Edmundo, Eugène Rellum, Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout, Shrinivāsi, Michaël Slory, Trefossa, Bea Vianen and Corly Verlooghen as well as new poems by Marcel de Bruin, Edgar Cairo, R. Dobru, Thea Doelwijt, Ané Doorson, Wilfred Grimmèr, Paul Marlee, Ruud Mungroo, Jozef Slagveer and Vene (Ronald Venetiaan). In the prose section, writers like Nel Bradley, Thea Doelwijt, Leo Ferrier, Ruud Mungroo, Benny Ooft, Shrinivāsi, Hetty Sporkslede and Jozef Slagveer got their share (*Moetete* I and II). In addition, the magazine published literary criticism by Louis Burleson, Thea Doelwijt, and Ané Doorson. As editors

the magazine listed Thea Doelwijt, Martinus Lutchman (Shrinivāsi), Benny Ooft, Robin Ravels (R. Dobru) and Jozef Slagveer (*Moetete* I and II). Not wanting to be associated with the allegedly imperialistic influences of the Sticusa (which had funded *Soela*), the group organised the publication themselves. Although the magazine claimed to be a representation of all literature produced in Suriname, only texts in Dutch and Sranantongo were published. Although Shrinivāsi had already published poetry in Hindi by that time, his Hindustani background was omitted, reflecting the (almost anti-Hindustani) political attitude prevalent in the national and literary discourse of that time (van Kempen 2002 IV, 435). Despite the group's high ambitions, after two editions the magazine came to an end – probably because of internal frictions (van Kempen 2002 IV, 431). Despite the importance of writers who were published in the magazine, no piece of prose published in *Moetete* would ever be listed in an anthology of the region (van Kempen 2002 IV, 431).

Next to these magazines that focussed on literature and literary criticism, three anthologies of literature from Suriname were published in the 1970s: *Wortoe D'e Tan Abra* (1970) edited by Shrinivāsi and featuring poems by Bernardo Ashetu, Bhāi, Marcel de Bruin, Edgar Cairo, Thea Doelwijt, Rudi Kappel, Paul Marlee, Orlando, R. Dobru, Eugene W. Rellum, Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout, Shrinivāsi, Jozef Slagveer, Michaël Slory, Trefossa, Vene, Corly Verlooghen and Fritz Wols. In 1972, Thea Doelwijt edited *Kri, Kra! Proza van Suriname* which included older Surinamese work by W. Ahlbrinck, Petronella Breinburg, H. van Cappelle, A.C. Cirino, A. Donicie, Arie de Groot, Albert Helman, Frances S. Herskovits, Melville J. Herskovits, M.T. Hijlaard, Johannes King, F.P. and A.P. Penard, H.F. Rikken and J.G. Spalburg as well as contemporary writers such as Nel Bradley, Eddy Bruma, Edgar Cairo, Thea Doelwijt, Ané Doorsen, Leo Ferrier, Rudi Kross, Paul Marlee, Ruud Mungroo, Benny Ooft, Coen Ooft, R. Dobru, René de Rooy, Shrinivāsi, Jozef Slagveer and Corly Verlooghen. In *Creole Drum* (1975), Jan Voorhoeve and Lou Lichtfeld included literary work by Eddy Bruma, Edgar Cairo, Johannes King, J.G.A. Koenders, Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout, Michaël Slory and Trefossa. All anthologies provide a comprehensive overview of literature, literary-cultural discussions, and criticism of that time.

3.7 Reception

In addition to their involvement in the publication and distribution of literature, the above mentioned newspapers and magazines also played an important role in relation to literary reception and criticism. As the actual book market was still underdeveloped, sales figures were a less important parameter in relation to the success of a piece of literature. Receptions in newspapers and magazines were of far greater importance.

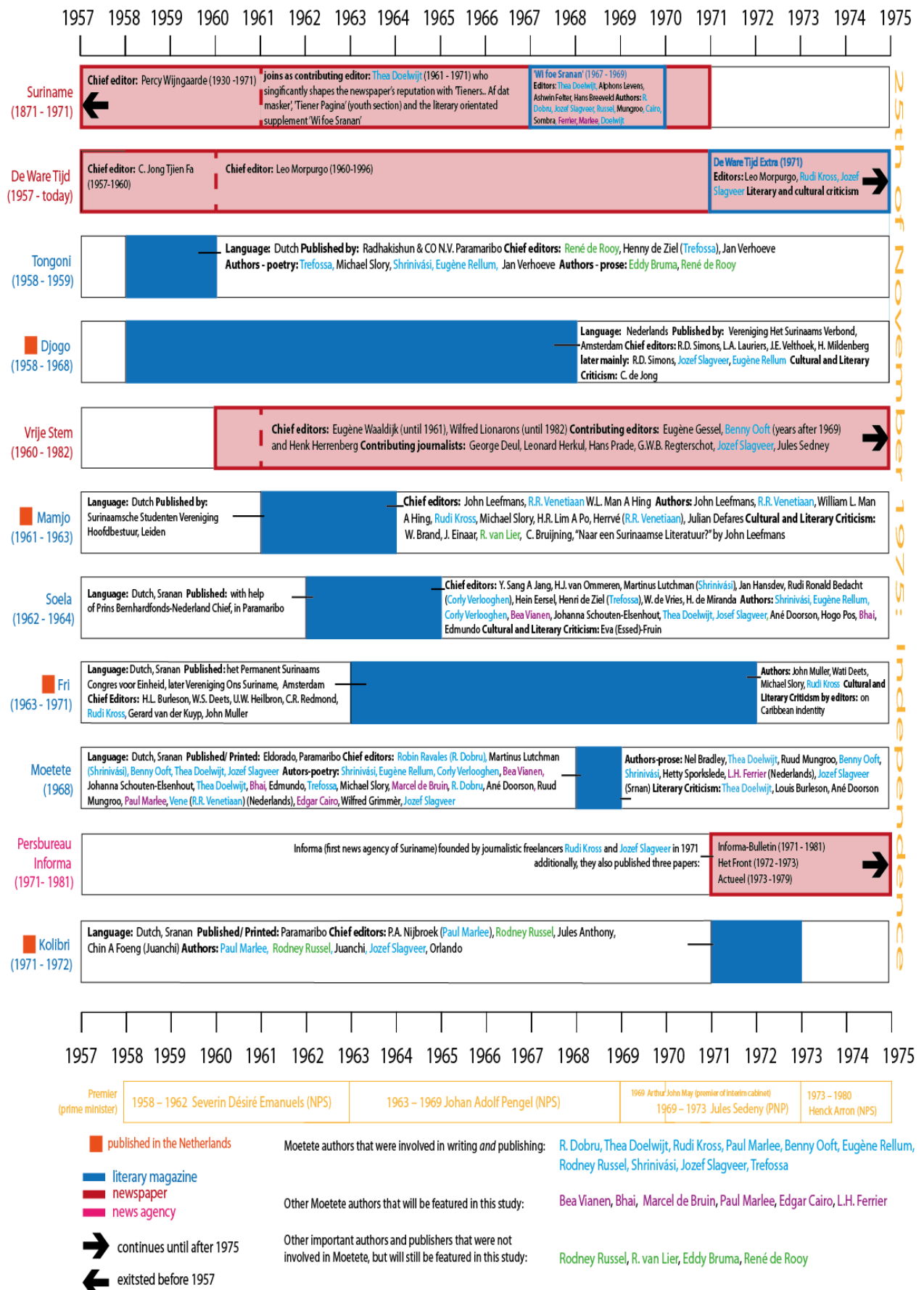
Between 1959 and 1960, the critic Telemachus (pseudonym of John Leefmans) published critical articles, not only on Suriname but also generally on literature produced in the Caribbean (van Kempen 2002 VI, 551). Tainted by a conspicuous nationalist overtone, his critical eye scrutinized and his sharp tongue evaluated many of the important writers of that time (van Kempen 2002 VI, 552). Further literary criticism was published by Thea Doelwijt in *Suriname* and Jozef Slagveer in *De Ware Tijd*. However, due to their explicitly nationalist orientation, their criticism hardly considered Surinamese literature in relation to the literary production of the rest of the Caribbean or in the Netherlands (van Kempen 2002 VI, 558f).

Another kind of reception was executed by literary prizes. Although voices came up which criticised that the prizes were mainly administered by Dutch institutions, the benefit and reputation that came along with these prizes should not be neglected. In 1974, Shrinivāsi and Slory received the *Currie-prijs for arts and science* (but not really for literature) as an appreciation of their work (van Kempen 2002 IV, 279). As far as short fiction is concerned, the *van de Rijn Prijs* presented an important instance. In 1970, the prize was awarded for a piece of short fiction. The winners were Rita Dulci Rahman and Ludwich van Mulier. Together with other stories by John Edward Benshop, Leonèl J.P. Brug, Thea Doelwijt, Kenneth Eddy Madarie, Benny Ooft and Paul Woei, who had been in a closer selection for the prize, the two winning stories were published in the short story collection *Isa Man Tra Tamara?! (1972)*. In 1973, the Sticusa introduced a literary prize. J.J.R. Berrenstein, Orsine Nicol, Eddy Pinas, Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout and Michaël Slory were awarded with the prize (van Kempen 2002 IV, 281).

4. *'The Moetete Group'*

Due to the scarcely developed book market, a substantial part of literary productions and literary-cultural criticism was published in the printing press. Young as well as established writers were published in or were themselves active in publishing newspapers and magazines (van Kempen 2002 IV, 328). A lot of writers held positions as journalists and editors in important newspapers through which they shaped the leading public cultural, political, and social discourses. The following figure (Figure 1) is supposed to depict the various involvements of Surinamese writers in the printing press:

Overview of influential newspapers and literary magazines between 1957 and 1975



From Figure 1 on page 137, it can be determined that the writers involved in *Moetete* can be considered to form the ‘core-group’ of writers that were involved in the nationalist literary discourse in Suriname between 1960 and 1975. From these writers Thea Doelwijt, Rudi Kross, and Jozef Slagveer protrude significantly through the frequency and influence of their journalistic activities. Furthermore, together with John Leefmans, Thea Doelwijt, Rudi Kross, and Jozef Slagveer were conspicuously active in literary and cultural criticism. In addition, R. Dobru, Juanchi, John Leefmans, Paul Marlee, Eugène Rellum, René de Rooy, Shrinivāsi, Trefossa, Jan Verhoeve and Corly Verlooghen also wrote *and* published literature. The publication and reception of literature formed an important part of the cultural discourse in Suriname, even if a piece was published or reviewed in the Netherlands.

In addition to the fact that many Surinamese writers of that time published, reviewed, and criticised each other’s works in newspapers and magazines as journalists and editors, many also knew each other personally through meetings of writers’ associations and groups. A lot of them were friends who went to the same schools (van Kempen 2002 IV, 329). The more or less religiously neutral *Hendrikschool* brought forth writers as Adhin, Ashetu, Bos, Bruma, Dandillo, Emanuels, Pos, Redmond, and Verschuur; the Protestant *Graaf van Zinzendorfschool* trained Doorson, Ravales, and Trefossa; the Catholic *Paulusschool* was attended by Bhāi, Helman, Kross, Leefmans, Marlee, Ooft, Russel, Shrinivāsi, Slagveer, Slory, Venetiaan and Verlooghen; and Vianen went to the catholic *St. Louiseschool* for girls (van Kempen 2002 IV, 241f). Considering that most of these schools had a pronounced Catholic or Protestant background, classic philology assumed an important role in the educational training of many of these writers which also influenced their notion of the cultural role of literature (van Kempen 2002 IV, 242). The notion that literature is an indicator of advanced civilisation and, hence, that an autonomous literary production designates a sophisticated autonomous culture certainly derives from their classic education. Significantly, many of them went to study at a Dutch university (Edmundo, Leefmans, Marlee, Mungroo, Ooft, Rellum, Slagveer, Slory, Verlooghen); spent a considerable part of their work-life outside Suriname (Ferrier, Kross, Marlee, Ooft, Rellum, Shrinivāsi, Slagveer, Slory, Trefossa,

Verlooghen, Vianen); or stayed in the Netherlands for good (Ashetu, Defares, Leefmans; see also van Kempen 2002 IV, 327). Doelwijt was born in Den Helder and first came to Suriname in 1961, after her journalistic training in the Netherlands (van Kempen 2002 IV, 432). Accordingly, the educational background of most of these writers was significantly shaped by a Dutch (still rather colonial) primary education in Suriname, followed by a Dutch secondary education in the Netherlands which also had a significant influence on their (self-)understanding as writers. Thus, considering their educational background, the *Moetete* group must be considered elitist. In their case, a substantial part belonged to the Afro-Surinamese, i.e. Creole, elite. Their ethnic, i.e. African, origin is a recurring topic in their texts. They created a positive sense of (national) identity, reaffirming the integrity and self-sufficiency of the Creole self, and a strong connection between a potential national culture and their Creole culture.

The contact with and influence of other Caribbean writers existed but did not play a central role, as the general consensus in the 1960s and 1970s was to establish a specifically Surinamese national literature (van Kempen 2002 IV, 328). V.S. Naipaul, for example, came to Suriname in 1961 for his 4th chapter of *The Middle Passage* ([1962] 1969), and Frank Martinus Arion visited Suriname a couple of times from 1970 onwards (van Kempen 2002 V, 60, 62). However, a cohesive Caribbean community did not exist between Suriname and the rest of the Caribbean.

Accordingly, the literary discourse of identity in Suriname of the 1960s and 1970s was considerably shaped by the notions and ideas of a relatively small group of writers and critics. Most of these writers had been involved in publishing or had been published in *Moetete*. Despite the ephemeral existence of the literary magazine, these writers can be considered the most influential of their time. Their common engagement in a mutual cultural objective, however, does not imply that they all had the same notions and ideas (van Kempen 2002 IV, 431). Despite the group's open affirmation of nationalist ideas, Leo Ferrier stated in 1973: 'Do I have to belong to a nationalist group? I earn my living as teacher, and this is already tedious enough' ([my translation] Ferrier 1973; cited in van Kempen 2002 IV, 350). However, to a certain degree, they were all part of or influenced by the

nationalist literary discourse, since they all had a mutual influence upon each other – not only, but mainly – because they knew each other well and personally.

4.1 *Important Characteristics of ‘the Moetete Group’*

Due to their involvement in political groups, through their work as journalists, and due to the general political climate of the 1960s and 1970s, most of the *Moetete* authors had an explicitly nationalist political notion towards literature – although with an affinity for communist ideas typical for the 1960s and 1970s. Michiel van Kempen writes:

the generation of writers of the 60s was very much aware of the fact that they were creating a whole new literature, and that this new creation would play a significant role in a social process that would lead to the emancipation of the people of Suriname and to the creation of an independent nation ([my translation] van Kempen 2002 IV, 342).

They were very self-conscious concerning their role as the creators of a new, independent Surinamese literary tradition. Among these writers, certain notions circulated in relation to specific ideas of what writer and literature *are* and which effect or (political) impact writer and literature can achieve. Although not everyone of them identified with nationalism (e.g. Ferrier), the *Moetete* group actively engaged in literary projects with ‘certain greater cultural objectives in mind’ such as the creation of a new Surinamese literary culture which was thought to contribute to Suriname’s independence ([my translation] Slagveer 1968c, 1). In *Moetete II*, Benny Ooft claims that the group can be considered Suriname’s ‘cultural avant-garde’ ([my translation] Ooft 1968c, 46).

Their education in the Netherlands did not only contribute to their elitist status, it also influenced the way in which they perceived themselves and their position in the postcolonial, pre-independence political context of Suriname. In addition to the political and cultural climate in Suriname, in which the leading discourse was generally anti-colonial and pro-independence, the Creole elite assumed a peculiar position. Due to their historical, ethnic, cultural background, their position could certainly be interpreted as *hybrid* in the sense of not only being part of one, but of several cultures. Having been brought up in Suriname and its (post)colonial hierarchies, ‘Whiteness’ and ‘Dutchness’ presented the

socially desirable norms which they themselves could not present due to their Afro-Surinamese background. However, their education and social status made them “almost the same [as other Dutch people] but not white” (Bhabha 1994, 89). In terms of Bhabha’s hybridity, they were “*neither the One [...], nor the Other [...], but something else beside*” ([italics in original] Bhabha 1994, 41). Their secondary education at Dutch universities in the Netherlands added to their realisation of their difference. Hence, their not-quite / White-ness positioned them *in-between* the majority of (lower or non-educated) Surinamese people and the former Dutch colonists.

Many writers were not only influenced by the Dutch educational system, but also spent a considerable amount time outside Suriname. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld point out that the experience of emigration and re-immigration contributed significantly to the writers becoming aware of their specific cultural background and developing a sense of cultural identity (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 10). However, in *Moetete II* Benny Ooft argues that the group ‘should work, first and foremost, in Suriname and for Suriname, and that all these Surinamese writers that produce something relevant in Holland should come back rather sooner than later and join our cause’ ([my translation] Ooft 1968c, 46). In his opinion, their international education and involvements were less important than their obligations and fidelity to their homeland. However, this radical nationalist attitude seems to be somewhat at odds with their rather intellectual, uprooted lifestyle entailed by their higher education abroad. The fact that these writers were so ardently engaged in a national discourse is something that calls for further contemplation. In the analysis of the discourse, migration will not only be understood in relation to postcolonial cosmopolitanism and diaspora, but will be contemplated in relation to psychological aspects, e.g. feelings of alienation and anxiety, which the group’s hybrid uprootedness might entail. Michiel van Kempen argued that new insights might be gained through accessing the texts of these ‘sensitive Surinamese artists’ because they seem to have faced psychologically challenging life-circumstances that for some of them (e.g. Ferrier and Russel) even resulted in ‘serious cases of psychosis’ (van Kempen 2002 IV, 567). However, diagnosing some kind of general psychopathology inherent to postcolonial, hybrid identities would be disproportionate and inadequate.

Nevertheless, these writers' uprooted lifestyle might have presented a challenge to their feeling of belongingness or relatedness that, consequently, had negative psychological consequences. Probably, feelings of alienation are the roots of the tenacious promotion of a discourse that provided this very sense of identity and belonging that these writers lacked. Basically, nationalism creates definite positions which provide stable conditions of relatedness and belongingness. Therefore, in the analysis of their literary texts, special attention will be paid on the relation between the *Moetete* group's hybridity, their definition of creoleness, their cosmopolitan, diasporic lifestyles, and the national discourse that they created.

4.2 *Selection of Authors and Texts*

The two important media of the discourse – newspapers and literary magazines – entailed the promotion of short forms of texts, such as journalistic articles and essays as well as poetry and short fiction. Short fiction and poetry provided an important platform for the development of what these authors considered a national literature. Therefore, the anthologies of Surinamese literature published by Shrinivāsi (*Wortoe d'e tan abra*, 1970), Thea Doelwijt (*Kri, Kra!*, 1972), and Jan Voorhoeve together with Ursy Lichtveld (*Creole Drum*, 1975) consist to a substantial part of these two genres. Accordingly, together with journalistic texts, short fiction and poetry were important vehicles for the proliferation of the authors' national ideologies. Hence, in relation to the nationalist discourse, journalistic texts, short stories, and poems will be taken into account.

In relation to aesthetic preferences, most of the authors chose poetry over short fiction. Michiel van Kempen observes that 'in terms of literary publications, in nine out of ten cases, it concerns poetry' ([my translation] van Kempen 1989, 243). However, in terms of reception, he emphasises the importance of short fiction and essays, because 'nine readers out of ten would rather read a story than a poem' ([my translation] van Kempen 1989, 243). Therefore, the importance of short prose for the development of a distinct tradition of literary reception should not be neglected. Furthermore, the significance of the short story as a vital and popular means of expression should be highlighted in its frequent position as the only possibility for the production of prose, because novels were hard to get

published due to the underdeveloped infrastructure of publishing houses. Although, the short story is overshadowed by the focus on poetry, the variety and the amount of stories published in the 1960s and 1970s in Suriname certainly should be acknowledged. However, there is still a lack of literary criticism that deals with short fiction in this period. Since the short story is supposedly a ‘genre for beginners’ in terms of production and reception, the focus of literary criticism had been directed towards the supposedly superior genres of the novel and poetry (Smith 2011, 7). Therefore, although, poetry will also be taken into account, the focus of this study will be set on short fiction. The analysis of the poems will function as a support in relation to the aspects that were identified in the short stories.

In terms of language, most of the texts of the 1960s and 1970s were written in Dutch and Sranantongo. The latter assumed a significant role in the nationalist discourse, because a certain cultural-political agenda was associated with its use. In the spirit of Kamau Brathwaite’s idea of ‘nation language’ that he elaborated in “History of the Voice” ([1979] 1993), Creole, i.e. Sranantongo, was considered “best suited to become the national language because it was the only language spoken in Surinam that had indigenous roots” (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 11), in the sense of having developed in Suriname (Smith 1986). The use of Sranantongo becomes important in relation to theories of Caribbean creolisation and creoleness that emphasise the African heritage inherent to the new creole identities of the Caribbean. Hence, in accordance with the general focus on African roots of the time, Sranantongo was a suitable Caribbean nation language, because it was “influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World / Caribbean heritage” (Brathwaite [1979] 1993, 265-266). As a local language, the use of Sranantongo in written and spoken language could be interpreted as a defiance against “cultural imperialism” (Brathwaite [1979] 1993, 262) imposed by Dutch as official language. However, although Sranantongo was spoken or at least understood by the majority of people (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 11), Creole claims on Sranantongo, i.e. the proposed nation language, neglected or concealed the use of other languages, particularly Sarnami. However, regardless of their Caribbean nationalist ideology (and although the majority of poems published by the *Moetete* group were written in Sranantongo), a substantial

part of their prose was written in Dutch.¹⁹ Despite the *Moetete* group's explicitly nationalist agenda, their Dutch educational background still had a significant impact on their texts: they started using local varieties of Dutch in their prose, instead of rejecting Dutch all together (Ooft 1968b; Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 13). The policies of publishing houses and newspapers also had an influence on the choice of language for pieces of prose. Accordingly, since the analysis of texts will focus on prose, almost all texts used in this study are written in Dutch, or local, i.e. Surinamese, versions of Dutch.

4.3 *Demarcation of the Text Corpus*

Considering that not all texts published in the two volumes of *Moetete* can be analysed, I selected texts that were related to the following identity relevant topics: anti-colonialism, nationalism, Hindustani-Creole relations and identity. In addition to the 15 texts that I chose from the two editions of *Moetete*, I added other short stories from relevant anthologies which contributed to the distribution of short stories: *Isa Man Tra Tamara?! (1972)* and *KRI, KRA! Proza van Suriname (1972)*. Furthermore, I chose several short stories from an anthology assembled by Michiel van Kempen, *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers (1989)* which contains several 'classic' short stories from the respective time period (van Kempen 1989, 243). Furthermore, van Kempen's anthology also seeks to fill the gap between the amount of short stories written and the amount of short stories published in anthologies (van Kempen 1989, 243) – hence, stories will be discussed that received little attention in literary analyses. Thirty texts, i.e. four short essays (NSF), fifteen short stories (SF), and eleven poems (P) will be discussed. The following table provides an overview of the stories that are analysed in detail:

19 Only three out of twelve short stories in *Moetete I* and *II* were entirely written in Sranantongo: R. Dobru's "A feti foe Gado Sabi" (1968), Slagveer's "6 April 1968 na kownoestrati" (1968a), and Trefossa's "Owroekoekoe ben kari" (1968). Of the other twelve stories that are discussed in this study, none were written in Sranantongo.

| I. Representations of Surinamese National Identity in Literary Texts | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|-----|
| 1. Anti-colonialism | 1.1. The Colonial Past and Present | Vene (1936-) | “[Er is één grote verrader]” (‘There is a big traitor’) ²⁰ (1968) | P |
| | | R. Dobru (Robin Ravales) (1935-1983) | “A Prasi foe Bigi Dorsi / Het Erf van Bigi Dorsi” (‘The House of Bigi Dorsi’) ([1967] 1989) | SF |
| | 1.2. A Common Enemy – Creating Political Unity in the Face of the Colonizer | R. Dobru | “4-juni Overpeinzing” (‘Musings on June 4’) ([1966] 1968) | P |
| | | Bea Vianen (1935-) | “Over Nonnen en Straffen” (‘About Nuns and Punishment’) ([1969] 1989) | SF |
| | | Marcel de Bruin (René de Rooy) (1917-1974) | “Dagorder” (‘Order of the Day’) (1968) | P |
| 2. National Identity | 2.1. National Narratives | Robin Ravales | “Ter Introductie” (‘Introduction’) (1968) | SNF |
| | | Rudi Kross (1938-2002) | “Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe” (‘An X-ray, a Myth’) ([1971] 1972) | SNF |
| | | René de Rooy | “De Edelstenen van Oom Brink” (‘The Gems of Uncle Brink’) ([1958] 1989) | SF |
| | 2.2. National Territory – Creole Territory? | Josef Slagveer (1940-1982) | “Totness” (‘Totness’) ([1967] 1970) | P |
| | | Josef Slagveer | “Ik” (‘I’) (1968) | P |
| | | Eugene W. Rellum (1896-1989) | “Sranan” (‘Suriname’) ([1959] 1968) | P |
| | | P. Marlee (1938-) | “Landbouwer” (‘The Peasant’) (1968a) | P |
| | | Eddy Bruma (1925-2000) | “De Fuik” (‘The Fishnet’) ([1952] 1989) | SF |
| | 2.3. National Culture – Creole Culture? | Thea Doelwijt (1938-) | “13 Spelen met Land” (‘13 Games with Land’) (1968a) | SF |
| | | Thea Doelwijt | “De Nacht van de Winti” (‘The Night of the Winti’) (1968b) | SF |

²⁰ This and all other titles are my translations from the Dutch original.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|---|-----|
| | 2.4. The Internal National Outside | Rudi Kross | “Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe” (‘An X-ray, a Myth’) ([1971] 1972) | SNF | |
| | | Leo Ferrier (1940-2006) | “Notities van een Vriend” (‘Notes Written by a Friend’) ([1973] 1989) | SF | |
| | | Jit Narain (1948-) | “De Contractant” (‘The Contract Worker’) ([1986] 1989) | SF | |
| | | Frank Martinus Arion (1936-) | “The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness” (1998) | SNF | |
| | 2.5. The Other Side of the Story – Focus on Hindustani | Shrinivāsi (1926-) | “Kila” (‘Kila’) ([1971] 1989) | SF | |
| | | Benny Ooft (1941-1989) | “Shântidevi (Een Idylle)” (‘An Idyll’) (1968a) | SF | |
| | | Corly Verlooghen (1932-) | “Dit Wankel Huis” (‘This Fragile House’) ([1962] 1968) | P | |
| | 3. Challenges to National Identity | 3.1. Migration | Thea Doelwijt | “Hoppen in de Caribbean” (‘Jet-setting in the Caribbean’) ([1971] 1972) | SNF |
| | | | Noni Lichtveld (1929-) | “Anansi Zakt op Schiphol” (‘Anansi Arrives at Schiphol’) (1989) | SF |
| Edgar Cairo (1948-2000) | | | ““Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!”” (‘T’is Here Where I Lived’) ([1980] 1989) | SF | |
| Rodney Russel (1946-) | | | “Uit het Voorgeborchte” (‘From Limbo’) ([1970] 1989) | SF | |
| 3.2. Identitarian Alternatives? | | Rudie van Lier (1914-1987) | “Fragmenten” (‘Fragments’) ([1947] 1989) | SF | |
| | | Bhāi (1935-) | “Tussen de Schelpen” (‘Between the Seashells’) (1968a) | P | |
| | | Bhāi | “Yahân se Dur” (‘From Here to There’) (1968b) | P | |
| 3.3. The Un-homely Hybrid | | Leo Ferrier | “Notities van een Vriend” (‘Notes Written by a Friend’) ([1973] 1989) | SF | |
| | | Shrinivāsi | “Dehati” (‘Land’) ([1961] 1968) | P | |
| | | Thea Doelwijt | “In den Vreemde” (‘In Foreign Parts’) (1972) | SF | |

Chapter 7

Suriname: Representations of (National) Identity in Literature

The following literary analyses will focus on how the *Moetete* authors constructed their specific national Surinamese identity in their texts. The analyses will consider topics and recurring themes that are constitutional for their version of Surinamese identity. However, the analyses will not only concentrate on the contents of Surinamese identity, but attention will be paid to the specific mechanisms according to which identity is constructed and to the psychological functions it might serve. Accordingly, I will try to determine upon which constitutive outsides Surinamese identity is based and which consequences are entailed by the focus on Creole subjectivity in the nationalist discourse.

1. Anti-colonialism

In colonies on the verge of independence, the dissemination of anti-colonial mindsets was often associated with asserting an identity of one's own. A common, unifying identity was considered to be the prerequisite for an anti-colonial, politically effective agency. Resurrecting an authentic identity was seen as a first step towards breaking the chains of colonialism. Therefore, anti-colonialism and raising awareness for an identity of one's own often went hand in hand (Rosenberg 2007, 1). As in most colonies, anti-colonial mindsets emerged in Suriname in the first half of the 20th century. Affected by the political climate, Surinamese literature written in the 1960s and 1970s displays an 'inevitable

tendency towards subversion’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 33). This part of the case study will present a short overview of the most common anti-colonial topics and themes that are presented in the texts of the *Moetete* authors.

1.1 *The Colonial Past and Present*

Literature presented a channel through which the resentment towards the atrocities of the colonial past could be expressed. Criticism towards the old colonial regime and raising awareness for the grievances in the colony (that could potentially be cured by the establishment of an own independent nation [Rosenberg 2007, 1]) presented a recurring theme. In addition, literature also functioned as a means to form awareness for a sense of unity which is needed for effective resistance.

1.1.1 *Never Forget – Exposing the Past with Vene’s “Er is één Grote Verrader” (1968)*¹

Revealing the crimes and brutalities of the colonial history was not only a way to come to terms with one’s own past, it also presented a possibility to claim justice – even if only on a literary level.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| Er is één grote verrader | | There is a big traitor |
| de tijd | | the time |
| een dolle wals | | a mad barrel |
| die de grootste misdaden | | that buries even the greatest |
| begraaft | 5 | misdeeds |
| in het stof van het verleden | | in the texture of the past |
| de grote misdadigers | | that lets great offenders |
| terugplaatst | | rejoin |
| in de rij van de kleine | | the row of the insignificant |
| die onschuldig zijn geworden | 10 | that remained innocent |
| achttiendrieenzestig | | eighteen-sixty-three |
| iedereen was er nog | | everyone was still |
| de slavenhalers de handelaars | | a slave snatcher a trader |
| de slavenhouders de drijvers | | a slave owner a bigot |

¹ Vene was born as Ronald Venetiaan on 18 June 1936 in Paramaribo. In 1956, he moved to the Netherlands to study Biology and Mathematics. In 1964, he returned to Suriname where he became the headmaster of a high school. In 1973, he became a minister in Henck Arron’s cabinet which ended after Bouterse’s coup. Afterwards, he became a lecturer at the Anton de Kom University. From 2000 to 2010, he was president of Suriname (Hoogbergen and Kruijt 2005, 250f). Although he never published a collection of poems, some of his poems were published on their own in *Mamjo* and *Moetete*. His poem “Er is één Grote Verrader” came out in *Moetete I* in 1968.

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| koningen ministers dominees priesters | 15 | kings and ministers dominies priests |
| nu zijn ze allen weg vertrokken naar hun vaderland waar ze schuilen achter ieder gezicht of gestorven | 20 | now they are all gone gone back to their mother land hidden behind every face or dead |
| alleen de slavenkinderen zij zijn er nog | | only the slave children are still there |
| want in het hart van de tiran mag de tijd de druk verlichten de slachtoffers blijven voorzover verminkt verminkt voorzover verwond getekend | 25 | for though in the heart of the tyrant the time relieves the pressure the casualties remain some mutilated mutilated some wounded brand-marked |
| (Vene, "Er is één Grote Verrader", 50) | | ([my translation] Vene, 'There's Big Traitor', 50) |

Vene's poem is written in free verse; hence, its metre varies in length and pattern, and the lines do not rhyme. The number of lines in each of the five strophes varies as well (ten, six, five, two, and five lines). Yet, there are two formal characteristics which attract the reader's attention. There is an emphasis on the forth strophe (it is the only one which only has two lines); and in the last strophe, the word 'verminkt' ('mutilated', l. 27) is repeated twice.

The poem reminds the reader that even if the atrocities of the colonisers seem to be buried in the past, they are not forgotten by the victims. And just as this past is still present for the descendants of the victims of slavery, the coloniser's culture is afflicted as well. Although many of the original transgressors are 'dead' (Vene, "Verrader", l. 21), 'behind every face' (ll. 19-20) potentially hides an 'offender[.]' (l. 7) or one of their descendants. Thus, the poem criticises that the atrocities of slavery have not been reconciled.

However, with its open accusation, the poem suggests that even if time did not bring the colonisers' misdeeds to justice, the memories of the victims *will*. Simultaneously, this literary denunciation deprive the colonisers of their claims on the land and culture of the former colony, because now 'only the slave children | are still there' (ll. 22-3). The weight of this message is emphasised by its formal presentation; these two lines comprise one single strophe. Thus, the slave children

are the ones who persisted, and thus, have an actual, ongoing connection to the land. Accordingly, in adherence to the nativist logic of nationalism, the poem suggests that the descendants of slaves should be the ones to make a rightful claim on the land and culture. In the light of the poem, the creation of an independent nation could be presented as the slave descendants' 'natural right' to reclaim autonomy and justice.

*1.1.2 A Call for Action – Contemporary Social Grievances in R. Dobru's "A Prasi foe Bigi Dorsi / Het Erf van Bigi Dorsi" (1967)*²

Not only past, but also contemporary grievances needed to be revealed. In his short story "A Prasi foe Bigi Dorsi / Het Erf van Bigi Dorsi", R. Dobru describes the outrageous conditions in some parts in Suriname. The narrative centres on the situation of those who are dependent on public housing. The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). Although the government is in charge of the property and in frequent contact with the people living in public housing, the conditions are repulsive. The narrator claims that "de gemeenschap wordt misleid door de mooie voorgebouwen"³ (Dobru, "Dorsi", 71). After having had a look inside the building, the narrator is totally shocked. The filth and poverty immediately raise concerns about "opvoeding, hygiëne, sociale rechtvaardigheid, stadsplanning, volkshuisvesting, stadsverfraaiing"⁴ (71) – hence, about almost every topic that a socially committed government can be concerned with. In the face of this "*onrecht en verwaarlozing, die nog voortwoekeren in onze maatschappij*",⁵ the narrator expects the government to take action [*italics in*

2 'The House of Bigi Dorsi' ([my translation] Dobru, "Dorsi", 71). R. Dobru was born as Robin Edwald Ravales on 29 March 1935 into a Creole family. Ravales was quite politically active. In his youth, he was involved in KRA and *Wie Eegie Sanie*. Between 1973 and 1977, he was a member in the PNC. In 1980, he became 'onderminister van cultuur' in the first cabinet of Chin A. Sen. As a writer, he was involved in several magazines and newspapers (van Kempen 2002 IV, 441f). He published his first collection of poems in 1965, and he was involved in the publication of and was published in *Moetete*. He wrote the introduction of *Moetete I* and his poem "4-juni Overpeinzing" was published in the same volume. His short story "A Prasi foe Bigi Dorsi / Het Erf van Bigi Dorsi" was first published in *Wasoema* in 1967, and republished in 1989 in Michiel van Kempen's *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers*.

3 'is blinded by the neat façade of the buildings' (71).

4 'education, hygiene, social justice, urban management, public housing, improvement of the townscape' (71).

5 'the injustice and neglect that still sprawls in our society' (72).

original] 72). However, the government seems indifferent to the concerns of these people, even if they belong to their most ardent supporters: although many of these people were “fanatieke aanhangers van onze leiders”⁶ who also “zijn allemaal ook naar onze politieke vergaderingen geweest”,⁷ they are still “in de morserij”⁸ (72). In addition, the fact that they voted for the government does not give “hun leiders [...] het recht ze daarom te verwaarlozen”⁹ (73). But these irresponsible leaders do not care, they “houden zich alleen bezig met hun eigen zak”¹⁰ (73). Therefore, the narrator calls for action, to do away with all that filth and poverty, and “de overlopende wc’s – Laten wij ze eindelijk opruimen!”¹¹ (72), he demands.

The story informs the reader not only about the outrageous conditions in social housing, but also about the need for change. The story raises awareness for social grievances. It promotes solidarity and social justice. It makes the reader aware of their own social responsibility for their community, i.e. the people of Suriname. Hence, the story encourages its readers to tackle social injustice by holding those responsible who are accountable for social inequalities, i.e. the government. Considering that in 1967, when the story was published, the government was still associated with the old colonial regime, the story can be read as a call for self-governance and independence. Therefore, the poem demands political change – a change which might be most logically achieved through political independence.

Vene’s poem and Dobru’s short story also make sense from a psychological perspective. Both texts exercise in-group favouritism (Tajfel and Turner 1986): the narrators explicitly solidarise with the socially marginalised by presenting them as innocent survivors (Vene, “Verrader”, l. 10) or as victims of political indifference (Dobru, “Dorsi”, 72). The out-group, i.e. the colonial government, are presented as the politically negligent, power-hungry, and self-involved out-group (Dobru, “Dorsi”, 72) – and, more generally, as descendants of

6 ‘fanatic supporters of our leaders’ (72).

7 ‘all of them also attended our political gatherings’ (72).

8 ‘in the greatest filth’ (72).

9 ‘their leaders the right to neglect them’ (73).

10 ‘only care about their own business’ (73).

11 ‘the spilling toilets – let’s finally take action’ (72).

slave snatchers, bigots, and slave owners (Vene, “Verrader”, l. 13-4). This depiction of the colonisers can also be related to the narrative themes identified by Robert Sternberg (2003): the out-group is presented as morally and culturally corrupt. Based on the principle of “the simultaneity of the mutually exclusive” (Iser 1997, 3), the negative depiction of the out-group is also a narrative strategy to emphasise the positive qualities of the in-group (Sternberg 2003). Thus, the two texts do not only raise awareness of issues in Suriname’s past and present, they also present Suriname’s society as divided into two opposing social groups. In adherence to Kelly’s principles of the dichotomy and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 46-106), clear lines between victim and perpetrator were drawn. Hence, the texts create a positive self-concept for the descendants of former slaves and unambiguously present the former colonisers as the pronounced enemy.

1.2 *A Common Enemy – Creating Political Unity in the Face of the Coloniser*

For political action, however, it was not enough to raise awareness for the inadequacies of the colonial past and its repercussions in the present. Suriname needed ‘one people’. However, considering the different ethnic and social groups in Suriname, a ‘self-evident’ solidarity based on a shared history or culture did not really exist. To circumvent the task of bridging the gap between the different ethnic groups, some of the texts created a unity by focusing on the out-group or the common constitutive negative outside – the former colonisers.

1.2.1 *Not Ours – The Inadequacy of the Colonial Flag in R. Dobru’s Poem “4-juni Overpeinzing” (1966)*¹²

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| Deze vlag | | This flag |
| die mijn Natie draagt | | that my nation bears |
| deze kleuren | | these colours |
| waarmee dit Volk | | with which this people |
| zit opgescheept in sterren | 5 | sits bannered in stars |
| deze vlag | | this flag |
| welke wij vandaag nog moeten | | that today we still have to |
| verdedigen | | defend |
| met ons bloed | | with our blood |
| waarvoor wij vandaag nog | 10 | for which, today, we still |

¹² The poem was included in *Moetete I* (1968); it was first published in *Afoe Sensi* (1966).

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----|---|
| willen offeren have en goed | | would offer our goods and chattels |
| als het moet | | as needs to be done |
| deze vlag | | this flag |
| die ons volk verdeelt en heerst | | that divides and rules our people |
| deze vlag die apartheid propageert | 15 | this flag that advocates apartheid |
| deze vlag frustreert | | this flag frustrates |
| deze vlag | | this flag |
| die staat | | that stands still |
| terwijl wij zoeken naar vaart | | while we're looking for change |
| deze vlag | 20 | this flag |
| is ons verleden en | | is our past and |
| – vandaag somwijlen nog – ons | | – sometimes still today – our |
| heden | | present |
| deze vlag | | this flag |
| geeft ons geen streven | 25 | does not give us ambition |
| heeft geen jeugd | | has no future, |
| deze vlag, die niet deugt | | this flag that is no good for nothing. |
| (Dobru, “4-juni overpeinzing”, 11) | | ([my translation] Dobru, ‘musings on June 4’, 11) |

In terms of form, R. Dobru’s can be seen as a ‘transitional’ poem that incorporates some aspects of conventional poetic forms, while simultaneously breaking with others (Nowak 2007). There is no strict rhyme scheme; however, although some rhymes are half-rhymes (e.g. *heden* – *streven*, ll. 22, 24) most lines rhyme on the last syllable or (due to enjambement) on a syllable of the second last word (e.g. ll. 7, 10, 21). The word ‘Volk’ (l. 4) is emphasised by the fact that it is the last word of the only line that does not rhyme; and that it is a single syllable word that is embraced by two feminine rhymes. ‘This flag’ is emphasised by its repetition (ll. 1, 6, 13, 17, 20, 23). Hence, the formal presentation underlines the poem’s topic: adequate national representation. The underlying metric pattern is not completely regular either and the number of feet varies. Nevertheless, most lines follow a pattern of alternate stresses, either iambic (e.g. l. 5) or trochaic (e.g. l. 4). Together with the enjambement, the metre creates a swift rhythm. Hence, the poem still adheres to some aspects of conventional poetic form, while applying them in a more unconventional way.

The main theme in R. Dobru’s poem “4-juni Overpeinzing” is the impossibility of an adequate representation of the colonised under the colonisers’ symbols. The (colonisers’) flag, emblem of a nation, does not unite the population into one people, but the flag ‘divides and rules’ (Dobru, “4-juni”, l. 14), it

‘advocates apartheid’ (l. 15), and it ‘frustrates’ (l. 16). Although the people should defend this flag with their ‘blood’, they cannot identify with the colonial values and ideologies that it stands for, and therefore, it does not raise any ‘ambitions’ or positive feelings (l. 24). Hence, this flag ‘is no good for nothing’ (l. 26), and consequently, it does not have a future as presentation for a people ‘looking for change’ (l. 19). Although R. Dobru’s poem “4-juni Overpeinzing” does not explicitly state which kind of flag would be appropriate for the nation, it obviously claims that the current flag is *not* an appropriate one. Despite the fact that no explicit characteristics of ‘the people’ are mentioned, a sense of one-ness and community is suggested by Dobru’s poem. Irrespective of their differences, *all of them* are not adequately represented by the colonisers’ flag. This strategy can be related to the *linguistic intergroup bias* (i.e. describing positive in-group and negative out-group characteristics in abstract terms) (Maass et al. 1989). The out-group as well as the in-group are described in *abstract terms* (by referring to the colonisers as an anonymous, unfathomable power that rules without legitimacy; and to the Surinamese people as a united group in which no-one is adequately re-presented by the colonisers’ symbols). Thus, the argumentation of the poem is hard to rebut. Furthermore, as suggested by Tajfel and Turner (1986), mere social categorisation into ‘own’ and ‘foreign’ is enough for in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination to emerge. The fact that the logic of the poem is so easy to understand exemplifies the pervasiveness of this psychological principle.

1.2.2 *Common Suffering – Unity in the Face of Colonial Punishment in Bea Vianen’s “Over Nonnen en Straffen” (1969)*

A similar sense of unity is created in Bea Vianen’s “Over Nonnen en Straffen”.¹³ The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator, a little Creole girl who is sent to a

13 ‘About Nuns and Punishment’ ([my translation] Vianen, “Straffen”, 151). Beatrice Vianen was born on 6 November 1935 in Paramaribo. Her mother was a Hindustani, her father had various ethnic backgrounds. After finishing her secondary school, she worked as a teacher and tried to earn some extra money with writing. In 1957, she moved from Suriname to the Netherlands. Between 1975 and 1976, she shortly returned to Suriname. Between 1976 and 1986, she lived in various South American countries. In 1991, she again returned to Suriname. Bea Vianen first published in *Soela*. Later her poetry and short stories were also published in (among others) *Moetete*, *Podium*, *Mamjo*, *De Gids*, *Het Parool* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 537f).

Catholic boarding school. The attitude of the nuns towards their little protégés, however, conveys anything but Christian altruism. In this all-girls school, you could “om alles gestraft worden”¹⁴ (Vianen, “Straffen”, 157). The girls, aged between ‘three and twenty-five’ (151), live in ceaseless fear to commit crimes they do really know anything about. The most common crime is “onkuisheid”¹⁵ (154), a crime that seems almost absurd; not only with regard to the girls’ age, but also considering that they are completely shut off from the outside world, apart from the occasional stroll through the city (155). During these walks, they are not allowed to talk to each other (in fact, they are never really allowed to talk to each other), let alone look at anything they meet on their way. However, as always, “naar de saaie wandelingen door de stad kregen verschillende meisjes straf”¹⁶ (156) – because they laughed or looked at boys or whatever. Consequently, they are insulted as “[v]uile straatmeiden”¹⁷ (156) and punished with confinement. They are locked into the many different dark and sticky rooms of the school, without food, although the girls already suffer from the scarcity of food anyway. They start stealing fruit from the gardens of the school to still their hunger. However, eventually, their transgression is discovered and more punishments follow.

In a certain way, the story can be read as an analogy for the colonial society in Suriname. The narrator argues that the school resembles a small image of Suriname’s society, because “alle rassen van onze samenleving dezelfde straffen ondergingen, dezelfde zonden beleden en dezelfde taal spraken. Het Nederlands. De voertaal. De taal van de beschaafden”¹⁸ (150). Interestingly, despite the physical and psychological hardships that the girls have to endure, most of them respect each other. The nuns cannot control their thoughts, and in solidarity, the girls secretly send “allerlei lelijke en boze dingen aan het adres van

Her short story “Over Nonnen en Straffen” was first published in the newspaper *Avenue* in 1969, and republished in 1989 in Michiel van Kempen’s *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers*.

14 ‘be punished for anything’ (157).

15 ‘unchastity’ (154).

16 ‘after our boring walks through the city, many girls get punished’ (156).

17 ‘Filthy street girls’ (156).

18 ‘all races in our community received the same punishment, committed the same sins, and spoke the same language. Dutch. The official language. The language of the civilised’ (150).

de Hollanders”¹⁹ (154). Also their “drang naar vrijheid werd groter”²⁰ (156). Hence, regardless of their ethnic and social differences, they solidarise – if mostly in silence – but silence and “[b]ang zijn is ook een mening”²¹ (158) – against a common enemy: the Dutch colonisers.

Vianen’s short story is not only a depiction of the outrageous punishments that were practiced at Catholic boarding schools in the first half of the 20th century, it also shows that community and solidarity can be built even in the face of hardship – even if it takes a while, and even if this solidarity is silent. From a psychological perspective, the unity described in the story serves the purpose to fulfil the need for belonging and security (Ryan and Desi 2002). The story conveys that in the face of a common enemy, a comforting sense of unity and relatedness can be generated, even if there are no other commonalities apart from this enemy. In addition, it can be seen as propaganda for resistance – even if this resistance were to be silent.

1.2.3 *The Unifying Power of a Common Cause – Marcel de Bruin’s “Dagorder” (1968)*²²

Marcel de Bruin’s poem “Dagorder” addresses its readers directly – or even more, it gives an explicit order:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| Geef dit land toch niet over | | Don’t give up this country |
| Wij zijn nog niet | | We are all |
| Allen dood | | Not dead yet |
| Al lijkt het bijwijlen somber | | Although it looks sombre sometimes |
| Ons hart blijft heroïsch | 5 | Our heart remains heroic |
| En groot | | And great |
| Geef het niet over | | Don’t give it up |
| Verman U! | | Admonish yourself! |
| Bezie het beminde bezit | | Look at the beloved property |
| Het erfdeel van onze vaders | 10 | The piece of land of our fathers |
| Is dit | | Is this |
| Zij en ik en de felle | | They and I and the fierce |
| Rebellen | | Rebels |
| Wij zwaaien geen | | We don’t wave a |

19 ‘various mean and angry words were addressed to the Dutch’ (157).

20 ‘desire for freedom grew’ (156).

21 ‘being scared is also an opinion’ (158).

22 Marcel de Bruin is a pseudonym of René de Rooy. The poem “Dagorder” was first published in *Moetete I*.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----|--|
| Witte vlag | 15 | White flag |
| Maar verbeiden | | But we hope for |
| Hardnekkig, verbeten | | Tenaciously, bid for |
| De trotse bloedeigen dag | | The proud, (blood-)own day |
| Geef het niet over | | Don't give it up |
| Sta recht! | 20 | Stay straight |
| Kerf uit Uw wonden de etter | | Scrape the purulence from your wounds |
| En vecht. | | And fight. |
| (de Bruin, "Dagorder", 9) | | ([my translation] de Bruin, 'Order of the day', 9) |

In terms of form, de Bruin's can also be considered as 'transitional' between the two poetic traditions in the Caribbean (Nowak 2007). Again, there is no strict rhyme scheme; however, some lines rhyme (e.g. *bezit – dit*, ll. 9, 11; *vlag – dag*, ll. 15, 18; *recht – vecht*, ll. 20, 22). Although several lines are connected through enjambement (e.g. ll. 12-18), many other lines have an end-stopping (e.g. ll. 1, 7, 8, 19, 20). The metric pattern is not regular either. Several lines are emphasised through an iambic metre (e.g. ll. 6, 11, 13, 20, 22), most other lines are (loosely) dactylic mixed with iambic and trochaic feet (e.g. ll. 1, 4, 5, 10). Most lines that rhyme have masculine rhymes (e.g. ll. 15, 18). Together with the unconventional metre and rhyme pattern, a belligerent rhythm is created in which the natural flow of longer sentences is interrupted by short single sentences. Hence, the form and rhythm create the impression that the poem is in fact an invocation or an order.

The poem calls on its readers to remember the things they are emotionally attached to: their 'property', i.e. the 'land of [their] fathers' (de Bruin, "Dagorder", ll. 9, 10). The poem almost plays with its (imagined) readers' need for belonging and relatedness; it suggests that if they do not brace themselves, do not admonish themselves to keep their faith in an independent nation, all that is dear to them will be in danger. It also makes clear that surrender is not an option. The poem calls on them to forget the hardships of the past and to actively fight for a better future. Although no explicit common grounds are mentioned, the poem evokes association of being rooted in 'one's true place and ancestry' (l. 10). Hence, it invokes a nativist line of argumentation. The communality that is suggested by the poem is generated through the cause the people share in their fight against a common enemy. The incentive to fight is to protect one's personal property, the land that they have inherited by their fathers. Hence, the poem seems to evoke

feelings of belonging and relatedness by reminding people of their relation to their land. The connection between nationalist ideologies and the psychological need for relatedness is quite a typical one – and the fact that de Bruin employs this connection is proof of its commonness and effectiveness.

1.3 *Interim Summary*

The anti-colonial poems and short stories presented here call for action in the face of suppression, hardship, and social injustice. The texts imply that a unity of the people already exists and that they only need to embrace them. However, the texts do not invite their readers to remember any *specific* common hallmarks of their common identity. Thus, even if these texts suggest that a common Surinamese identity exists, there is little else but the fact that they all live in Suriname which they share. Correspondingly, the texts do not portray a specific Surinamese identity, but they seek to integrate their readers into one common unity in the face of a common enemy: the Dutch colonisers. These texts suggest that the people of Suriname should fight together for a common cause against a common aggressor, despite their ethnic, racial, and social differences. However, they do not actually specify how these discrepancies can be overcome.

In sum, these texts have in common that they adhere to the cognitive principles of Kelly's (1955) dichotomy and choice corollary and that they can be explained by Tajfel and Turner's (1986) notion of in-group favouritism. They present a binary opposition between the readers and the detrimental foreign powers that allegedly still reign in Suriname (dichotomy corollary). Due to their association with colonialism, the foreign forces occupy the negative position within the binary; the positive position is assigned to the readership without specifying any specific characteristics (choice corollary). As categorisation is enough to evoke out-group discrimination and a bias to prefer the in-group, pointing out a difference between the foreign and local powers inside Suriname is enough to invoke feelings of belonging to the in-group and a desire to separate one's identity from the out-group (Tajfel 1974; Tajfel and Turner 1986; 2010). Hence, these texts effectively create a sense of belonging and community without mentioning any actual hallmarks that would define this unity.

2. *National Identity*

In Suriname, fostering national unity became a major cultural-political goal in the 1960s and 1970s, and literature was considered as a suitable instrument to raise national consciousness. The ulterior motive of the writers was to create a political entity, a unity of the people, and solidarity. However, they wanted to create something more affirmative, more personal and emotional than a political unity *ex negativo* in face of the ‘colonial enemy’ – they wanted to create a *Surinamese national identity*.

2.1 *The National Narrative*

Bearing Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* in mind (Anderson [1983] 2006), the nation should be considered a narration, i.e. a *fiction*. However, the national narration also requires narrators. The Surinamese writers of the 1960s and 1970s had a similar notion of how a Surinamese national identity should be created. With their political orientation, these authors had a distinct idea of which role writer and text could achieve within the national discourse.

2.1.1 *Nutritious Literature – Robin Ravales’s Introduction to Moetete I (1968)*²³

That the *Moetete* authors had an ulterior motive in mind when writing their texts is obvious in their introduction to the first publication of *Moetete* on 1 July 1968:

De 1 juli-dag is voorlopig de enige uit onze Surinaamse geschiedenis, waarop VRIJHEID als centrale idee wordt herdacht. Het is daarom een goede gedachte van onze dichters en schrijvers, om op deze dag een MOETETE, volgeladen met proza en poëzie, aan te bieden aan het volk van Suriname: want vrijheid is voor de kunstenaar de levensader van zijn bestaan. Ik weet dat wij een grotere dag hebben te verwachten. Eén waarop wij niet alleen zullen vastzitten aan de gedachte van afschaffing van de lichamelijke onvrijheid op deze grond. Er zijn nog meer ketenen.

23 Robin Edwald Ravales was born on 29 March 1935 into a Creole family. Ravales was politically quite active. In his youth, he was involved in KRA and *Wie Eegie Sanie*. Between 1973 and 1977, he was a member in the PNR. In 1980, he became Onderminister van Cultuur in the first cabinet of Chin A. Sen. He published under the pseudonym R. Dobru. As a writer, he was involved in several magazines and newspapers (van Kempen 2002 IV, 441f). He published his first collection of poems in 1965, and he was involved in the publication of and was published in *Moetete*. He wrote the introduction to *Moetete I*, and his poem “4-juni Overpeinzing” was published in the same volume, too.

Het is een voorrecht van de kunstenaar, de gemeenschap te mogen voorgaan in het breken van ketenen, in het verklanken en verbeelden van nieuwe, betere wegen (Ravales 1968, 2).²⁴

The writers did not only openly support the political aspirations towards independence; they also saw themselves and other artists as role models who would pave the way to freedom with their words. Thus, in this text, they convey an instrumentalist notion of nationalism, in which nationalism is a means to achieve freedom and self-governance, and the writers are the ones who will help to achieve this goal. The *Moetete* authors considered themselves the first to break free from the shackles of colonialism in the hope for others to follow. They presented their work as a *moetete*, a nourishing baby-bowl full of prose and poetry on which the people of Suriname should feed to become aware and be reassured of their own identity. Accordingly, the introduction to *Moetete* conveys a certain idea of nationalism in which cultural production is equated with political action. Additionally, it also implies a certain understanding of what writers and literature can achieve. With their words, the writers strove to lead the people, i.e. the basis of the nation, to an unshackled and better future in a united nation. The next text gives an impression of how exactly the writers thought that this unity could be achieved.

2.1.2 *The Importance of the National Narrative – Mythopoesis and Communitality in Rudi Kross's "Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe" (1971)*

Notably, national unity was considered something that did not yet exist, but that still needed to be created – an endeavour to which the authors and their words were considered to contribute significantly. In his short essay, “Een Röntgenfoto,

24 ‘The 1st of July is currently the only day in the history of Suriname that is dedicated to FREEDOM as a central idea. Therefore, it was a good idea of our poets and writers to offer a MOETETE full of prose and poetry to the people of Suriname: because freedom is central for the artist to strive. I know that we can wait for an even greater day to come. One that is not only concerned with the abolition of the physical freedom on our land. There are more shackles. It is the artist’s duty and prerogative to lead the community into freedom from enchainment by composing and describing new and better ways’ ([my translation] Ravales 1968, 2).

een Mythe”²⁵ that was published in the Dutch paper *Avenue* in 1971, Rudi Kross wrote:

in ieder geval moet uit het samenleven van de bevolking hier [in Suriname] nog een maatschappij van een volk ontstaan, dus met geëigende economische, sociale etc. structuren. Dát Suriname bestaat [nog] niet²⁶ (Kross, “Mythe”, 185).

Furthermore, what is significantly missing is a Surinamese “volksidentiteit”²⁷ (186). A noticeable aspect in Kross’s argument is that his article is ‘a model of something that still needs to be written’ ([my translation] 182), and not an instruction for something that merely needs to be *done*. Literature is deemed to possess a certain performative power as it is considered to call a united Surinamese community into being. In this context, Kross’s answer to the question of “van waaruit zullen wij de overgang maken naar het Surinamerschap?”²⁸ (186) is quite consistent: “Vanuit een mythe”²⁹ (186). Similar to Édouard Glissant who elaborated on the importance of mythopoesis for the creation of a unifying creoleness ten years later (Glissant [1981] 1989, 8, 87, 130), he considers a myth, i.e. a fiction, a suitable remedy for the lack of ‘volksidentiteit’ upon which a new Surinamese national identity can be built.

Kross’s notion of a nation is modernist in the sense that he believes that the nation is something is necessary for freedom, but something that needs to be actively forged: the writers’ texts are assumed to possess the power to merge the people into one cohesive entity, and to shape the people’s awareness of their

25 ‘An X-ray, a Myth’ ([my translation] Kross, “Mythe”, 185). Rudi Frank Koss was born on 21 October 1938 in Paramaribo into a Creole family. In 1957, he moved to the Netherlands where he studied and worked as a journalist. In 1970, he re-immigrated to Suriname. He founded ‘Informa’ with Slagveer in 1971. In 1974, he moved back to the Netherlands, where he continued his work as writer and journalist. In 1978, he moved back to Suriname, but returned to the Netherlands in 1983 after Slagveer’s death in 1982 (van Kempen 2002 IV, 513). Kross published poetry and fiction in *Mamjo*, *Podium*, *Contour*, *Fri* and *Avenue* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 514). His essay “Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe” was first published in *Avenue* in 1971 and was included in Doelwijt’s collection of Surinamese literature *Kri, Kra!* which was composed for educational purposes (Doelwijt 1972).

26 ‘this life of co-existence that our population currently leads, has to develop into a cohesive community of one people; thus, a society with appropriate economic, social, etc. structures. This Suriname does not yet exist’ ([my translation] Kross, “Mythe”, 185).

27 ‘identity of the people’ (186).

28 ‘from where should we start into this new Surinamese-ity?’ (186).

29 ‘from a myth’ (186).

‘Surinamerschap’, or ‘Surinamese-ity’. Hence, his perspective can be related to Anderson’s ([1983] 2006) and Bhabha’s claim that the nation is a narration. Similar to Anderson and Bhabha, Kross embraces the idea that the nation is a myth. Nevertheless, he also acknowledges the necessity and need for a foundational myth to create a national unity. Thus, Kross’s text can also be related to the positive psychological effects of narrative identity (McAdams 2001). Kross praises the integrative function of the national narrative. He explicitly emphasises the relation between national myths and an alleged feeling of unity (186). In accordance with McAdams’s theory of narrative identity (2001, 121), Kross associates the creation of a narrative national identity with feelings of belongingness, positive self-esteem, and security.

Furthermore, Kross’s text also indirectly refers to an aspect related to the creators of a national identity. Author and text assume a crucial role in the formation of a new national identity, and therefore, are indispensable for the national cause. Thus, with their texts, the writers create a sense of self-importance for themselves. Hence, the text also expresses the desire to maintain a positive self-esteem. Therefore, the creation of a national myth does not only have positive effects on Surinamese people as a whole (because they are provided with a unifying ‘volksidentiteit’), but they also provide the creators of the myth with a sense of purposefulness and importance.

2.1.3 *Not For Sale – The Inalienability of Mythical Roots in René de Rooy’s “De Edelstenen van Oom Brink” (1958)*³⁰

According to Anthony Smith, sharing myths is a constitutive factor determining the nation (Smith 2002, 65). Common history and culture, but also hopes and aspirations are able to endure within the national myths. As narrations, myths are the reminders of a shared history and culture, and therefore, they are crucial for the formation of a sense of unity. However, this invocation of a common past can

30 ‘The Gems of Uncle Brink’ ([my translation] de Rooy, “Brink”, 58). René de Rooy was born on 1 October 1917. He mainly worked as a teacher in Suriname, the Netherlands, and the Dutch Antilles. As a writer and publisher, he was involved in *Tongoni* in 1958. Furthermore, he was published in several magazines and newspapers, also in *Moetete* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 367f). His short story “De Edelstenen van Oom Brink” was first published in 1958 and republished in 1989 in Michiel van Kempen’s *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers*. de Rooy died in 1974 in Mexico.

be purely fictional as well. Thus, the integrative effect of the myth is a narrative achievement, not a mimetic depiction of a common past (see also McAdams 2001; Schachter 2011). What kind of national identity these writers had in mind and how they defined Surinamese ‘identity’ is revealed in the following texts.

René de Rooy’s short story “De Edelstenen van Oom Brink” reveals important aspects about the *Moetete* writers’ notion on the connection between identity and myths. The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). The main part of the story is a flashback to the narrator’s youth in Combé, and an account of how he came to acquire ‘the gems of uncle Brink’. Oom Brink, friend of his father, is an adventurer who tells the narrator about a hidden place somewhere in the mountains in the jungle between Suriname and Brazil, where he and his friends once travelled during their quest for precious gems (de Rooy, “Brink”, 59). In the following night, the young narrator dreamt about the way to the gems, and his dream is full of exotic stereotypes. The way leads through the “goudbos”, and there are “schuimende stroomversnellingen”, “nieuwsgierige apen”, and finally “sporen van tijgers”³¹ (59). In addition to the fact that there are no tigers in Suriname, the account presents not only a desire for inviolate, wild nature, but also for mythical stories. Finally, Oom Brink does not only show the gems to the youngster, but gives them to him as a present, together with a map that is supposed to indicate that mysterious place where the gems were found. Although the map is lost, the narrator keeps the gems. Years later, the narrator and his wife are short on money, and therefore, a friend sends over an American who might be interested in buying the gems. The slick American bargains over the “*rather worthless stones*” ([Italics in original] 62); the narrator, however, finally keeps them “*for sentimental reasons*” ([original emphasis] 62). He claims that “[a]ls een waar Surinamer koester en vertroetel ik liever ook deze ijle droom [...] van verborgen schatten in ons binnenland, maar waarmee ik opgegroeid ben en die zo innig verweven zijn met de onuitroeibare liefde voor de geboortegrond”³² (62f). Furthermore, the narrator claims that he would rather

31 ‘gold-forest’, ‘foaming rapids’, ‘curious apes’, and ‘tiger tracks’ ([my translation] de Rooy, “Brink”, 59).

32 ‘[a]s a true Surinamese, I’d rather go on dreaming this idle dream [...] of a hidden shadow in our inlands. But I grew up with this dream which is so tightly intertwined with the ineradicable love for one’s birthplace’ (62f).

“*pienaren*”³³ ([italics in original] de Rooy, “Brink”, 63) than to give up “*deze groene, glinsterende droom*”³⁴ (de Rooy, “Brink”, 63). Particularly this last sentence reveals the actual topic of the story: Just as the ‘gems of uncle Brink’, his belief in and love for Suriname are not for sale, i.e. inalienable.

De Rooy’s story ascribes a certain importance to memories and myths in relation to the expression of a Surinamese identity. The narrator cannot let go of the ‘idle dream’, i.e. this myth, of Suriname as the home of exotic flora, fauna, and adventures. Within the realm of the myth, one’s love for one’s country can be manifested and remembered. In de Rooy’s story, the myth offers a space for expressing the irrational, ‘ineradicable’ love for one’s country. In accordance with Schachter’s and McAdams’s notion of identity, the myth offers a possibility to create an overarching whole in which one’s past, present, and future can be aligned ‘to make sense’ (Schachter 2011; McAdams 2001). However, within these narratives, identity is often depicted as if it were *a fact* not a fiction. Although de Rooy’s story acknowledges the importance of national myths in relation to a national Surinamese identity, he suggests that the love for one’s country is *ineradicable*, i.e. inalienable. Hence, the narrative conveys that the identity described is an essence, not a narrative construct. De Rooy’s story advocates a specifically *primordialist*, *nativist* identity that connects territory, history, lineage, and personal identity.³⁵ Accordingly, *the kind* of identity that is depicted within the narrative is *essentialist*. Considering Raskin’s notion “On Essences in Cognitive Psychology”, the identities that are depicted within these narratives can be regarded as cognitive essentialisms (Raskin 2011). As such, the identities that are depicted are seclusive and discriminating.

Although the identities that are inscribed in Surinamese texts of the 1960s and 1970s are set against a postcolonial background, theoretical approaches such as hybridity and creoleness cannot really be applied. Although the *Moetete* writers themselves could certainly be considered hybrid or creole, they created completely different identities in their texts. However, as Laura Chrisman has

33 ‘accept hardship and poverty’ ([my translation] de Rooy, “Brink”, 63).

34 ‘this green, sparkling dream’ (63).

35 In this story, the myth is not presented as a foundation of the nation. In fact, the myth is not relevant for national identity at all. However, the reluctance to let go of the stones and the memories are presented as an expression of an inalienable love for one’s country.

pointed out, these essentialist narrative constructs should not be dismissed as a wretched, “self-inflicted false consciousness”, but they should be regarded as symptoms to a cause (Chrisman 1997, 56). As indicated earlier, this cause can be assumed to be located in the psychic domain. Considering motivational theories and cognitive theories, it can be suggested that the *Moetete* authors also seemed to benefit psychologically by presenting themselves as the advocates of Surinamese identity.

2.1.4 *The Psychological Function of the National Narrative*

The notions of national identity that are presented in the texts can be related to psychological functions. The myth, i.e. the narrative, is a discursive tool that has the power to create a *nativist* relation between identity, history, and territory. Territory, history, and identity are integrated in an overarching, sense-making narrative whole at the level of the myth. Through the myth, the link between one’s identity, lineage, and territory is naturalised, i.e. one’s birthplace can be depicted *as if* it were an inalienable part of one’s identity. This narrative achievement serves the psychological needs for security and self-esteem.

The psychological benefit deriving from cognitive essentialisms, such as the nation, has already been acknowledged by various scholars. For Julia Kristeva, the nation is an “identifying (and therefore, reassuring) space” (Kristeva 1993, 42). According to Kristeva, the national fiction provides shelter, security – a safeguard – for identity which would otherwise be exposed unprotectedly to the disruptive, alienating forces of the valueless (post)modern world (Kristeva 1993, 2). Hence, the importance of myths and stories in the national discourse in Suriname can be related to psychological functions. On the narrative level of the national myth, affiliations and relatedness can be shut off from real life dangers and change, e.g. the danger of White (neo-)colonial mindsets and practices. For example, in de Rooy’s story, Suriname is in danger to fall prey to Western capitalism, presented by the American who describes the narrator’s gems as ‘rather worthless’. Similar to the Whites that will be presented in the other texts, he seems treacherous, i.e. not to be trusted. However, remembering the stories connected to the gems, the narrator decides not to sell them, ‘for emotional reasons’. The gems do not only

present his ancestry and his common history with the land, they also present proxies of the self, and hence, tokens of identity. Kept safe in form of the gems, the narrative creates the impression that the narrator's identity is secured as well. Correspondingly, they offer an important source of psychological security and self-knowledge.

In the same vein, Mary Caputi emphasises the psychological value of the nation as trope for identity:

National identities strive to denote stable, clearly defined sets of meanings, meanings unsullied by annoying ambiguities and ambivalences. They aim at functioning as signifiers un-trammeled by the sometimes disturbing openendedness that can otherwise characterize our sense of self. They seek to engender definition, clarity, and closure (Caputi 1996, 683f).

National identities, even if they are merely cognitive constructs, provide a sense of security, stable relations, and autonomy (see also Kelly 1955). Although national identity is not an essential quality as such, it is a 'cognitive essentialism' (see also Raskin 2011). As cognitive essentialism, nativist national identities create a stable sense of self and unambiguous self-knowledge. However, although these identities seem to serve certain psychological functions (see also Schachter 2011), the writers might not have been conscious of the psychological motives that found their expression in their texts (see also Bargh and Morsella 2008). Furthermore, the discourse does not centre specifically around security and disambiguation, hence, the writers' (unconscious) motives should not be considered as translated mimetically into motivated goals and stories (see also Ryan and Desi 2002).

In addition, the *Moetete* writers did not only create a secure identity within their texts – they also chose a specific social identity as writers. As the indispensable creators of the national fiction, the writers placed themselves and their texts (as the medium of the unifying fiction) at the centre of the nationalist discourse in Suriname in the 1960s and 1970s. In their role as representatives and advocates of Surinamese identity they created and claimed a specific political agency for their own. However, the identity that they constructed did not only have a political dimension, it also served certain psychological functions. By

ascribing a salient position to themselves, the *Moetete* authors created a sense self-importance and affirmative self-esteem. Thus, they adopted a certain notion towards themselves that ensured a feeling of autonomy and competence. By constructing an affirmative social identity as indispensable representatives of the national ‘volksidentiteit’, these authors provided themselves with the possibility to adopt a positive sense of self.

However, identity does not only serve certain psychological motives, it also functions according to certain cognitive principles. Identity does not only *create* continuity and contrast (Erikson 1956), identity is *created through* imbalanced binary oppositions. Kelly’s (1955) cognitive theory of personal constructs can be used fruitfully to analyse the mechanisms according to which identity is constructed in these texts. The main principles which will be used are the dichotomy, choice, organisation and fragmentation corollary. The dichotomy corollary basically coincides with the linguistic notion that meaning is constructed in dichotomies, and a person possesses a finite number of them (Kelly 1955, 59). The organisation corollary refers to the “ordinal relationships” in which the dichotomous elements of meaning are organised (Kelly 1955, 54). The choice corollary denotes that the dichotomous constructs are unequally charged in terms of their evaluative content. Hence, a person always considers one side of the binary opposition as more positively charged, i.e. the better choice (Kelly 1955, 64). The depictions of self and other that can be found in the texts presented above adhere to these very principles. The depicting foreign forces as invariably corrupt and evil entails that the own group is perceived as good and unadulterated – even if these characteristics are not explicitly specified. In addition, the implied national unity is created by people’s inclination to engage in in-group favouritism (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Once the existence of different social groups or categories has been noticed and one’s affiliation to one group was decided (or was decided for one), the bias to favour one’s own group is more or less automatic (Tajfel and Turner 1986; 2010).

Accordingly, the goal of the following literary analyses will not determine what Surinamese identity *actually* was, but according to which principles Surinamese identity was *created* within the texts. In the following sections will try

to identify the specific narrative strategies that were employed by the writers – and which cognitive mechanisms served to maintain a positive identity.

3. *Creole Hegemony*

Although the creation of one common Surinamese identity was a forthright literary project, the kind of identity that was conveyed by the national narrative in Suriname was just as overtly *essentialist*. The narratives followed a nativist notion of culture and identity, i.e. naturally innate bonds between territory, ethnicity, and identity. Hence, even if Surinamese national identity was a narration, i.e. *fictional*, it was narrated as if there was in fact an inalienable link between a person's identity and the national territory, history, and culture. However, not everyone's relation to Suriname was considered equally natural – and not everyone was deemed equally concerned with the nation's rightful independence. As mentioned in the section on the contextual background, the *Moetete* writers had several characteristics in common: most of them came from a similar educational (elitist) background and many of them studied in the Netherlands, or lived abroad. However, their most prominent characteristic is their Creole descent. The impact of these shared characteristics can also be found in their literature and the identities that are constructed in their texts.

3.1 *National Territory – Creole Territory?*

In Surinamese literature of the 1960s and 1970s, Creoles, i.e. people of African descent, were often depicted as the rightful heirs to the land. This notion derives from a connection between colonial soil and slave work. Allegedly, only people who descend from African slaves can make true claims on the national soil, because their ancestors were forced to toil on this land. Furthermore, that connection is further vindicated by associating territory and 'blood', i.e. lineage. In one of her short stories, Astrid Roemer writes: "Only the person [...] of the original African race will have a fertile life on this [land] because too much African blood still breathes in her soil" (Roemer, "Inheritance", 360). References towards some kind of birthright to the land, based on the connection between the African slaves and the land they were forced to work on frequent the literature of

the 1960s and 1970s. Correspondingly, literature did not only presented a channel to criticise the old colonial regime, it also presented a medium for a nationalist agenda that consistently strove for an own nation based on a Creole prerogative by birth and blood.

3.1.1 *Sons of the Soil – The Link Between Identity and Territory in Jozef Slagveer's "Totness" (1967) and "Ik" (1968b)*³⁶

The nationalist literary discourse in Suriname involved a *nativist* or “son of the soil” ideology (Appadurai 1996, 55). Although connection between land and lineage was not depicted as perennial, nationality was presented in nativist terms. The nativist logic that links a person to their birth-place is a salient theme in Jozef Slagveer's poem “Totness”:

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| Hier ben ik geboren tussen de erebogen van de cocospalmen uit de schoot van een negerin | 5 | This is where I was born between the triumphal arches of the coconut trees from the womb of a Black woman |
| hier klonken de eerste vreugde kreten van mijn vader en de vroedvrouw terwijl mijn huilen moeders hijgen eenzaam begeleidde | 10 | Here, the first cries of joy burst from my father and the midwife while the panting of my howling mother chimed in lonely |
| hier wil ik sterven met erebogen van cocospalmen | 15 | here, I would like to die between the triumphal arches of the coconut trees |

36 Jozef Hubertus Maria Slagveer was born on 15 January 1940 in Totness to a Creole couple. Aged 17, he moved to Amsterdam to study at the Instituut voor Perswetenschappen. Between 1959 and 1966 he travelled back and forth between Suriname and the Netherlands where he was involved in different journalistic, literary, and cultural projects. In 1966, he re-immigrated to Suriname where he established himself as a successful journalistic freelancer. In 1971, he was co-founder of ‘Informa’ together with Rudi Kross. Slagveer, who initially supported the military, but whose public opinion became more and more critical, was one of the casualties of the military coup, the ‘December Morden’ in 1982 (van Kempen 2002 IV, 438f). As a writer of poetry and prose he debuted in 1959 in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in the Netherlands, and in 1962 in *Soela* in the Netherlands. He was frequently published and involved in publishing afterwards, e.g. in *Moetete* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 438). His poem “Ik” was published in *Moetete II* in 1968. His poem “Totness” was first published in 1967 and re-published in Shrinivāsi's *Wortoe d'e tan Abra* (1970), one of the seminal collections of Surinamese poetry in the 1970s (Shrinivāsi 1970).

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| dit is mijn land | this is my country |
| mijn eigen land | my own country |
| niemand die me | no-one who can |
| dit ontnemen kan | take it from me |

(Slagveer, "Totness", 53)

([my translation] Slagveer, 'Totness', 53)

Slagveer's poem is written in free verse; the metre varies in length and pattern, and the lines do not rhyme. Nevertheless, the poem *does* have a certain regular form. The length of the three strophes is approximately equal (five, seven, seven), and the repetition of "erebogen | van (de) cocospalmen" (ll. 14-5, 2-3) in the first and the last strophe emphasises the cycle from birth to death that is depicted in the poem. Most lines are connected by enjambement which creates a natural rhythm.

Slagveer's poem is an idealising, paradisiacal depiction of Totness, the capital of the district Coronie in Suriname, the place where he was born. The 'triumphal arches of the coconut trees' (Slagveer, "Totness", ll. 2-3) provide a suitable setting for the birth of a true Surinamese Creole who shows pride in his 'own country' (l. 17). The 'triumphal arches' create associations with the solemnity of European nations and their nationalist emblems, such as the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, the Acropolis in Athens, the Colosseum in Rome; thus, placing Suriname as a nation among equally important nations. Following the nativist logic of primordialist ideology, Slagveer naturalises the link between national territory and national identity. Identity of self and territory remain the same over time, since the *same* self is born and will die in the *same* territory. Both personal identity and native territory are depicted as inalienable parts of the overall identity which is described. Furthermore, the explicit reference to lineage ('from the womb | of a Black woman', ll. 4-5) and enduring history ('this is where I was born [...] | here I would like to die', ll. 1, 14) naturalises the link between territory and ethnicity. The poem conveys that national territory and African-Surinamese, i.e. Creole, identity are in-separately bound together by the ties of time. Abiding by *nativist* notions of nationalism, the poem creates a connection between Creole identity and the national soil. The identity that is depicted in the poem does not only happen to be located on Surinamese soil, but identity and territory are inextricably linked through one common history. As a 'natural' part of the Creole

self, Suriname becomes an inalienable source of belongingness, identity, and security.

This link between national and personal identity is also a prominent theme in another of Slagveer's poems. The title, "Ik", i.e. 'I' (my translation), already suggests that the content of the poem may address identity relevant topics:

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| ik had mij een pak van de christenen aangemeten maar het zat 5 zo slap aan het lichaam van een neger | | I have clad myself in the garment of christians, tailored, but it fitted so saggy on the body of a black man |
| ik heb me gewassen 10 met jasmijnen en mijn kra danst van zoveel 15 geluk | | I have washed myself with jasmine and my soul dances full of joy |
| negerachtig of vernegerd ik ben mezelf trouw gebleven | | black-like or blackened I have remained true to myself |
| (Slagveer, "Ik", 42) | | ([my translation] Slagveer, 'I', 42) |

Slagveer's poem "Ik" is also written in free verse; the metre varies in length and pattern, and the lines do not rhyme. Yet, again, the poem *does* have a certain regular form. The length of the first two strophes is approximately equal (eight and seven lines). The lines connect through enjambement, and thus, the rhythm has a natural flow.

In "Ik", Slagveer presents an inalienable bond between identity and ethnicity. In Dutch the adjectival suffix *-achtig* marks a generic affiliation, or a classification; it signifies *sameness*. Hence, 'negerachtig' (Slagveer, "Ik", l. 16) denotes an unambiguous affiliation to an African ethnicity.³⁷ The connection

³⁷ Please note that the denotation 'neger' is considered racist and out-dated in Suriname and the Netherlands today.

between ethnicity and identity is generated by the nativist notion of identity that the poem conveys. Ethnicity is depicted as an inalienable part of the speaker's identity, as inalienable part of the nature of the 'I'. Hence, according to the poem, there is a 'true', innate self that can be expressed: the 'I' stays 'true to' (l. 19) its "negerachtig | of vernegert" (ll. 16-7), i.e. Black, self. Discarding itself of Christian garments and Western ideology, that did not fit anyway, the I's "kra" (l. 12), i.e. soul, is free to dance, evoking associations with a slave freed from the shackles of slavery. Hence, in the poem ethnicity and African roots function as a source of identity which can be activated and remembered in times of alienation and insecurity, e.g. when exposed to Western mindsets and culture.

Furthermore, the link between identity and ethnicity is created in a positive, affirmative way. Following Kelly's principles of the dichotomy corollary (Kelly 1955, 59f), the 'natural' link between identity and ethnicity is based on a binary opposition between Western (alienating) and African (true) influences on the self. Hence, following Kelly's principles of the choice (Kelly 1955, 64f) and the organisation corollary (Kelly 1955, 56f), Creole identity is positioned at the positive side of dichotomised ordinal relationships, i.e. predicated on a negatively connoted constitutional outside. The Afro-Guyanese / Creole self stays 'true' to itself, rather than complying to alien Western ideologies. Christian ideology is depicted as if it were naturally against the Creole self's generic disposition. Abiding by psychological self-enhancing motives, Creole identity is depicted as the naturally 'true', 'uncorrupted' way of being for the 'I' depicted in Slagveer's poem.

3.1.2 "*I am Surinam*" – *The Inalienability of Surinamese Identity in Eugène W. Rellum's "Sranan" (1968)*

A similar nativist notion of identity is put forward in Eugene Rellum's poem "Sranan".³⁸ Rellum's poem does not only depict a strong link between identity and Suriname, but it suggests that they are essentially the same:

38 Eugène W. Rellum was born on 10 February 1886 in Paramaribo into a Creole family. In 1913, he moved to the Netherlands to study topography. In 1952, he returned to Suriname; before he worked as a topographer in Indonesia. In 1957, he founded a dancing school. In 1962, he founded the weekly newspaper *De Waarheid*. He published his first poems in *De Ware Tijd*,

| | | |
|--|----------------------|--|
| Sranan na mi, mi na Sranan. | | Surinam is me, I am Surinam. |
| Sranan, Sranan a no wan nen wawan, Sranan na mi mama, mi mati, mi granwan frekti kon tron wan; | 5 | Surinam, Surinam is not just a name Surinam is my mother, my friends, my ancestors all mingled up to one; |
| dis' na mi bribi this is my belief | | this is my belief |
| mi skowroe moe gro kon bigi lek' wan kankantri, foe fiti Sranan glori; mi sjen na Sranan sjen; | 10 15 | my shoulders must grow out as big as a cotton tree to fit Surinam's glory; my shame is Surinam's shame |
| na in joe bere mi wan' mi dedebonjo foe tan Sranan, joe nanga mi na wan. | 20 | in your belly I want my dead-bones to stay Surinam, you and I We are one. |
| (Rellum, "Sranan", 29) | | ([translation in Seymour 1972, 28] Rellum, 'Surinam', 29) |

Rellum's poem "Sranan" is another poem written in free verse; the metre varies in length and pattern, and the lines do not rhyme. However, the form of the poem emphasises specific parts. Three out of five strophes are approximately comparable in length (five, seven, and six lines). Hence, due to their shortness, the two other strophes, the first couplet and the single line after the second strophe are emphasised. The poem incites vague associations with Shakespearian sonnets: three strophes comparable in length and a couplet. However, in contrast to the traditional Shakespearean sonnet, the couplet (which summarises the theme of the poem) is positioned at the beginning; and of course, there is also a single line after the second strophe. However, this faint association with sonnets can also be related to the theme of the poem: an ineradicable love – for one's country.

and he was published and involved in publishing *Tongoni* and *Soela* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 372f). His poem "Sranan" came out in *Moetete I* in 1968.

A salient linguistic feature of Rellum's poem is its corporal language. The language plays with isotopies related to incorporation and embodiment. Suriname 'is not just a name' (Rellum, "Sranan", l. 4), but it becomes palpable, real in and through its people. The speaker identifies so strongly with Suriname that they become interchangeable: 'Suriname is me | I am Suriname' (ll. 1-2), the speaker's 'shame | is Suriname's shame' (ll. 14-5). The chiasitic structure of the first two lines, as well as the parallel structure of the lines fourteen and fifteen emphasise the link between the speaker and Suriname.

In addition, Suriname also has an inspirational effect on the speaker. The speaker wishes for his bodily appearance to become stronger in order to be a suitable reflection of 'Surinam's glory' (l. 13). Figuratively, Suriname seems to motivate the speaker to become a better person. Furthermore, not only the speaker, but also almost everyone to whom the speaker is emotionally attached, i.e. 'mother', 'friends', 'ancestors' (ll. 5-6), all become one within Suriname. Furthermore, within Suriname, temporal differences merge into a synchronistic continuum in which the 'ancestors' (l. 6) and the present self coexist as one identity. In turn, the poem creates the impression that history, territory, and ancestry are an inalienable part of a person's identity – and again, Suriname is turned into an inalienable source of relatedness and security.

Moreover, the speaker's wishes to have their mortal remnants to be 'consumed' into Suriname's 'belly' (l. 16). By depicting Suriname as a living thing that has the capacity to incorporate and preserve, the speaker's wish for their 'dead-bones to stay in Surinam' (l. 18f) could be interpreted as the wish to be part of something enduring and less ephemeral than human life. Hence, Suriname is not only part of (or interchangeable with) the speaker's identity; Suriname is turned into a metaphysical place that offers a prospect of immortality for the speaker. Thus, the bond between a person's identity, ancestry, and Suriname, i.e. the national territory, provide the person with a sense of importance and immortality. Correspondingly, the identity that is depicted in Rellum's poem has several psychological benefits attached: by *being* Suriname, a sense of community and purpose is created. Furthermore, the poem suggests that the speaker's identity is the same as Suriname's which is depicted as stable, encompassing, and

continuous. Hence, by making a person's identity an inalienable part of a nation's identity, the poem creates a sense of psychological security and relatedness.

3.1.3 *Detrimental Urban Influences on Untainted Rural Life – The Creole Peasant in Paul Marlee's "Landbouwer" (1968) and Eddy Bruma's "De Fuik" (1952)*

Nativist notions of national identity often embrace the belief in the existence of a person's 'true' nature, an innate identity that is deeply rooted in the person's place of birth, i.e. national territory, and ancestry, i.e. ethnicity and history. One of the emblems of *nativist* national identity is the peasant, living in total harmony with nature and his (or her) true self. This stereotypical association is evoked by Paul Marlee's poem "Landbouwer":³⁹

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| Koeman en landman ze kijken op je neer terwijl ze elke dag weer zitten te vreten aan je melk je kouseband en je rijst | 5 | Cowherd and peasant they look down at you although, each day they sit and devour your milk your string beans and your rice |
| Landbouwer, schaam je niet voor je werk wees trots als de aren die de zwampen bevolken en zich vrij omhoog richten naar de zon | 10 | Peasant, don't be embarrassed because of your work be as proud as the spikes that live in the swamps and that raise their heads freely to the sun |
| bebouw de grond en weet dat je één bent met God en natuur dat je leeft van een frisse gezonde wind die nog niet is besmet en nog niet is geworden als moeraïna, woekerend onkruid tussen de bibit en de groene rijst. | 15 | plough the ground and know that you are one with God and nature that you live on the fresh and healthy wind that is not yet defiled and that is not yet as the <i>moeraïna</i> , sprawling weeds between the <i>bibit</i> and the green rice. |
| (Paul Marlee, "Landbouwer", 25) | 20 | ([my translation] Paul Marlee, 'The Peasant', 25) |

39 Paul Armand Nijbroek was born on 20 June 1938 in Paramaribo to a Creole family. He studied literature and agriculture in the Netherlands, the USA, and in Puerto Rico. As a writer, he published poetry, short stories, and novels under the pseudonyms P. Marlee or Paul Marlee. In his literary work, he liked to experiment with stylistic devices and forms. He was involved in publishing *Kolibri* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 473f). His poem "Landbouwer" was published in *Moetete I* in 1968.

Marlee's poem "Landbouwer" is another poem written in free verse; the metre varies in length and pattern, and most lines do not rhyme (apart from: *weer – neer*, ll. 2, 3; *met – besmet*, ll. 13, 16). There are three strophes, two shorter (five and six lines) and a slightly longer one (nine lines). Most lines are linked via enjambement, and the rhythm of the poem resembles the flow of normal speech.

Marlee's poem has a certain Marxist overtone. Despite the deprecating attitude of sophisticated townsfolk towards frugal peasant life, Marlee emphasises that the peasant should not be ashamed. In fact, it is urban life that should be regarded critically. Alienated from the productive, earthy life of the peasant, the townsfolk are dependent on the goods that the peasant produces. The peasants are depicted as 'one with God and nature' (Marlee, "Landbouwer", l. 13f), true to themselves and the life they live. City dwellers are depicted as hypocritical. Although they 'look down' (l. 2) at the 'peasant and the cowherd' (l. 1), they have no problem to 'devour' the 'milk, | [...] string beans and [...] rice' (l. 4f) that the peasants produced by the sweat of their brows.

Again, the uncorrupted, 'true' identity of the peasant is created by abiding by the principles of Kelly's (1955) dichotomy, choice, and organisation corollary. The nativist notion of identity allows for a network of binary oppositions that are ideologically charged. Hence, the goodness or badness of an identity is evaluated according to nativist paradigms that centre on 'truth' and 'nature'. Accordingly, the poem seems to adopt a derogatory attitude towards townspeople, because they are depicted as not living in accordance with their 'nature'. Simultaneously, the positive attitude towards the 'Creole' is created through the linguistic principle which e.g. Wolfgang Iser called "the simultaneity of the mutually exclusive" (Iser 1997, 3), which also relates to the Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* (Derrida [1967] 1983; 1972: [1978] 2001). Within the fictional dichotomy of the narrative, the 'goodness' of one thing is implied by the explicitness of the 'badness' of its constitutive outside. Kelly's cognitive principles of the dichotomy, choice, and organisation corollary adhere to the same logic (Kelly 1995, 59f, 64f, 56f). Hence, the positive stance towards peasants is created in contrast to the un-true and un-natural way in which townspeople lead their lives. The mendacity of the townspeople and their alienation from the goods they devour emphasise the

peasants' integrity and their harmony with nature. The apparent 'goodness' of the peasant's identity derives from the associations between authenticity, naturalness, and peasant's life that are created by the poem.

A similar topic is presented in Eddy Bruma's short story "De Fuik".⁴⁰ The story is set in a village in the district of Coronie at a time when drought and crop failure brought hardship into rural life (Bruma, "Fuik", 30). The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator with a focalisation on Oom Safrie (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). "Oom Safrie" (30), i.e. uncle Safrie (my translation), is one of the elders of the village, and he is regarded with respect and appreciation in the village for his achievements and knowledge. He helped to built the village's agrarian infrastructure (30), and he is a competent source of knowledge: "geen dam werd opgehoogd, geen varkenshok getimmerd"⁴¹ (31) without consulting Oom Safrie's advice. Therefore, for Oom Safrie, nothing seems more excruciating than seeing his beloved land, "de aarde, die zij meer lief hadden dan de dingen van het leven"⁴² (30), suffering from the ruthless heat of the sun. Hence, similar to Slagveer's "Totness", a connection between lineage, territory, and identity is generated: The protection of "het land, dat [hun] vaderen voor [hun] behouden hebben"⁴³ (31) becomes a priority, not only to secure their survival in terms of food, but also in terms of an identity (which is bound to the ancestors and their land) that needs to be preserved. Accordingly, the main danger presented in the story is not the merciless heat of the sun, but the proceeding rural depopulation caused by a mass emigration of young people to the cities who are tired of the hardships of rural life (31). In addition, their life is threatened by a "stadsmeneer" (35), a city fellow, who tries to buy all their land, preferably for a cheap price (35). However, there is no help that they can hope for, and even the Christian god in which many of them believe only betrays them by sending them one hardship after the other, and by always taking the side of their enemies: first, he let the

40 'The web' ([my translation] Bruma, "Fuik", 30). Eduard Joan Bruma was born on 30 May 1925 to a Creole family (van Kempen 2003, 665f). His life was already partly discussed in chapter 6 (see pages 123f). His literary and political work had a great impact on the nationalist discourse in Suriname. He died in 2000. His short story "De Fuik" was first published in 1952, and republished in 1989 in Michiel van Kempen's *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers*.

41 'no dam is built, no shoat cot is carpentered' ([my translation] Bruma, "Fuik", 31).

42 'the earth that they loved more than their life' (30).

43 'the land that our forefathers preserved for us' (31).

colonisers burn their ancestors' homes and shackle them; now, he lets their own land burn (40). In the end, this god even lets Joewan, Oom Safrie's foster child, get trapped in "de Fuik" (30) of the 'stadsmeneer' and his treacherous promises. Joewan, similar to so many other young villagers before and after him, leaves the village for the city, despite the fact that he would be dearly needed to keep their ancestors' heritage (and their own identity) intact.

Similar to the depictions of Creoles in Marlee's "Landbouwer" and Slagveer's "Ik", in Bruma's "De Fuik" a positive, affirmative identity is constructed according to Kelly's principles of the dichotomy, the choice, and the organisation corollary (Kelly 1955, 59f, 64f, 56f). The (black) Creole's apparent essential goodness is based on the essentially treacherous and hypocritical nature of the city dwellers who represent (White) Western, i.e. the colonisers', ideals. In "De Fuik", Black and White do not only refer to skin colour and ethnicity, they also refer to mindsets and ideologies. Oom Safrie dispraises another villager a "zogenaaamde blanke"⁴⁴ (34), not because of his skin colour, or his ethnic origin, but "omdat alle mensen, die brutaal waren, die niet zelf werkten, maar over anderen de baas speelden, die dronken, rookten en pronkten met het geld waarvoor anderen krom moesten liggen, op en blanke leken"⁴⁵ (34). The berated is a boastful and self-important person, and therefore, although his skin is just as dark as Oom Safrie's, he belongs to a category of people that Oom Safrie deeply despises (33). Hence, the danger of the (White) urban way of life is that it potentially corrupts everyone. (Black) skin colour and ethnicity do not protect people from getting caught in the net of lures that urban life presents to young people. "De Fuik" can be read as a warning and as a call for action. If the integrity and essential goodness of the lives of rural Creoles is to be preserved, the youth needs to stay at the country and help to maintain traditional ways of rural life and culture.

44 'a so-called White' (34).

45 'because all people who are brutal, who did not work themselves, but act as if they were someone else's boss, who drink, smoke and flaunt money for which others had wrecked their backs – all these people were like white people' (34).

3.2 *National Culture – Creole Culture?*

Culture played an important role in the national discourse in Suriname in the 1960s and 1970s. The assertion of a national culture became a significant aspect in Eddy Bruma's political agenda. However, this cultural nationalism was also influenced by Bruma's Creole background. – and thus, received an ethnocentric overtone. The presentation of Creole culture as a 'national culture' employed a nativist logic. Creole culture was depicted as 'the only' ethnic culture that *emerged* on and thus was bound to Surinamese soil. The Hindustani were portrayed as the late-comers whose culture had just not been practiced long enough on Surinamese soil to qualify as a national culture. Furthermore, their culture was seen as *Indian*, not as Indo-Surinamese. This ethnocentric focus on Creole culture is a dominant aspect in many of the texts of the *Moetete* authors.

3.2.1 *Something of Our Own – Thea Doelwijt's "13 Spelen met Land" (1968a)*⁴⁶

Doelwijt's text is hard to characterise generically. In the beginning, the narrator states that this piece of text was inspired by a visit to the Netherlands in 1968, and that it is based on a children's game, "landje pik" (Doelwijt, "Land", 29), that was often played during the narrator's childhood in the Netherlands. The rest is basically a conversation between "s" (a Surinamese person), "h" (a Dutch person), and "x" (a Surinamese person on visit in the Netherlands) (29). 'x' seems to refer to the narrator. In addition to the conversation, the narrator adds elliptic comments to the conversation. As indicated by the reference to 'landje pik', a game "waarbij

46 '13 Games with Land' ([my translation] Doelwijt, "Land", 29). Theadora Christina Doelwijt, born 3 December 1938 in Den Helder to a Dutch mother and a Surinamese father, will play a more central role throughout this study, since through her work as a journalist and her activities as a publisher and writer of literature, she assumed a prominent position within the literary and cultural discourse of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1961 she moved to Suriname where she worked as an editor at *Suriname*. After 1970, she worked as a journalistic freelancer and also began to concentrate on her involvement in theatre; particularly drama and cabaret (van Kempen 2002 IV, 432). After the 'December Morden' (December 8/9, 1982) of which one of the casualties was her colleague Jozef Slagveer, Doelwijt re-immigrated to the Netherlands (van Kempen 2002 IV, 436). Through her involvement in *Moetete* and 'Wi foe Sranan', Doelwijt provided a platform for the distribution and discussion of literature which contributed to the emergence of a critical literary tradition in Suriname. Her influence and devoted involvement in the creation of a literary culture places her at the centre of the literary discourse of that time. Her short story "13 Spelen met Land" was published in *Moetete II* in 1968.

kinderen met een mes [...] een stuk grond veroverden, verdeelden, en bezaten”⁴⁷, the main theme in the text is “land – grond”⁴⁸ (29). The narrator’s description of the game immediately evokes associations with colonialism, and (considering the year in which the story takes place) also the struggle for independence in Suriname. The connection to colonialism and independence is emphasised by the narrator’s description of the setting in which the game is played: “grote steden [...]. een saaie straat zonder zand zonder bomen [...]. winkels vol boeken, grammofoonplaten, stencils, pamfletten, affiches. uit de gehele wereld. afrika. cuba. russland. oosteuropa, zuidamerika”⁴⁹ (29). Although a children’s play is depicted, the story has a more serious overtone. The story is about the meaning of a ‘land of one’s own’ – particularly for people from a former colony. Hence, ‘land’ is not only defined in terms of territory. In the story, ‘land’ denotes a culture, a people, a government of one’s own.

In the story, the old and new colonial mindsets are presented by h, who seems to have a very blurred picture of Suriname in his/her mind, and his/her questions suggest that colonial stereotypes still exists that associate colonies with uncivilised backwardness. Basically, h does not really know anything about Suriname, and h’s questions range from “[h]ebben jullie echt televisie”⁵⁰ to “[p]raten jullie echt nog over nationalisme”⁵¹ (30). Therefore, h is “stomverbaasd”⁵² (30) about what s and x tell him/her about Suriname. In addition to mixing up Suriname and Curaçao, h does not know which language is spoken in Suriname. Therefore, when s says that they also speak Dutch in Suriname, h immediately concludes “[d]us jullie hebben geen eigen taal”⁵³ (30) – which implies that she/he thinks that they also do not need a nation of their own. When s answers, “[n]atuurlijk. Het Surinaams”⁵⁴ (30), h cannot really imagine what kind of language that should be. Furthermore, when s tells h that there are 400,000

47 ‘in which children conquer, split, and own a piece of ground with a knife’ ([my translation] Doelwijt, *Land*, 29).

48 ‘land – ground’ (29).

49 ‘big cities. a boring street without sand and trees. shops full of book, gramophone discs, stencils, pamphlets, posters. from the whole world. africa. cuba. russia. eastern europe. south america’ (29).

50 ‘do you really have television’ (30).

51 ‘do you really still talk about nationalism’ (30).

52 ‘flabbergasted’ (30).

53 ‘[t]hus, you do not have a language of your own’ (30).

54 ‘of course. Sranan.’ (30).

Surinamese, h's dismissive answer is: "Jezus, dat is niets. Ik dacht altijd, dat Suriname wel een paar miljoen inwoners had. En zo'n handjevol mensen wil onafhankelijk worden. Maar dat redden jullie toch nooit"⁵⁵ (30). Correspondingly, h also seems to think that there are not enough people in Suriname to have a nation of their own, and he/she does not really seem to understand why the Surinamese would like to have their own nation. h's notion conveys that Suriname lacks all the necessary characteristics needed for an independent nation. In h's opinion, Suriname does not have a language of its own, Suriname is not industrially developed enough, and the Surinamese are not enough people to claim independence (Doelwijt, "Land", 31). s, however, tries to explain that independence is not only a territorial, or political issue, but an emotional one: "[g]ewoon. Zelfstandigheid. Een land zijn. Een volk. Een toekomst"⁵⁶ (31). s's notion on independence seems to be related to psychological aspects: belonging, identity, and autonomy. Independence is not only understood in terms of political independence, but as the acknowledgement of an identity and community of *their own*. s frequently emphasises that they want their "[e]en eigen cultuur"⁵⁷ (31) to be recognised as such. Therefore, s reacts aggressively ("Wil je soms dat we ons land 'schrappen'"⁵⁸, 31) to h's questions.

Furthermore, the creation of an independent Surinamese literature is emphasised and depicted as crucial for Suriname's independence. s strongly associates "[e]en eigen cultuur" with "een eigen literatuur"⁵⁹ (31). When s meets x, who is equally "stomverbaast"⁶⁰ (31) that s and others have published a considerable amount of books, s proudly says: "Vooral de laatste twee jaar is er een culturele opbloei. Een culturele revolutie"⁶¹ (31). Culture and literature are more or less equated. In addition, certain characteristics of literary production are stressed. x tells s about a former attempt to create a similar literary project in the

55 'Jesus, that's nothing. I always believed that Suriname had a several millions of inhabitants. And these couple of people would like to become independent. You will never accomplish that' (30).

56 '[s]imply. Independence. Being one country. One people. One future' (31).

57 '[a] culture of our own' (31).

58 'Would you like us to 'erase' our country' (31).

59 '[a] culture of one's own' with 'a literature of one's own' (31).

60 'flabbergasted' (31).

61 'Particularly over the last two years, cultural productions flourished. A cultural revolution' (31).

Netherlands, but “het mislukt[e]. We zouden hier een tijdschrift beginnen, maar we hadden geen duidelijk ideaal. We moesten concurreren op de Nederlandse markt. We waren niet eensgezind genoeg”⁶² (31). x’s example is used to emphasise the differences between former and current attempts to create an independent literary culture. Apparently, former attempts lacked common goals and mutual ideals. Therefore, the need for community and ideological unity are indirectly stressed by Doelwijt’s text.

Furthermore, the text also conveys that a literary culture should be created within Suriname, not outside Suriname. Although the text also acknowledges that “Holland is zekerheid, Suriname onzekerheid”⁶³ (33), the final statement is unambiguous. In relation to a common, unitary culture that should be created *in* Suriname, the text explicitly addresses Surinamese migrants in the Netherlands: “Kom terug. Kom kijken. Kom kijken hoe erg het is. Hoe fijn het is. Kom meeleven. Mee-werken. Mee zijn. Mee-worden. Mee-veranderen. Kom ons isolement verbreken. Kom meedoen. Kom dan. Kom dan. Kom!”⁶⁴ (33). This final appeal invokes a sense of community, a togetherness that could eventually lead to independence.

Accordingly, the text exemplifies the agenda that is also expressed in Ravales’s introduction to *Moetete I*. Doelwijt’s text suggests that the unity needed for independence can actually be created as and through a common national literary project. A common ideology, i.e. nationalism, and a basis on Surinamese soil appeared to be the only conditions they needed to comply with. Furthermore, Doelwijt’s text conveys that the national culture that is to be asserted is Creole culture. Surinaams, i.e. Sranantongo, is depicted as the language ‘of their own’. Hence, the language of the Surinamese Creoles is presented as *the* national language. Furthermore, the call for participation is addressed to Surinamese writers in the Netherlands. Although s is described as a common Surinamese

62 ‘it didn’t work out. We wanted to start a literary magazine, but we didn’t have a strong common ideal. We had to compete against the Dutch market. We weren’t concordant enough’ (31).

63 ‘Holland is security. Suriname is insecurity’ (33).

64 ‘Come back. Come, have a look. Have a look at how bad it is. How beautiful it is. Come to live together. To work together. To be together. To become ‘together’. To change together. Come to break free from our isolation. Come and participate. Come on. Come on. Come!’ (33).

person, “uw buurman links. uw buurvrouw rechts”⁶⁵ (29), s cannot be seen as a typical Surinamese person, but someone who belonged to the Surinamese elite. Although the text appears to address *everyone*, the text mainly addresses the Surinamese elite in the Netherlands that was predominantly Creole. Although other ethnic groups are not denied to exist in Suriname, the text does simply not mention them. This omission leaves the reader with the impression that the Surinamese national language, and hence culture, is Creole.

3.2.2 *Unifying Culture – Belonging and Community in Thea Doelwijt’s “De Nacht van de Winti” (1968b)*⁶⁶

Another of Doelwijt’s texts, “De Nacht van de Winti” provides insights into the specific practices of Creole culture. Doelwijt’s text is an account of a *Winti pré*, a communal service to the *Winti*, representing the Creole’s ancestors and divine spirits. The text is told by an autodiegetic narrator who attends the *Winti pré* together with Erwin, a friend. The style is immediate, graphic, and elliptic, giving the reader the impression of being presented with a ‘snapshot’ of the evening. It seems to be the first *pré* that the narrator attends. Erwin, however, seems quite familiar with the practices; he explains the meaning of the *Winti pré*:

je kra, je eigen ik, bestaat uit je jeje, je geest en je twee djodjo (twee peetjes, een man en een vrouw). De winti vergezellen je van je zestiende jaar af ongeveer. Met je winti moet je op goede voet blijven; als je oprecht leeft, hinderen zij je niet. Winti moet je niet aanbidden; je kunt wel dingen vragen. De priester, de bonoeman kan je helpen de juiste manier te vinden om in harmonie te leven. Soms moet je baden, soms moet je een wintipré houden⁶⁷ (Doelwijt, “Winti”, 15).

The *pré* is held for one of Erwin’s female relatives. For the Creoles, the *pré* is the way of communicating with and honouring the divine spirits and ancestors.

⁶⁵ ‘Your neighbour on your left side. your neighbour on your right side’ (29).

⁶⁶ ‘The Night of the Winti’ ([my translation] Doelwijt, “Winti”, 13) was published in *Moetete I* in 1968.

⁶⁷ ‘your *kra*, your own I, is made up by your *jeje*, your spirit and your two *djodjo* (a godmother and a godfather). The winti come to you from approximately your sixteenth birthday onwards. You have to be on good terms with your winti; if you live a candid life, they won’t bother you. You should not worship your Winti; but you can ask things. The priest, the *bonoeman*, can help you to find the right way to live in harmony. Sometimes you will have to bathe, sometimes you will have to hold a *wintipré*’ ([my translation and emphasis] Doelwijt, “Winti”, 15).

Basically, the participants of the *Winti pré* receive their *Winti* while dancing “een enigszins nonchalante dans”⁶⁸ (Doelwijt, “Winti”, 14). After having received her *Winti*, Erwin’s relative invites others to join her, “iedereen een braza gevend, opdat allen in een vriendschappelijke sfeer de pré zullen meemaken”⁶⁹ (14). The atmosphere is friendly and joyful: “De geest van vriendschap die op de winti-pré heerst, is opvallend”⁷⁰ (15). *Winti* is presented as an affirmative cultural practice that creates a sense of belonging and harmony because it is rooted on Surinamese soil. The people at the *pré* are addressed by the *bonoeman* with “Famiri”, i.e. family, and “Lanti”, i.e. “mensen, volk van dit land”⁷¹ (13). They sing a song for “Maisa, de moeder van de grond”⁷² (13). The connection to African roots and slave ancestors is presented as a salient aspect. They enact movements that resemble sequences of slave work: “Één van de voorouders heeft op een suikerplantage gewerkt”⁷³ (14). The connection between Surinamese soil, history, culture, and ethnicity is depicted as an inalienable part of a person’s identity: “Het is onze cultuur. Als je neger bent, zit dit in je. Het hoort bij ons”⁷⁴ (15). Again, the link between soil, ethnicity, and culture is naturalised. Accordingly, Doelwijt’s text depicts Creole culture as authentic, genuine, and inextricably connected to Surinamese soil.

Furthermore, Creole culture is also distinguished from Western culture and the culture of the Hindustani. The narrator claims that “[z]endingen en missionarissen [i.e. Western people] dachten (denken) er anders over”⁷⁵ (15), indicating that for Western people *Winti* is some kind of unworthy paganism. Hinduism is depicted less negatively, and as somewhat more open: “Het Hinduïsme ziet niet in, waarom een ieder precies hetzelfde moet geloven of doen, waar iedereen toch anders is”⁷⁶ (15). However, the Hindustani are also presented

68 ‘a nonchalant dance’ (14).

69 ‘she gives a *braza*, i.e. hug, to everyone to invite everyone to join the *pré* in a friendly atmosphere’ ([my emphasis] 14).

70 ‘there is conspicuously friendly atmosphere, a the spirit of friendship palpable at the *pré*’ ([my emphasis] 15).

71 ‘*Lanti*’, i.e. ‘people of this land’ ([my emphasis] 13).

72 ‘*Maisa*, the mother of the soil’ ([my emphasis] 13).

73 ‘One of the ancestors worked at a sugarcane plantation’ (14).

74 ‘This is our culture. When you’re black, it is in you. It belongs to us’ (15).

75 ‘missionaries had (have) a different opinion on this’ ([15]).

76 ‘Hinduism does not understand why everyone needs to believe in and do exactly the same thing, while, in fact, we are all different’ (15).

as not accepting *Winti* as an equally valid culture or religion: “Wanneer een Hindu een primitief mens slangen of bomen ziet aanbidden, dan laat hij hem in zijn natuurverering, doch legt hem uit dat dit niet de uiteindelijke waarheid is”⁷⁷ (15). The narrator suggests that *Winti* is not considered as ‘truth’ by the Hindustani, and therefore, looked upon dismissively.

The text itself, however, illustrates a completely different picture of *Winti*. The account of the *Winti pré* conveys that *Winti* is a reassuring, open, and communal practice that invites everyone to join in. In the end, *Winti* “heeft zijn stempel gedrukt in [the narrator’s] kra”⁷⁸ (16). Hence, *Winti* is presented as a cultural practice that includes, embraces, and deeply moves its community. The text suggests that *Winti* creates an affirmative sense of community, even in the face of the violent history of the colonial slave system. Again, the principles according to which cultural identity is presented in the text adhere to the cognitive corollaries suggested by Kelly (1955). Abiding by the dichotomy, organisation, and choice corollary, the text creates an affirmative Creole cultural identity – Creole identity is placed at the centre of a dichotomously organised web of meanings (dichotomy and organisation corollary [Kelly 1955, 59f, 56f]) in which Creole culture (i.e. the in-group [Tajfel and Turner 1986]) is associated with positive characteristics (choice corollary [Kelly 1955, 64f]). Hinduism and Christianity function as constitutive outsides that emphasise the communal and tolerant atmosphere that the text associates with *Winti*. Christianity is depicted as trying to force its worldview on everyone. Hinduism is portrayed as dismissive towards other beliefs. Furthermore, in comparison to Christianity and Hinduism, *Winti* is presented as a cultural practice that is deeply connected with Surinamese soil. With regard to nativist notions of nationalism, the element of ‘natuurverering’ inherent to Creole *Winti* culture is not a reason to adopt a dismissive attitude towards *Winti*, but, in fact, an asset. Considering its strong relationship to Surinamese soil and history, *Winti* can be quite suitably presented as a Surinamese cultural practice in a nativist sense. Christianity and Hinduism are depicted as alien influences that are rooted elsewhere, and as foreign cultures that do not treat

77 ‘When a Hindu sees a primitive person who worships snakes or trees, he accepts his nature cult, but at the same time, he tells him that his belief is not the ultimate truth’ (15).

78 ‘has left its mark [on the narrator’s] soul’ (15).

Surinamese nature and land with due respect. In addition, taking Tajfel and Turner's (1986) principle of in-group favouritism into account, categorisation creates a feeling of purposefulness and relatedness – for the in-group. Through identification with the group to which they 'naturally' belong, i.e. the in-group, the text engenders a sense of belonging to a greater Creole cultural whole.

In addition, Doelwijt's text does not only portray *Winti* as a source of belonging and cultural authenticity; *Winti*, and therefore, Creole culture, is illustrated as the only cultural practice that can truly be considered Surinamese, and hence, suitable to be a representative of true Surinamese national culture.

Another possibility is to interpret the portrayal in terms of in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Although the Hindustani are also mentioned as Surinamese people, their culture is not depicted as being as typically Surinamese as Creole culture. Hence, the text conveys that Creole culture is the only true Surinamese culture. In both cases, purposefulness and importance is assigned to Creole culture. Hence, the text engenders a positive self-esteem for the in-group, i.e. Creoles, and therefore, it can be related to self-enhancing motives.

3.3 *Interim Summary*

Although this Creole-Surinamese national identity, which is portrayed by the texts presented above, conveys a specifically nativist notion of the nation, it remains a fiction. Hence, the identitarian essentialisms that are created in the texts are as fictional as any narration. Identity is created according to Kelly's (1955) principles of the dichotomy and choice corollary: Creoles are depicted as essentially uncorrupted, honest, and good, whereas everything that can be associated with Western ideologies is potentially corrupted, treacherous, and hypocritical (dichotomy and choice corollary). Due to the 'natural' connection between Creole lineage, history, and Surinamese soil, Creoles are presented as the only ones who can truly lay claims on 'authentic' Surinamese identity and culture. Thus, these discursive strategies can also be related to the phenomenon of in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Although the texts allegedly convey the culture and identity of a united Suriname, i.e. a super-ordinate group

that is composed of several ethnic groups, they only portray Creole culture. Hence, Creole culture and identity are presented as prototypical of Surinamese culture and identity as such. Hindustani and their cultural influences are either omitted or used as a demarcation of the Creole's position as the true representatives of Surinamese national culture and the rightful executors of political independence. Accordingly, in-group projection served as a means to allocate power and to reserve positive characteristics for one sub-group, i.e. securing or maximising this group's social power and cultural hegemony. In this context, the dichotomous depiction of Creoles and Hindustani serve specific self-enhancement motives. The inalienable bond between territory and identity create a sense of security which satisfies the need for relatedness and self-esteem. By presenting themselves and their texts as the indispensable creators of the national narrative that will lead Suriname into independence, these authors create a sense of self-importance, hence, of autonomy and competence. Accordingly, these Surinamese writers place themselves at the centre of a discourse that determines the bonds and affiliations from which they benefit psychologically.

4. On the Other Side of Affirmative Identities – The Relationship Between Hindustani and Creoles

Notwithstanding the positive psychological effects that can be ascribed to the identities that the Creole authors created in their texts, this depiction also had negative consequences. In the 1960s and 1970s, the nationalist discourse, as well as most literary texts centred on Creole subjectivity. The connection between Creole identity and Suriname as a nation was created according to nativist principles: as the descendants of the African slaves, the Afro-Surinamese Creoles were portrayed as having occupied and toiled on Surinamese soil 'way before' the arrival of the Indian indentured workers. Hence, Creole culture was presented as inextricably intertwined with Surinamese soil. Furthermore, it was emphasised that Creole culture and language are based on a common origin, i.e. an African origin, but that they also evolved on Surinamese territory over the past centuries. However, the nativist portrayal of Creole Surinamese culture did not only have positive effects. Although many of the texts of the 1960s and 1970s conveyed a

positive and affirmative, and hence, psychologically securing and beneficial identity for Creoles, these texts did not embrace other identities. Linking national territory with Creole culture, history, and identity also implied that ‘other’ non-Creole ethnic groups were conceptualised as not-as-much-Surinamese⁷⁹, and even anti-nationalist. In addition to the general anti-colonial attitude in Suriname, the aftermaths of the political climate of the 1950s and early 1960s generated an anti-Hindustani climate. After the last and unsuccessful RTC in 1961, the Hindustani were not only blamed to have inhibited national independence, they were more and more generally depicted as sly supporters of the colonial regime.

4.1 *The Internal National Outside – In-Group Projection in Rudi Kross’s “Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe” (1971)*

In some cases, the Hindustani were even blamed for the lack of a common Surinamese community and identity. As an example, I will again consider Kross’s “Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe”. Kross’s text can be related to in-group projection, because he acknowledges that the Hindustani are Surinamese, too, while defining Surinamesity only in terms of the Creoles. Kross claims that an independent and united “Suriname bestaat niet en dreigt steeds onbereikbaar te worden”⁸⁰ (Kross, “Mythe”, 185), because unfortunately it seems prone to fail due to a lack of support of the “Surinaamse bevolkingsdelen die uit India en Indonesië afkomstig zijn”⁸¹ (186). He depicts them to be against independence. Furthermore, he accuses them of rather wanting to be fully Dutch than Surinamese, because “het Surinamerschap, zo wordt hun door hun leiders voorgehouden, is de inhoudsloze en letterlijk levensgevaarlijke mythe waarmee de Creolen het nog onvolledig verworven Nederlanderschap willen vernietigen”⁸² (186f). Within the national discourse of identity in Suriname of the 1960s and 1970s, a dichotomy was created between the supposedly progressive, pro-independence Creole population, and the supposedly regressive, sly supporters of the colonial regime,

79 As in in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999).

80 ‘does not yet exist, and more and more runs the risk of being unachievable’ ([my translation] Kross, “Mythe”, 185).

81 ‘parts of the Surinamese population whose ancestors come from India and Indonesia’ (186).

82 ‘they are told by their leaders that Suriname’s independence is an unsubstantial and literally life-threatening myth with which the Creoles want to annihilate the not yet completely achieved status of Surinamese people as fully acclaimed Dutch citizens’ (186f).

i.e. the Hindustani. By associating pro-independence with Creoles, i.e. people with African roots, and anti-independence with Hindustani, i.e. people with Indian roots, the struggle for independence subliminally became an ethnic conflict. The well-intended idea of raising and shaping a common national culture and identity through literature grappled with the seclusive, nativist ideas according to which Creole culture and identity were (cognitively) constructed. In the spirit of *négritude* (Senghor [1964] 2005) and Ethiopianism, African heritage and slave work were associated with rightful claims on Surinamese soil, and hence, claims to national culture and identity. The Indian contract workers were accused of being sly, weak, and self-involved supporters of the former colonial regime. They were believed to have slowed down the process of successful slave emancipation, because they ‘agreed’ to do the former slave work for almost slave-like conditions. When the third RTC failed in 1961, the memories of the uneasy relation between former slaves and contract workers re-emerged.

In his text, Kross is particularly scathing in his critique, almost cynical. Hindustani are depicted as the antipodal force inhibiting independence. Hindustani are portrayed as the constitutional outside that provided the basis for a (cognitive) construction of Creole as essentially good, honest people of integrity.⁸³ In their texts, Creole identity was created according to Kelly’s dichotomy, choice, and organisation corollary. Furthermore, Hindustani were also used to denote the Creoles’ essentially good intentions and the importance of their cause. In relation to the intention of the *Moetete* group to create a Surinamese community and foster Surinamese identity, Hindustani were depicted as ignorant towards the importance and power of a national fiction: “Het Surinamerschap wordt dan ook in de meest volledige zin (dus zowel nu als in de toekomst) opgevat als een fictie, en van ficties kunnen alleen dichters, schrijvers en andere parasieten leven”⁸⁴ (187). Due to the Hindustani’s reputation to be anti-nationalist, Kross’s text conveys that everyone concerned with independence should not only embrace pro-nationalism, but also anti-Hindustani. Accordingly, Kross suggests that Hindustani notions and

83 Interestingly, a similar argument is made by Edward Said in relation to the colonisers’ discursive strategies (Said [1978] 1979, 4).

84 ‘Suriname’s independence is understood as a fiction in the most literally sense (hence, now and in the future); and only writers and other parasites can live on fictions’ ([my translation] Kross, “Mythe”, 187).

attitudes need to be rejected. Based on this logic, Kross indirectly states that fictions *are important* to all concerned with the building of a new nation. Furthermore, Kross does not only confute the supposedly parasitic nature of writers, but even re-emphasises their necessity for the creation of a new nation. Kross reaffirms the writer's virility in relation to the creation of the new nation, and thus, reaffirms a positive image of the author-as-indispensable-creator of the nation.

However, the indispensability of the national fiction and its creators is not affirmed by an inalienable quality inherent to the fiction or writers themselves, but in relation to an o/Other that provides constitutional borders. In Kross's text, the Hindustani constitute the conceptual other on which the positive image of the Creole self can be built and reaffirmed. The necessity of a national myth is not vindicated in and by itself, but in relation to the Hindustani who are depicted to dismiss its importance. The progressive, pro-nationalist identity of the Creoles is based on a depiction of Hindustani as conservative supporters of the old colonial regime. Hence, based on the principle of the simultaneity of the mutual exclusive (Iser 1997), the importance of the myth for nationalist goals is confirmed by the Hindustani's dismissive demeanour towards fictions.

However, although the negotiations during the last RTC in 1961 supposedly failed due to a lack of support of the Hindustani VHP, the image of the Hindustani as the petrified political and cultural opposition of the Creoles seems to be based on prejudice rather than actual facts. In relation to the psychological functions of identity, the Hindustani can be considered to take up a structural function. The Hindustani-Creole relationship constitutes a stable, ideologically charged dichotomy that serves psychological motives related to self-enhancement and self-esteem. The Hindustani provide the conceptual basis, the negative blueprint that defines the rootedness of Creole culture, the authenticity of Creole identity, and the importance of the Creole deeds.

This dichotomy between Hindustani and Creoles was spread and stereotyped in the national discourse of the 1960s and 1970s – with devastating consequences for the Hindustani. Considering that Kross's text was included in *Kri, Kra!*, Thea Doelwijt's collection of Surinamese writing which was assembled

specifically for educational purposes in schools (Doelwijt 1972; van Kempen 2002 IV, 244), the portrayal of Hindustani as the sly or even detrimental antipode to Creoles was spread among many people and from a young age onwards. The actual share and perspective of Hindustani in the national discourse was widely neglected or adulterated. Although one of the most prominent writers of that time – Shrinivāsi – came from a Hindustani background, Hindustani writers assumed a marginal position in the literary discourse in Suriname of the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, the literary magazines of that time rarely published literature in Hindi – even though Shrinivāsi had already written poetry in Hindi (van Kempen 2002 IV, 431) – in favour of Sranantongo and Dutch. In one of the important collections of Surinamese literature, *Creole Drum*, the publishers Jan Voorhoeve and Ursy Lichtveld unambiguously stressed the importance of Surinamese Creole in relation to nationalism. They state that “Surinam Creole was regarded as the only true national language” (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 185), implying the insignificance of Sranami or Hindi as national modes of expression. Although later, Hindustani writers and texts in languages other than Dutch and Sranantongo received greater acknowledgement, their reputation as being sly supporters of the colonial regime remained. In many cases, they are portrayed as the conservative opposition to the progressive Creoles.

4.2 *We Need You to Support Us – National Community in Leo Ferrier’s “Notities van een Vriend” (1973)*⁸⁵

Kross’s text suggested that the lack of national community was mainly a result of the Hindustani’s refusal to support the national goals of the Creoles. This logic also offers a possibility to blame Creole failures on the Hindustani’s lack of support. Leo Ferrier’s short story “Notities van een Vriend” adopts a similar judgmental stance. Although the actual plot of the story centres more on the

85 ‘Notes Written by a Friend’ ([my translation] Ferrier, “Notities”, 139). Leo Henri Ferrier was born on 14 September 1940 in Paramaribo into a multi-ethnic family. In 1961, after finishing his training as teacher, Ferrier moved to the Netherlands where he studied piano and literature. In 1971, he re-immigrated to Suriname where he engaged in various activities as a pianist and writer. In 1968, he debuted with his seminal novel *Atman*. Afterwards his literary production decreased due to a psychological condition (van Kempen 2002 IV, 533). His short story, which will also be discussed in part 2, “Notities van een Vriend”, was published in *Tirade* in 1973 (van Kempen 2002 IV, 533). The version used for this discussion was featured in van Kempen’s *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers* in 1989.

narrator's isolation and loneliness, the story's beginning offers a clear statement concerning the relationship between Hindustani and Creoles.⁸⁶ In the beginning of the story, the narrator states that the social situation in Suriname is "[e]en dwangsituatie voor allen, Creool en Hindostaan"⁸⁷ (Ferrier, "Notities", 139). In his opinion, these constraints derive from the fact that the Creoles are in the course of "een minderheid te worden terwijl zij de meerderheid in haar aanwezigheid meer dan zelf was"⁸⁸ (139). The statement conveys that although the Creoles seem to form the minority in terms of percentages, for the narrator, they form the ideological majority – indirectly stating that the Hindustani will be unable to live up to the political responsibilities of a representative majority that a new Suriname requires. His statement also may imply that the Hindustani are not representative for a common Surinamese culture. The narrator also claims that "wat [de Creool] verloren heeft, door die Hindostaan gewonnen is"⁸⁹ (139). Again, the relationship between Creoles and Hindustani is depicted dichotomously, since the loss of one side is the other's gain. In addition, this statement seems to suggest that the declining percentages of the Creoles will lead to a decrease of nationalism and an increase of the anti-nationalist attitudes of the Hindustani – which, in the narrator's opinion, would be detrimental the national community which still needs to be formed.

However, the narrator also realises that the Creoles' ideological hegemony can only be effective, if the majority of the people of Suriname, i.e. Hindustani, will support them. This condition can only be resolved in community, since they "kunnen het niet zonder elkaar"⁹⁰ (139). If they want to create the "volk van morgen"⁹¹, an objective that the narrator considers "toch zo nodig"⁹², Hindustani and Creoles need to collaborate (139). However, although 'the friend's' message seems to be that a new Suriname can only be formed in company, his call for collaboration has an urging undertone directed at the Hindustani. Basically, "we

⁸⁶ The story will be analysed in more detail in a later section.

⁸⁷ 'a situation of constraint for all, Hindustani and Creoles' ([my translation] Ferrier, "Notities", 139).

⁸⁸ 'becoming a minority although they used to be more than a majority' (139).

⁸⁹ 'what is lost by the Creoles, is won by the Hindustani' (139).

⁹⁰ 'cannot win without the other's support' (139).

⁹¹ 'people of tomorrow' (139).

⁹² 'so very important' (139).

kunnen het niet zonder elkaar”⁹³ (139) could also mean: ‘we cannot achieve what we want – independence for Suriname – if you, the Hindustani, are not going to support us’. Although the friend seems to suggest that if Creoles still want to achieve their ideological goals, they need to come to terms with the Hindustani, he mainly seems to urge the Hindustani to finally support the Creoles’ political goals. Therefore, the dichotomous portrayal of Hindustani and Creoles remains, even when the text tries to call for a national community. Again, the Hindustani are portrayed as the cause of socio-political issues and the lack of national community, because they do not support the political objectives of the Creoles.

4.3 *Left to Oblivion – Hindustani Subjectivity in Jit Narain’s “De Contractant” (1986)*⁹⁴

The repercussions of the dichotomous depiction of the relationship between Creoles and Hindustani become obvious when reading Jit Narain’s short story “De Contractant”. The very short text portrays the typical end of a story of a contract worker from “Brits-Indie”. The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator. The main character, a contract worker dies without having received the respect and acknowledgement of his (his)story. For many Hindustani, their history in Suriname was predicated on a deceit: the contract worker depicted in the story, as many others, had unrealistic hopes regarding Suriname, fostered by the people who hired them. The narrator conveys that the Hindustani were lured to come to Suriname under false pretences. The contract worker was convinced that the ship he was boarding would bring him to a “Sri Ram Tapu”-like place (Narain, “De Contractant”, 195); hence, a place he imagined to be like Rama’s wonderful holy island. Instead, however, he was faced with the atrocious reality of contract workers in Suriname. Nevertheless, despite the appalling working conditions, he dutifully conducted his work: “In Suriname heeft hij gewerkt. Alles wat hij

⁹³ ‘we cannot win without the other’s support’ (139).

⁹⁴ ‘The Contract Worker’ ([my translation] Narain, “De Contractant”, 195). Jit Narain was born as Djietnarainsingh Baldewsingh on 7 August 1948 to a Hindustani family in Suriname. He studied Medicine in the Netherlands. He worked as a physician in the Netherlands and Suriname. Furthermore, he is a poet and performance artist (van Kempen 2003, 1153f). His story “De Contractant” was written in 1986, but first published in Michiel van Kempen’s *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers* (1989). Baldewsingh eventually returned to Suriname in 1991.

aankon, heeft hij gedaan”⁹⁵ (195). But his toil and history are not acknowledged: “Met welk respect praat men erover? Weet men het dat er ooit contractanten waren? Weten ze ook dat hun bloed in deze aarde heeft gevloeid? Is het bekend dat op ze is geschoten?”⁹⁶ (196). The narrator criticises the lacking representation of a Hindustani subjectivity in the national discourse in Suriname. The story conveys that the Hindustani also have a ‘natural’ connection to Suriname, because they toiled and left their blood and lives on Surinamese soil. However, their story is not heard: the contract worker dies alone; his story left to oblivion. Narain’s story even indicates that *their* national discourse is silenced. The story ends with an even less optimistic tune: “Alleen en eenzaam is hij vergaan en hij heeft de smet die op hem lag ook meegenomen. Wat sta ik te lachen, mij heeft hij ook besmet”⁹⁷ (196). Narain’s story does not evoke any association with community, but mainly depicts isolation and devastation. Being Hindustani (a group to which the narrator also seems to belong) is portrayed as some kind of ‘human stain’. The stereotype of the sly, pro-colonial, and docile contract worker, who supposedly inhibited possibilities for the emancipated slaves, is irrationally transferred to all Hindustani. Although there are reports that also give accounts of surges by Hindustani contract workers against plantation owners and supervisors (Fokken unpublished conference paper, 8), these instances are not often recalled and even less often taken as proof of the anti-colonial attitude of Hindustani. Much research needs yet to be done on the history of Hindustani in Suriname. Considering the fact that Narain’s story was written in 1986, it is also proof of the persistence of the constructed dichotomy between Hindustani and Creoles.

95 ‘He worked in Suriname. Everything that he could bear, he did’ ([my translation] Narain, “De Contractant”, 195).

96 ‘Is there any respect for this? Do they know that there were ever contract workers? Do they also know that this soil is soaked with their blood? Do they know that people shot at them?’ (196).

97 ‘Isolated and alone, he died. He took the stain that he bore with him as well. But who am I to laugh at him. He also gave his stain to me’ (196).

4.4 *Blocking the Road to Caribbeanness – Repercussions of the Hindustani-Creole Dichotomy on Contemporary Postcolonialism and Frank Martinus Arion's "The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness" (1998)*

The depiction of the Hindustani as being the inhibiting, conservative antipode to the progressive anti-colonialist Creoles had wide-reaching consequences. The constructed dichotomy between Hindustani and Creoles did not only have an impact on the representation of Hindustani in the national discourse. This cognitive construct also influenced theoretical discourses in postcolonial studies. The Hindustani were not only presented as the socio-political opposition in Suriname. They also became to be portrayed as the opposition of creolisation and creoleness. In 1998, Frank Martinus Arion claims in his contribution to the *Callaloo* special issue on the Dutch Caribbean, "The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness",⁹⁸ that the Asian population in the Dutch Caribbean inhibits, if not threatens, creoleness which he considers the prerequisite for the desired *Caribbeanness*:

To my mind, the region as a whole has not [...] reached the stage of Caribbeanness [...] yet. We may all still be only 16th-century European simpletons, deadly afraid of falling into hellish ravines once we leave Spain and Portugal and get beyond Cape Bojador. What makes it so extremely difficult to get to Creoleness is that, since the abolition of slavery in this region, one of the most essential ingredients of Creoleness is fading away. There are no more blacks coming from Africa [...]. Instead the region is continuously refilled by Europeans and [...] Chinese and Indians. And since these mostly represent migrating but non-creolizing, non-mixing cultures in splendid isolation, the Creoleness is not augmented but diminished [...]. [N]ever in my whole life have I seen a mixed Chinese-Antillean couple walking the streets of our island. The famous black saga of Kunta Kente by Alex Haley, for example, could not be shown on the television in Suriname because non-black and Asian-Indian segments of Suriname society feared it would create race tensions (Arion 1998, 448).

⁹⁸ Frank Martinus Arion was born on 17 December 1936 in Aruba. In 1955, he moved to the Netherlands to study. He is an important writer and linguist of the Dutch-Caribbean. He published several novels, and he was awarded the title 'Ridder in de Orde van Oranje-Nassau' for his work by the Netherlands in 1992 (Coomans and Rutgers 1991, 405f). He died in 2015. His essay, "The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness" was published in the *Callaloo* in 1998.

Asians, in the case of Suriname, mainly Hindustani, are presented as the Creoles' antagonists. They do not only serve as the (nationally internal) constitutive outside of Creole national identity. Hindustani also provide a scapegoat that can be blamed for 'Creole failure' such as the unachieved national independence, or later, the not yet realised *Caribbeanness*. Furthermore, in relation to postcolonial theories, the Hindustani are pushed into a conceptual position that does not reflect their actual experience and reality. Although the theoretical concepts of creolisation and creoleness distance themselves from ethnic claims, but suggest openness, tolerance, and vitalising ambiguity, the reality of creoleness is often lopsided – and explicitly linked to African heritage. Hence, in this context, when creoleness and creolisation are considered as 'good to think' and full of 'teleological optimism' (Khan 2007, 654), Hindustani simultaneously becomes associated with inhibiting conservatism. In fact, as Arion suggested, the Indian population in the Caribbean is thought to prevent *Caribbeanness* – which is another theoretical concept in postcolonial studies similar to creoleness. Therefore, the dichotomous construction of the relationship between Hindustani and Creoles in the context of nationalist discourses has had a significant influence on how Hindustani are perceived in postcolonial studies – even until today. Although creoleness and creolisation should not be automatically associated with ethnical groups that identify as 'Creole', they often are, and 'Creoles' are automatically assumed to adhere to the ideological principles and the teleological optimism of creolisation – thus, to be morally superior or culturally progressive. Simultaneously, other groups in the Caribbean that do not call themselves 'Creole' come to be considered as anti-creole. Although Khal Torabully and Marina Carter have tried to introduce a “‘*remise en perspective*’ (recollection) of the cultural elements of the coolie which were *mis en mal* (stifled) by colonial history” (Carter and Torabully 2002, 144f), and although coolitude is theoretically similar to creoleness, coolitude became neglected by the “durable influence [of *négritude* and Afrocentrism] in the Americas” (Carter and Torabully 2002, 147). Although coolitude represents a theoretical position that focuses on integration and the creation of a new common identity, the goal of coolitude “that the Indian migrant

should become part and parcel of an identity open to the dynamics of cultural interplay” (Carter and Torabully 2002, 148) has not yet been achieved.

4.5 *Interim Summary*

It is difficult to analyse Creole identity in these texts in terms of creolisation and hybridisation. Creole identity can be considered a cognitive *essentialism* that adheres to nativist paradigms. As a cognitive *construct*, Creole identity is created according to Kelly’s principles of the choice, dichotomy, and organisation corollary: Creole identity is based on two dichotomous relations (dichotomy corollary [Kelly 1955, 59f]), anti-colonial – colonial, and Hindustani – Creole. In both cases, Creole is depicted as the more positive identity (choice corollary [Kelly 1955, 64f]). The anti-colonial – colonial dichotomy provides a logical basis that naturalises the right to an independent national Suriname (organisation corollary [Kelly 1955, 56f]). The colonialists are depicted as ‘illegitimate rulers’ of the territory, because they do not have any ‘natural connection’ to the land, nor is their culture intertwined with local Surinamese culture. Their cultural influences are depicted as potentially alienating and threatening the preservation of a true Surinamese national culture. The relationship between Creoles and Hindustani can be interpreted as a case of in-group projection. The Creoles are depicted as more Surinamese or prototypical Surinamese culture. Furthermore, the dichotomous relation between Hindustani and Creoles secures the positive self-image of Creoles as the true executors of political independence, and the rightful representatives of a Surinamese national culture (choice dichotomy). Hindustani are presented as anti-national, sly supporters of the colonial regime. Hence, based on the linguistic principle of the ‘simultaneity of the mutual’ exclusive (Iser 1997, 3), the Hindustani’s inadequacy to function as executors of political independence emphasises the necessity of Creoles to fulfil this function. In addition, the adequacy of Creoles was actively constructed in nativist terms. The dichotomous relation between the Creoles and the other two groups presented a basis to define and construct the salient position within the national discourse that the (mainly) Creole writers assigned to themselves. In sum, Creole national identity was organised in a tight web of dichotomous relations (within which Creole assumed

the positively associated pole) that determined the stability of the Creoles' affirmative, positive self-regard.

Correspondingly, the way in which Creole identity was construed can more generally be related to Tajfel and Turner's (1986) psychological principles of in-group favouritism and out-group-discrimination (13). With the identification of a cultural difference between people with African and Indian roots, the process of demarcating in-group and out-group was initiated. Although these texts allegedly portray a common Surinamese culture, they are a case of in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999), because all cultural value and importance was ascribed to the Creole in-group. The Hindustani were homogenised into a cohesive antipode. Serving self-enhancing motives to maintain a sense of purposefulness and positive self-esteem, the essentiality of these differences was petrified in discourses and texts.

However, the nationalist Creole identity that is presented in the texts remains a *cognitive* essentialism. As such, its essential nature is an invented, rather than an inherent one. Therefore, there might be far more similarities, common notions and goals between Hindustani and Creoles than these texts suggest (see also Misir 2010). Furthermore, Kelly's notion of the fragmentation corollary implies that personal constructs or identity are not necessarily logical and fixed, but that a person might employ various "subsystems" that contradict each other (Kelly 1955, 83). Hence, there are other texts either by Hindustani authors or even by Creole writers that convey not only a different picture of Hindustani, but also portray Creoles differently. The next section will focus on texts that present the Hindustani in a different light – not only written by Hindustani authors, but also by Creoles. Subsequently, the inconsistencies and ambiguities of Creole identity will be analysed together with factors that pose a threat to the integrity of the nationalist identity that the Creoles sought to construct.

5. *Hindustani Culture in Suriname*

Despite their reputation to be anti-nationalist and sly supporters of the old colonial regime, the Hindustani had an equally strong connection to their homeland

Suriname (Fokken, unpublished conference paper). Although there were significantly less writers in the 1960s and 1970s that had a Hindustani background (and who also expressed their background in their texts), there were writers such as Bhāi and Shrinivāsi who belonged to the core group of *Moetete*, and whose texts express a particular sense of belonging and relatedness to Suriname. Furthermore, there were some Creole writers within the *Moetete* group, such as Benny Ooft and Corly Verlooghen who tried to depict a less negative picture of the Hindustani and who emphasised the importance of political and cultural cooperation.

5.1 *The Land of the Holy River – New Indian Roots in Shrinivāsi's "Kila" (1971)*⁹⁹

Shrinivāsi is one of the Surinamese writers who sought to contribute to an independent Surinamese literary culture from a very early stage of his career onwards. Although he is mainly known and critically-acclaimed for his poetry, he also wrote short stories. His short story "Kila" conveys a deep connection between the story's Hindustani characters and Suriname. The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator who describes his visit to Kila, a small village at "de samenvloeiing van de Suriname- en de Commewijnerivier"¹⁰⁰ (Shrinivāsi, "Kila", 64). The story bears a certain auto-biographical overtone, because the narrator is also a writer. In the story, the narrator starts in Paramaribo, but already at "Mahonylaan"¹⁰¹, at the beginning of his journey, his heart leaps for joy, just as every time when he faces an "ontmoeting met de rivier"¹⁰² (64). The narrator praises the beauty and greatness of the *Suriname* river, its steady, silent "kracht

99 Shrinivāsi was born as Martinus Haridat Luchtman on 12 December 1926 in Beneden-Suriname into a Hindustani family. He worked as a teacher in Paramaribo until 1951, when he moved to Curaçao. Between 1963 and 1966 and 1977 and 1980, he lived in the Netherlands. He published his first collection of poems, *Anjali*, in 1963. He was also involved in literary culture of Suriname as publisher and writer, and he contributed in *Soela* and *Moetete*. He received several prizes for his writing, and he is one of the most renowned writers of Suriname. His short story "Kila" was first published in his only collection of short stories, *Phagwa* in 1971 and republished in 1989 in Michiel van Kempen's *Verhalen van Surinamse Schrijvers* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 393f).

100 'conjunction of the Suriname- and the Commewijne-river' ([my translation] Shrinivāsi, *Kila*, 64).

101 'Mahony-Lane' (64).

102 'meeting with the river' (64).

van de jeugd”¹⁰³ (64). “Tegen de river”¹⁰⁴ (64), he could never say anything negative. The narrator states that the river’s “water zuivert de mensen hier. Op verre afstand. In heilige rivieren”¹⁰⁵ (64). Although, he obviously and consciously praises a Surinamese river, his appreciative description evokes associations with the river *Ganges* which is considered holy in India. Hence, his depiction can be associated with an Indian cultural background. However, he praises the Suriname river without any explicit references to India. For the narrator the local river seems to bear the same power and the same holiness as the *Ganges*. Furthermore, considering that Hindus should never distance themselves too far from the pure waters of the *Ganges* (Bragard 2008, 73), the river *Suriname* is presented as a worthy substitute that may provide the same cultural and spiritual rootedness. Thus, the narrator conveys that he and the culture that he was raised in are deeply connected with the land. Suriname seems to offer a sense of belonging, not only for him personally, but even his culture appears to be ‘at home’ Suriname.

“Kila” depicts a new Indian culture Suriname that offers “geborgenheid”¹⁰⁶ (65) and homeliness, a web of relatedness and community. When the narrator arrives at his niece’s house, he is heartedly welcomed. In their company he feels “gelukkig. Relaxed”¹⁰⁷ (67). The Indian roots are still palpable in the food and language that they speak. The dish that he is offered is “massalageel”¹⁰⁸ (66). His niece speaks “[e]n Rajpur-hindostaans”¹⁰⁹ (65). Indian traditions appear to be practiced and respected at his niece’s house. The preservation of their cultural traditions constitutes an important aspect, particularly for his niece: “‘*Kab roti khiyaye?*’[...] [*Wanneer trouw je?*]”¹¹⁰ (65), she asks him, reflecting the importance of the preservation of cultural traditions through marrying someone from one’s own culture. The narrator seems to see this focus on preservation a little more critically. Although he does not want to be ungrateful, he claims that “[z]e willen je zo graag inkapselen. Hun vleugelen

103 ‘power of youth’ (64).

104 ‘Against the river’ (64).

105 ‘water cleans the people here. From a distance. In holy rivers’ (64).

106 ‘security’ (65).

107 ‘happy. Relaxed’ (67).

108 ‘*massala*-yellow’ (66).

109 ‘a Rajpur-Hindi’ (65).

110 ‘‘*Kab roti khiyaye?*’[...] [*When are you going to marry?*]’ (65).

spreiden ze zo graag ook over mijn zorgen”¹¹¹ (65). Although he appreciates the sense of relatedness and the security that this Indo-Surinamese community offers, he also considers their focus on preservation restrictive. He seems to connect their conservative attitude with a certain hesitance and un-willingness towards (political) change. As a writer, he claims, they consider him to live in a world of fantasies, “dat [hij] vlucht voor de realiteit”¹¹² (67). Their appraisal of his work also seems to be applicable to the nationalist movements in Suriname: “Ach jij met je wonderen. Die tijd is toch allang voorbij. Je moet gewoon weer beginnen. Loopt het goed dan heb je geluk”¹¹³ (65). Although he sees his role as a writer differently – “[o]nze wereld [...] beweegt [zich]. Door mijn hand”¹¹⁴ (68) – he also understands his niece’s concerns and her focus on preserving what is dear to her. He can understand that, in the face of hardship, “[je] moet alleen [jezelf] in leven houden. [...] Dat is de keilharde realiteit van vandaag”¹¹⁵ (67). Although “Kila” seems to confirm the stereotypes about the Hindustani who would not like to participate in political change, the story does not depict their intentions as generally sly or negative. Furthermore, the narrator suggests that the reason for their conservative attitude seems to derive from their focus to preserve a sense of relatedness and belonging in the face of hardship and poverty.

Furthermore, the story also depicts different aspects of the new Indian culture. Their culture does not seem as rigid and incapable of change as his niece’s attitudes suggest. Her children speak with his uncle “Nederlands en Hindostaans door elkaar. Met hun moeder Surinaams. Met hun vader ook. [...] Zonder enige vorm van spraakverwarring”¹¹⁶ (66). Although their mother is not pleased, their father also answers her in Sranan, the language of the Creoles, because “Nederlands is [hem] te lastig”¹¹⁷ (66). Hence, there seems a tendency towards change within the community, an inner hybridity, despite the superficial

111 ‘they would like to encapsulate you. They like to spread their wings around my worries as well’ (65).

112 ‘he escapes from reality’ (67).

113 ‘Oh you with your wonders. That time is long gone. You simply have to restart. When everything goes well, you’re lucky’ (65).

114 ‘our [...] world [...] moves. By my hand.’ (68).

115 ‘[you] have to keep [yourself] alive. That is the harsh reality of our times’ (67).

116 ‘a mix of Dutch and Hindi. With her mother they speak Surinaams [Sranantongo]. With their father, too. [...] Without mixing them up or confusing them’ (66).

117 ‘Dutch is too annoying’ (66).

rigidity of their focus on preservation. Furthermore, the father's attitude towards Dutch also suggests a certain willingness towards resistance.

Furthermore, the children practice their own hybridised culture. At school, "Javanen [...], Hindustanen [...], Creolen [...], Hindus [...], Moslems"¹¹⁸ (Shrinivāsi, "Kila", 69), they all celebrate "Phagwa"¹¹⁹ (69), i.e. *Holi*, together. 'They have breached their (cultural) borders' (69). In their happy play with colours, "alles krioelt door elkaar", but "alles gebeurt met de hand van de liefde"¹²⁰ (69). They do not only respect each other, but they actively join to celebrate, even if it is a traditional Indian festivity.

Shrinivāsi's short story seems to offer a different depiction of a new Indian culture, beyond the stereotypes that the media seem to convey. Hindustani culture, as described in "Kila", is open and integrative. In a way, it is depicted as far more open and hybridising than Creole culture or Creole identity in other texts. Hence, in some way, Hindustani identity seems to be more 'creole'¹²¹ than Creole identity in Suriname. In that sense, "Kila" opens the possibility for a common future, in the sense of a teleological optimism that Khan connects with creolisation (Khan 2007, 654). The text offers a sense of community in which everyone is welcome. However, although the children seem to create some kind of inseparable chaos in their play, they do not merge into one indistinguishable mass. They all remain 'Hindustanen' and 'Creolen', etc. In the end, the narrator is again welcomed by the smell of *goelgoelá*, an Indian dish (69). Hence, Shrinivāsi appears to offer a different possibility for a common (national) Surinamese culture. In his depiction of Surinamese community, the different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds of the population are preserved and respected, but they are potentially open to everyone. Furthermore, as was indicated in the beginning, the Indian community is as rooted in Suriname as Creole culture. In this rural community, the Western world "bestaat voor niemand hier"¹²² (69), they are all equal, and equally respected.¹²³

118 'Javanese [...], Hindustani [...], Creoles [...], Hindus [...], Moslems' (69).

119 Important holiday in India. Involves a lot of colours.

120 'everything creolises [goes haywire]', but 'everything is done with a gesture of love' (69).

121 In the sense of Aisha Khan's notion of creoleness as "ideology of alterity" (Khan 2007, 654).

122 'does not exist for anyone here' (69).

123 This notion of Hindustani identity is also reflected by Kumar Mahabir who argues that Indo-

Shrinivāsi's depiction of a Surinamese community can be best represented in terms of Khan's notion creolisation as "cultural change that occur[s] over time as [...] heterogeneous peoples come into [...] 'culture contact' and undergo acculturation" (Khan 2007, 653). In Shrinivāsi's story, "[a]llen zijn hier allen"¹²⁴ (69), but they also preserve their cultural roots. The happy overtone in "Kila" resembles Khan's notion that creolisation should be a change "for the good" (Khan 2007, 653). Furthermore, their common, active participation in the *Holi* festivities suggests a kind of agency that is not dependent on the Western world. In their joint and active play, they produce some kind of community that possesses an agency of its own.

Hence, Shrinivāsi suggests a different possibility for the formation of cultural community and a national identity that does not follow the principles of the primordialist, nativist, or ethnosymbolist notion of a necessary singularity of one national culture, one national ethnicity, and one national territory. Hence, he also offers an alternative to the focus on Creole culture (that everyone needs to adhere to) in the nationalist discourse in the 1960s and 1970s. However, despite the potential that Shrinivāsi's notion of the national community and identity bore, the dominant ethnocentric preoccupation with Creole culture remained.

5.2 *Auspicious Futures and Benevolent Warnings – The Creole-Hindustani Relationship in Benny Ooft's "Shaantidevi (Een Idylle)" (1968) and Corly Verlooghen's "Dit Wankel Huis" (1968a)*

Despite the generally negative depiction of Hindustani as conservative opponents of independence, there were also Creole writers who presented a positive notion of Hindustani or did not portray the relationship between Hindustani and Creoles as rigidly dichotomous. Benny Ooft's short story "Shaantidevi (Een Idylle)" centres around a young Creole-Hindustani couple.¹²⁵ The story is told by an

Caribbeans promote an "identity based upon an understanding of tolerance of differences and equality of opportunity" (Mahabir 1996, 186).

¹²⁴ 'everyone here is everyone else' (69).

¹²⁵ Benny Charles Ooft was born on February 3, 1941 in Paramaribo into a Creole family. Between 1963 and 1967, he lived in the Netherlands where he studied journalism. In 1967, he returned to Suriname. In 1967, he published his first collection of short stories *Silhouetten*. In 1968, together with Thea Doelwijt, he was also involved in the publication of *De Vlucht*, a

heterodiegetic narrator, but with a strong focalisation on the young male character in the story. Basically, the story describes the beginning of a romance between Nel, a Creole, and Shaantidevi, a Hindustani. The two shy lovers meet somewhere outside at a tree. The story portrays a very positive picture of the nature that surrounds the characters. There is an atmosphere of peace, anticipation, and idyllic nature. The boy even imagines the trees to have their own character. One tree looks like “een dansende man”¹²⁶, another like “een vrouw die haar handen vragend naar de hemel uitstak”¹²⁷, and another one resembles “een moeder van veel kinderen”¹²⁸ (Ooft, “Shaantidevi”, 26). Therefore, for the male character, “[d]e weg hoorde bij het spel”¹²⁹ (26). With pleasant anticipation, he walks down the path to their meeting place and indulges every minute of the walk. The trees are his taciturn, but living companions: “silhouetten van de bomen stonden als zwijgende kameraden om je heen. Ze begrepen alles”¹³⁰ (26). In the story, nature is presented as a source of peace and feelings of belonging.

In turn, the taciturnity of the lovers reflects the silence of the trees. However, their silence is not awkward, but a sign of a deeper and meaningful connection – not only between the lovers, but also between the lovers and nature. The shy lovers melt into the nature that surrounds them “een kunstzinnig liefdesspel opvoerend, even kunstzinnig als de natuur om hen heen”¹³¹ (28). Therefore, they also remain silent when threatening figures, “mannen met stokken in hun handen”¹³² (28) show up one night. Apparently, the men share some kind of Creole ethnic background, because they were “zwarter dan de diepste nacht”¹³³ (28). These men seem to represent the Creole ethnocentrism and the prejudice against Hindustani that is advocated by the Creole national discourse. However, Nel and Shaantidevi remain silent. Nel only holds Shaantidevi tight. This “stilte

collection of literary texts about migration (van Kempen 2002 IV, 454f). His short story ‘Shantidevi. An Idyll’ ([my translation] Ooft, “Shaantidevi”, 26) was published in *Moetete II*. He died in Almere in 1989.

126 ‘a dancing man’ ([my translation] Ooft, “Shaantidevi”, 26).

127 ‘a woman raising her hands into the sky inquiringly’ (26).

128 ‘a mother of many children’ (26).

129 ‘the way was part of the game’ (26).

130 ‘the silhouettes of the trees stood around him like comrades. They understood everything’ (26).

131 ‘staging an artful love-play, as artful as the nature that surrounded them’ (28).

132 ‘men with clubs in their hands’ (28).

133 ‘blackier than the deepest night’ (28).

hield sekondenlang aan”¹³⁴ (28), but again their silence is interpreted as a sign of a deeper connection that binds them. The silence of the trees confirms the lover’s legitimacy, and the men also realise that they cannot fight against their love. When their silence finally reaches “een hoogtepunt [...] verloren de mannen eensklaps hun dreigende houding. De opgeheven stokken gingen omlaag”¹³⁵ (28). The men leave without harming the lovers. The end of the story is rather positive. The trees silently continue “begrijpend neer te kijken op deze twee mensenkinderen, die daar hand in hand langs de weg liepen, zo vredig en zo gelukkig”¹³⁶ (28).

Ooft’s story suggests a different possibility for a new Surinamese community. In his story, the bond between Creoles and Hindustani is legitimised by the Surinamese nature that surrounds them. Their connection prevails, because they both are not only deeply connected to each other, but also because they are both deeply connected to nature. Ooft seems to convey that only together, Hindustani and Creoles can lay (nationalist) claims on Surinamese soil. The benevolence of the trees, and the peacefulness of the lovers’ relationship are reflected in the atmosphere of peace that is engendered in the story. Already the title suggests that the lovers’ relationship is “een idylle”¹³⁷ (26). Furthermore, the girl’s name, Shaantidevi, means ‘goddess of peace’ in Sanskrit. In the end, the lovers walk away ‘hand in hand’, ‘so peacefully and happy’ (28). The story seems to suggest that if Creoles and Hindustani learn to ‘love’ each other, there is a possibility for a new peaceful social community. Importantly, the story seems to suggest that the Creoles need to take a step towards the Hindustani, because Nel speaks Sarnami with Shaantidevi. In comparison to the other stories, Ooft’s story seems to convey that not only Hindustani should support Creoles in their political goals, but that Creoles should respect the cultural influences of Hindustani as well. Furthermore, the story seems to suggest that this potential community is legitimised by its connection to Surinamese nature, because both groups, the Hindustani and the Creoles, have a deep connection to the land. According to the

134 ‘their silence took several seconds’ (28).

135 ‘a climax, the men suddenly lose their menacing posture. They lower their clubs’ (8).

136 ‘to look down knowledgeably at these two human children who walk away hand in hand so peacefully and happy’ (28).

137 ‘an idyll’ (26).

story, the ‘son of the soil logic’ applies to both groups, because both share their love for Suriname’s nature. Hence, Ooft advocates a national community whose sense of belonging is rooted in a shared love for one’s country, and whose positive self-regard is built upon mutual appreciation. Similar to Shrinivāsi’s depiction of the rural community in “Kila”, Ooft’s story promotes an attitude of mutual respect that is based on a common love and rootedness in Suriname’s nature. Although the text also presumes a link between belongingness, identity, and territory, the nativist logic that connects territory and identity is not used to deprecate one group in favour of the other. The love and rootedness to Suriname’s nature becomes the element that binds Hindustani and Creoles together. Hence, similar to Shrinivāsi, Ooft creates an alternative to the ethnocentric nationalist identity that is presented in most of the texts above. In fact, “Shaantidevi” depicts “een Idylle”, an auspicious future full of peace and positive regards that can possibly be reached if Hindustani and Creoles collaborate and concentrate on what ties them together, i.e. their love for Suriname. In Ooft’s text, identity is not built on the basis of mutual exclusiveness, but with a focus on similarities and commonness. The positive regard for self and other is based on the shared love for one’s country. Simultaneously, this love is rewarded by the legitimising function of nature that relates to the nativist logic of identity. Therefore the story suggests that nationalist identity is not necessarily built upon dichotomous relations, but is potentially embracing and inclusive.

Maybe, however, Ooft’s story is slightly too optimistic. Although its teleological optimism should be acknowledged positively, the story offers a rather naïve resolution of the tensions between Hindustani and Creoles. However, the Hindustani-Creole dichotomy might not be as easily resolved as Ooft’s story suggests. In this regard, Corly Verlooghen’s poem “Dit wankel huis” offers a benevolent warning for both Hindustani and Creoles:¹³⁸

138 Corly Verlooghen was born as Rudi Ronald Bedacht on September 14, 1932 in Paramaribo to family with various ethnic origins. Before he moved to the Netherlands to study journalism in 1954, he worked as a teacher in Suriname. In 1962, he returned to the Netherlands, but migrated to Sweden to study music in 1966. In 1979, he returned to Suriname, where he worked as lecturer for music at university level. In 1990, he returned to Amsterdam where he continued his work as a music teacher. (van Kempen 2002 IV, 404f). He published his first collection of poems in 1959, and he was involved as a publisher in Soela. His poem “Dit Wankel Huis”(‘This Fragile House’) was published in *Moetete I* in 1968.

| | | |
|--|----|---|
| Hindoestanen en Creolen hebben het gezegd de laatsten het bevolen er is een avontuur te vondeling gelegd. | | Hindustani and Creoles they said they commanded the last they assigned a foundling, an adventure. |
| en wij staan onbehulpzaam toe te zien hoe het bederf invreet in de huid van 't jonge kind | 5 | And we stay helpless and watch how corruption ate its way into the young child's skin |
| God had ik maar de macht een lied te zingen waarnaar men luistert in dit wankel huis dat zo gebarsten is en dreigt omver te vallen in een onverhoedse nacht. | 10 | God, if I had the power to sing a song that men would listen to in this fragile house that is so divided and that is on the verge of falling into a sudden night. |
| (Verlooghen, "Dit Wankel Huis", 51) | | ([my translation] Verlooghen, 'This Fragile House', 51) |

In relation to form, Verlooghen's poem incorporates some aspects that can be related to conventional European poetic traditions. For example, the first stanza still follows a crossed rhyme scheme (a-b-a-b) with alternating feminine and masculine rhymes. The metre is mostly iambic, with three feet in line one, two, and three, and with six feet in the fourth line. After the first stanza, however, the rhymes stop; and also the iambic feet become less regular. In the second strophe, none of the endings rhyme; but in the last one, the first and the last line rhyme (macht – nacht, ll. 8, 12). The poetic form of the poem can be related to its content.

Verlooghen's poem is a social criticism, but it is also a call for action. However, this time, the poem addresses Hindustani and Creoles alike. 'This fragile house' (Verlooghen, "Huis", l. 10) seems to refer to the new nationalist awareness that was built up with the RTCs in Suriname, but which had slightly been ebbing away due to the internal tensions in Suriname. With this second nationalist surge at the end of the 1960s, a new chance for political and cultural independence has come, but this chance can only be taken when Hindustani and Creoles enter this 'adventure' (l. 4) of independence together.

This message is reflected by the form of the poem. The smoothness of the rhymes and metre of the first stanza suggest harmony and coherence. Thus, supported by its form, the first stanza suggests that a harmonious political unity is possible. The second strophe's lack of rhyme and uneven metre seems to reflect

the discords between the Hindustani and the Creoles. In the last stanza, however, new hope is suggested. The poem warns that independence can only be achieved if internal ‘corruption’ (l. 6) is fought. However, it also suggests that with internal unity, ‘this fragile house’ (l. 10) can be turned into a fully independent nation. This is reflected by the rhyme between the first and last line – and through this re-emerging formal harmony, hope and the possibility for a new and common nationalism is expressed.

5.3 *Interim Summary*

Although there are significantly less texts that portray a positive image of Hindustani, they do exist. Shrinivāsi and Ooft offer a portrayal of Hindustani culture that is psychologically beneficial. In Shrinivāsi’s “Kila”, the main character feels deeply related to Suriname and the Indo-Surinamese culture. In addition, a sense of autonomy and positive self-regard for Hindustani is created by the positive depiction of Hindustani culture. Furthermore, the notion of identity that is presented in “Kila” is in line with creole concepts of identity that seek to include alterity and tolerance. Hence, the Hindustani notion of identity in “Kila” seems more ‘creole’ than Creole identity.

In Ooft’s story, the relatedness and belongingness is independent of the characters’ ethnic origin, but mainly derives from their respect for and harmony with Surinamese nature. Both texts depict Hindustani culture as respectful of Surinamese nature and soil; both Hindustani and Creoles share their love for Suriname; and both texts suggest that Hindustani culture is as deeply rooted in Suriname as Creole culture.

However, Shrinivāsi’s and Ooft’s notion of national identity is slightly different from the national identity that is presented in most texts of Creole writers. Shrinivāsi and Ooft present an alternative account of national identity that is based on a common love for one’s country and that is independent of ethnic relations. They create a sense of community and shared relatedness that is deeply rooted in Suriname’s nature, but that is not dependent on lineage and ethnicity. What keeps this community together is their authentic love for their country (and potential nation), not their innate or inalienable identity that is based on an overlap of

ethnicity, territory, and personal identity. The identity that is described can indeed be associated with Khan's definition of creoleness – and the Surinamese identity that Shrinivāsi and Ooft describe in their texts could indeed be defined as integrative. Its potential derives from its teleological optimism, the promise for a better future in which all social groups in Suriname can live together with mutual respect, but without losing their specificities. For example, in Shrinivāsi's story, all cultural influence mingle and separate again in a happy cultural festivity.

Yet, this alternative notion of identity mainly remains 'good to think'; something that one should strive for rather than a depiction of the status quo. Although, in Ooft's story, the Creoles take a first step towards the Hindustani and both groups are called upon for collaboration, the discrepancies are swept away far too easily. Although Shrinivāsi and Ooft present an alternative identity that could possibly integrate both or all ethnic groups, they do not really tackle the issues between Hindustani and Creoles.

Verlooghen's poem is more critical. It addresses the fragility of benevolent thoughts. After all, the ambitious goal of a unified national identity still needs to be achieved. Therefore, in Verlooghen's poem the appeal for collaboration becomes more of a warning. Only if both groups collaborate and respect each other's equal but different cultural rootedness in Suriname, some sense of national identity (that everyone would like to identify with) could be created.

Overall, the *Moetete* authors considered it as their duty as artists to contribute to the creation of a new autonomous Surinamese literary culture. Influenced by the political climate of the 1960s and 1970s, they saw their work as part of the political struggle for independence. Hence, in the spirit of the time, many of their texts can be related to a conspicuously nationalist agenda. Within their texts, they do not only write back against the alienating influences of the Dutch colonisers, they also seek to express a specific Surinamese identity in their texts. Adopting a nativist, sometimes even primordial perspective on identity, they create a firm link between identity, ethnicity, national territory and history. In this respect, they also create a specific link between Creoles and national culture. Many of their texts express some kind of birthright to the land that their ancestors have toiled upon as slaves. In defiance of the former colonial depictions of

colonised people as sub-humans that did not have or deserve an identity, the *Moetete* authors presented an affirmative, psychologically beneficial Surinamese identity in their texts. However, their identity is always crucially dependent on a constitutive outside. An affirmative identity for one group can have negative consequences for other groups that presented as its others. The psychological perspectives of Kelly's (1955) cognitive theory of personal constructs, the concept of in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999), as well as in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Tajfel and Turner 1986; 2010) confirm the pervasiveness of these cognitive principles. Correspondingly, the identity that was presented by the *Moetete* authors failed to fully embrace all other non-Creole social and psychic realities. A particularly depreciative attitude was adopted towards the Hindustani. Through in-group projection, Creole culture was presented as prototypical for Surinamese culture as a whole. Hence, although the Hindustani constituted the majority in the population, they did not play a major role in the discourse of national identity that was biased towards Creole culture and identity. The relation between Hindustani and Creoles was often even perceived and presented as a binary opposition. The long-lasting consequences of this depicted relation becomes obvious in Frank Martinus Arion's text which blames Caribbean people of Asian and Indian descent for blocking the road towards Caribbeanness and societal progress.

However, after all, national identity remains a fiction, a narration that is contingent on the imperfection of human cognition and the ambiguities of meanings. Although national identity had positive psychological consequences for those who were able to identify with it, the identity in question did not become more or less real because of that. The birthright to land and culture, as well as the link between Creole identity, Creole ethnicity, Surinamese territory and history remained an elaborate construct whose inalienability was created by the coherence of a narrative structure rather than by blood. The integrity and inalienability of Creole identity was only an illusion, a narrative achievement, and as such, it was prone to corruption and inconsistencies. The next section will be concerned with the factors that challenge the integrity of positive notions of Creole identity, and the anxieties that result from this threat.

6. *Challenges to National Identity*

As has been shown in the previous sections, the *Moetete* group advocated a particularly primordialist, nativist notion of nationalism in their texts. Identifying with this kind of identity can be related to positive psychological consequences, because it serves self-enhancement motives and the fulfilment of basic psychological needs. However, the way identity was constructed had negative consequences for the Hindustani in the population who served as the out-group against which a positive Creole identity was constructed. The persistence of the notions that were shaped during the 1960s and 1970s, not only in the texts of the *Moetete* group, was exemplified by Marinus Arion's text which claimed that the Asian population in the Caribbean blocks the road to Caribbeanness, i.e. social amelioration.

Nevertheless, identity remains a fiction, a narration. As such, it can be inconsistent, and it is in a constant process of being slightly revised and reinterpreted. McAdams's and Schachter's depiction of identity as an 'anthology of the self' (McAdams 2001, 117) even suggests that identity is less stable than it was first suggested by the idea of identity as an over-arching master narration (McAdams 2001, Schachter 2011). Correspondingly, as a cognitive construct, identity contains inconsistencies and ambiguities.

In the following part, I will not focus on the predominantly nationalist approach to identity that most of the authors put forward in their texts, but I try to identify stories that reveal the inconsistencies and ambiguities of identity. The focus lies on two factors – one external, one internal – that potentially challenge the inalienability of national identity: migration and hybridity. In relation to *migration*, I will also discuss the texts in terms of cosmopolitanism, the Black Atlantic, and diaspora. In relation to hybridity, Bhabha's concept will of course be addressed, but I will focus more on the psychological consequences of hybridity rather than on the concept's subversive potential. In addition to the role of identity in fulfilling psychological needs, the following part will elaborate on the function of identity in relation to (self-)knowledge and (self-)understanding. Furthermore, I will focus on how identity provides meaning, and thereby, reduces anxiety and ambiguity.

6.1 *Migration*

After the Second World War, there was a conspicuous surge of middle class Creoles that immigrated to the ‘mother country’, i.e. the Netherlands (Amersfoort 2011, 7). The writers of that time were no exception. Notwithstanding the nationalist ideologies that they promoted, some of the writers did not only travel back and forth between Suriname, the Caribbean, and the Netherlands, but finally settled in a country other than Suriname (van Kempen 2002 IV, 327). Accordingly, their nativist notions of national identity were somewhat at odds with the lifestyle that many of these authors led. Their nationalist ideologies were undermined by the fact that many of these authors emigrated – either for a certain period of time, or for good. Furthermore, the ambiguous relationships of belonging that migration entailed also challenged these writers’ self-understanding. These discrepancies between ideology and reality are reflected by the diverging notions on who qualified as a Surinamese writer.

6.2 *Who Qualifies as a Surinamese Writer?*

The Surinamese *nederlandicus* Robby Parabirsing defines Surinamese writers as ‘born, raised, and currently living in Suriname; born and raised by parents that had also been born and raised in Suriname’ ([my translation] Parabirsing 1983, 55; also cited in van Kempen 2002 I, 79). Considering that most of the writers involved in the national discourse in the 1960s and 1970s emigrated or travelled back and forth between Suriname and the Netherlands, many of them would not count as Surinamese writers with that definition in mind. Hence, migration presented a challenge to Surinamese writers’ self-understanding. Arguing from a nativist perspective, only those who currently lived and stayed in Suriname over at least one generation would count as Surinamese writers – and for some this was not the case.

Realising this issue, the *Moetete* group formed a distinct attitude towards writers and artists who did not come back after their education in the Netherlands. In *Moetete* II, Benny Ooft reminded his fellow writers in the Netherlands that the group “op de eerste plaats in Suriname en voor Suriname werken en dat al die Surinamers die daar in Holland [...] zitten [...] liever maar zo gauw mogelijk

terug moeten komen om mee te doen”¹³⁹ (Ooft 1968c, 46). Ooft’s statement indicates a certain ignorance towards the importance of their transnational involvements. Despite their unambiguously nativist ideologies, they hardly managed to live up to their ideals. Their nationalist attitude seemed to be somewhat at odds with their strong affiliations to the Netherlands. One of the most salient figures in the group, Thea Doelwijt, was not even born in Suriname, but first came to live there after her journalistic training in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, she became one of the most prominent figures in the nationalist discourse in Suriname in the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, the agents of the national discourse did not necessarily adhere to the nativist standards that they promoted. However, they still seemed to believe in (or wish for) a natural and inalienable bond to Suriname. However, as I have argued previously, the inalienability or naturalness of this bond only existed on a narrative level.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, understanding oneself and others in essentialist terms, fulfilled several psychological functions and secured the writers’ sense of belonging and self-esteem (see also Kelly 1955, 486-534). These psychological benefits might also be able to explain why so many writers got involved in the nationalist discourse, despite the fact that they were not living in Suriname anymore. Reflecting this psychological aspect, John Leefmans and Astrid Roemer, for example, define a critical characteristic for a Surinamese writer as the “zekere affiniteit van de schrijver tot het land”¹⁴¹ (van Kempen 2002 I, 80). Hence, their definition of a Surinamese writer depends more on a psychological rather than a nativist kind of belonging.

The psychological benefits of identifying oneself with the nationalist discourse are reflected by the fact that writers mainly used their nativist ideology in their favour. Most of the *Moetete* group belonged to the Creole elite or identified with Creole ideas of nationality. Hence, their notion of the (Creole) native writer as the true representative of Surinamese culture and people was a rather distorted representation of their actual status in society. Considering that the

139 ‘first and foremost works in Suriname and for Suriname, and that all these Surinamese writers that are still in Holland should better come back as soon as possible’ ([my translation] Ooft 1968c, 46).

140 See e.g. pages 165ff.

141 ‘a deep affinity of the writer towards Suriname’ ([my translation] van Kempen 2002 I, 80).

Creoles did not even constitute the majority of Surinamese people, it seemed quite strange that they saw themselves as the representatives of Surinamese culture *per se*. However, they might have felt a certain inkling of the discrepancy between their nativist ideology and their actual role in the nationalist discourse. Retrospectively, Hugo Pos admits:

Mijn optimistisch geloof in een nieuwe, saamhorige maatschappij waar ik van harte aan mee wilde werken had het te kwaad met een heimelijk onuitgesproken achterdocht waar ik niet aan toe wilde geven. Het besef dat achter al onze fraaie woorden en idealen een niet te verbloemen onbehagen bleef smeulen, juist omdat ze verlangens opriepen die niet een twee drie bevredigd en verwerkelijkt konden worden. Terwijl het nog maar de vraag was of al die mooie ideeën wel aansloten bij de gevoelens van de mensen voor wie ze in eerste en laatste instantie bedoeld waren¹⁴² (Hugo Pos 1995, 148-149; also cited in van Kempen 2002 IV, 568).

Basically, Hugo Pos expresses doubts about the ideological underpinnings of their nationalist cause. Although, their intentions seemed to be honest and good, Pos identifies inconsistencies between their intentions and the realisation of their cause. Despite the fact that they wanted to express the feelings of ‘the people’, Pos had serious doubts if their words and ideas had anything to do with what the people of Suriname actually wanted – and many Surinamese chose to leave and find a better life in the Netherlands. Therefore, it also needs to be questioned if this Surinamese identity that is presented in the *Moetete* group’s texts reflects anything else but the *Moetete* authors’ own political agenda which was infused with their desires for a stable identity and positive self-regard. In fact, their preoccupation with expressing a positive national identity in their texts could indeed be read as an indication of their need to belong and to find purpose in their existence (see also Guibernau 2004, 135-6).

As pointed out before, nativist notions of identity should be understood as modes of cognitive essentialism, rather than the genuine expression of a real

142 ‘my optimistic belief in a new, united society, a cause to which I dedicated myself with all my heart, grappled with a secret, unuttered suspicion to which I did not dare to admit. I knew that plain discomfort was smouldering beneath all our beautiful words and ideals, because they elicited desires that could not be easily satisfied and realised. Moreover, the question remained if all our nice ideas could indeed be connected with the feelings and notions of those people for whom they were meant in the first place’ ([my translation] Hugo Pos 1995, 148-149; cited in van Kempen 2002 IV, 568).

connection between land, history, and identity. Due to its constructedness, the nativist notion of identity can be quite fragile and easily challenged. Since this nativist logic also secured the link between Surinamese identity, a sense of relatedness, and positive self-esteem the fragility of the constructed nativist identities also affected the psychological benefits that depended on them. Specifically in the context of migration, some of their texts do not portray a stable and secure identity, but they are stories of the challenges of migration, the hardship and anxiety that the experience potentially produces.

6.3 *Migration, Cosmopolitanism, and Diaspora*

Notwithstanding the nativist ideology that was advocated by most of the *Moetete* authors, their texts also portray typical issues associated with migration, such as the issue of having to find a new home, learning the language, adapting to the culture, facing discrimination, etc. Generally, their migrational stories have quite a sombre undertone. The following section will deal mainly with the issue of which analytical perspective to adopt in relation to these stories. Little of the teleological optimism that is ascribed to the postcolonial concepts of creoleness, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora is reflected in the *Moetete* authors' texts about migration. After all, there seems to be a fundamental difference between experiencing migration and being cosmopolitan. In the following section, I will try to elaborate on the specific problems and recurring themes that are conveyed by the *Moetete* group's texts on migration, and how these can be analysed appropriately.

6.3.1 *The Difference Between Being Cosmopolitan and Being a Migrant – Thea Doelwijt's "Hoppen in de Caribbean" (1971)*

Most of the writers involved in the national discourse in Suriname shared a certain uprooted lifestyle. Many of them travelled back and forth between Suriname, the Caribbean, and the Netherlands (van Kempen 2002 IV, 327; Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 164, 195). Hence, some of these writers followed a rather cosmopolitan lifestyle in which national borders could be crossed effortlessly. This cosmopolitan attitude is expressed in "Hoppen in the Caribbean – Martinique:

Met de Franse Slag”,¹⁴³ one of Thea Doelwijt’s contributions to her collection *Kri, Kra!* Presented as some kind of snapshot, or diary entry of a jet-setting intellectual’s short visit to Martinique, the text conveys a distinct notion of intellectual cosmopolitanism.

The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). Arriving in Martinique, the narrator immediately feels “direct in Frankrijk”¹⁴⁴ (Doelwijt, “Hoppen”, 176). Furthermore, the narrator “hardnekkig”¹⁴⁵ calls Mont-Pelée ‘Vesuvius’, since she feels “zo lekker ‘uit’ en op wereldreis”¹⁴⁶ (177) and the view to a small plaza from her hotel window “laat [haar] afwisselend naar Suriname, Parijs en Martinique reizen”¹⁴⁷ (176). Instead of feeling uncomfortable or anxious because of the unknown environment, the narrator seems to feel quite at home, and from the hotel window she can look at “[haar]’ pleijn”¹⁴⁸ (177). The text conveys a picture of an intellectual who is well-travelled and who feels ‘at home in the world’. In the end, she is “al weer in de lucht [...] op weg naar Puerto Rico, getting Spanish!”¹⁴⁹ (179). The spatial and mental transition from Suriname over France / Martinique / Italy to Puerto Rico appears to be an easy one. In this text, Suriname provides a sense of entrenchment which offers the Surinamese intellectual a security in relation to their identity. Suriname offers a basis for ‘likeness’ – the “calalou soep [verschilt weinig] van okersoep”¹⁵⁰ (178), a traditional Surinamese dish – which conveys a feeling of belonging and homeliness even when one is *not at home*.

This intellectual, cosmopolitan attitude towards travelling and changing place can be connected with Julia Kristeva’s view on nationalism. Kristeva would like to see herself as “a cosmopolitan” who opposes “national fundamentalism” without “denying national determinations” (Kristeva 1993, 15). Kristeva connects

143 ‘Jet-setting in the Caribbean – Martinique: With an Air of France’ ([my translation] Doelwijt, “Hoppen”, 176). Doelwijt’s essay “Hoppen in de Caribbean” was first published in *De Surinamer* in 1971 and was included in her collection of Surinamese literature *Kri, Kra!* (1972).

144 ‘immediately like in France’ (176).

145 ‘tenaciously’ (177).

146 ‘so nicely out and about on a world tour’ (177).

147 ‘gives her alternate impressions of Suriname, Paris, and Martinique’ (176).

148 ‘her plaza’ (177).

149 ‘already up in the air again, [...] on her way to Puerto Rico, getting Spanish!’ (179).

150 ‘there is little difference between [the Martiniquean] calalou soup and our [Surinamese] okersoup’ (178).

cosmopolitanism with the *contractual* quality of (French) nationalism and her idea of the nation as a *transitional object* that offers psychological security (Kristeva 1993, 40f). In Doelwijt's text, it is the particular 'likeness' to her own country which provides the security needed to be able to enjoy the visit. Significantly, it does not really matter which country actually is visited – the Caribbean, France, Italy or Martinique – as long as the sense of relatedness to her own nation remains.

Furthermore, although Doelwijt's text seems to be an example for belonging to a nation while also being cosmopolitan, her text is an account of travelling, not of migration or being forcefully dislocated. The kind of cosmopolitanism that is depicted in the text does not result in the creation of a new identity (in the face of alienation and displacement), but in an *enrichment* of one's old identity (without discarding it all-together). Eventually, "Hoppen in de Caribbean" is incomparable with stories of more profound displacement (such as migration or eviction), as the cosmopolitan attitudes of the jet-setting intellectual should be considered quite distinct from the experience of forceful dislocation or migration. Visiting different countries as a journalist cannot be compared with relocating a whole life. The experience of displacement potentially entails a deep distortion of one's sense of belonging and relatedness. Therefore, being cosmopolitan should not be confused with being a migrant, a refugee, or a descendant of slaves or contract workers. As a cosmopolitan, a 'citizen of the world', one might feel at home everywhere, as a migrant or refugee, one might be deprived of one's ability to feel at home at all.

Simon Gikandi even claims that cosmopolitanism is an 'intellectual myth' which cannot be related to the feeling of uprootedness and alienation caused by the experience of displacement (Gikandi 2010, 28). Hence, Gikandi suggests, cosmopolitanism only and specifically applies to intellectual lives and identities. In his opinion, "the tension between roots and routes [...] characterize[s] the lives of postcolonial elites" (Gikandi 2010, 29), rather than the lives of the average migrant, refugee, or descendant of slaves or contract workers. Furthermore, he criticises the hypocrisy inherent to cosmopolitanism. He points out that the cosmopolitan attitudes of valuing someone else's culture while also praising one's own creates a structural identitarian impasse. Since identity is always dependent on a constitutive other, a negative outside, "the cosmopolitan ideal is caught

between the desire to valorize one's culture, home, and social position as essentially good while at the same time trying to perform one's ability to be tolerant of the strange and different" (Gikandi 2010, 29). Accordingly, the generally positive attitude towards cosmopolitanism conceals the essentialist notion inherent to the concept by depicting it as unlimitedly open and tolerant.

In Doelwijt's text, it is the *certainty* and *security* of one's own identity that provides the possibility for a cosmopolitan life-style, i.e. openness and tolerance towards others without having to fear threat to one's identity. In contrast to the travelling cosmopolitan in Doelwijt's texts, a recurring issue within the *Moetete* authors' stories of migration is the alienation and isolation that migration entails. Cosmopolitanism, diaspora, or the Black Atlantic seem to be viable concepts to address the inadequacies of old concepts of identity; their focus on ambiguity and change, however, appears to neglect the quantum of psychological security that is needed for identity and emotional stability. Identity is a fiction, a narration; however, this realisation does not make a person's subjective feelings of self-identity any less real.

Therefore, the following stories will not only be analysed in terms of cosmopolitanism, diaspora, or the Black Atlantic, but these theoretical concepts will be supplemented with psychological perspectives on the topic. Cosmopolitanism, diaspora, and the Black Atlantic might present a good way to think of alternative identities, or contain some kind of teleological optimism that is necessary to create a better future; as analytical tools, however, they might not present an adequate theoretical framework for the analysis of the *Moetete* group's texts. Considering the psychological repercussions of migration, the following texts will be analysed from a psychological perspective in relation to the three basic psychological needs, motivational theory, and cognitive psychology.

6.3.2 *Hopes and Dreams – Noni Lichtveld’s “Anansi Zakt op Schiphol” (1989)*¹⁵¹

Notwithstanding its often devastating psychological consequences, migration is just as often motivated by the need for change and the hope for the better – many people want to leave their old lives for a better one in another country. Hence, migration is saturated with expectations, hopes, and dreams. In many cases, migration is associated with the hope for a change for the better. Many migrants hope for better living conditions, for a better job, for a fast and seamless integration. They are lured by the endless possibilities that a ‘new life’ seems to offer. These hopes and dreams are also palpable in Noni Lichtveld’s short story “Anansi Zakt op Schiphol”.

Noni Lichtveld’s *Anansi tori* (‘Anansi story’ [my translation]) features one of the most popular characters in Caribbean oral narrative traditions: *Anansi* the trickster spider. Rooting back to West-African traditional folk tales, Anansi is a trickster character, master of cons and hoaxes, and he has become the symbol of Caribbean resilience in the face of colonisation and slavery. Lichtveld’s *Anansi tori* resembles an oral narration. The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f) who addresses the reader, or potential listener, directly: “Jaren geleden toch! Je wist het niet?”¹⁵² (Lichtveld, “Anansi”, 113). The story is about Anansi’s arrival at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam. Along with his “valies en doos en tas en vogelkooi”¹⁵³ (114), he brings his intent to ‘make his fortune’ ([my translation] 113). The story presents all stereotypes of Surinamese migrants and their expectations towards the Netherlands, but in an endearing, positive way. Anansi only wears a light jacket, hardly suitable to protect him of the cold in Holland – and of course Holland is *very* cold (113). Fortunately, just as ‘you and I’ ([my translation] 113), i.e. everyone in Suriname, Anansi already has a family living in the Netherlands. He brings loads of presents, but he did not call in advance; so he calls – not his family, but – his best friend Bawbaw Bunati (113).

151 ‘Anansi arrives at Schiphol’ [my translation]. Noni Lichtveld was born on 3 May 1929 in the Netherlands. She is the daughter of Lou Lichtveld (Albert Helman). She works as an illustrator and writer (van Kempen 2003, 711f). Her *Anansi Tori* “Anansi Zakt op Schiphol” was first published in Michiel van Kempen’s *Verhalen van Surinaamse Schrijvers* (1989).

152 ‘Years ago, isn’t it! You haven’t heard?’ ([my translation] Lichtveld, “Anansi”, 113).

153 ‘trunk and box and bag and birdcage’ (114).

Anansi takes a taxi to his friend's home, but is outraged by the fee: "Gridiman-nanpinaman" (114), 'the poor are misers' (my translation), and comes up with a trick to pay less. The taxi-driver, "eentje van het zogenaamd gemoedelijke Amsterdamse volk"¹⁵⁴ (114), mistakes Anansi's outcry of outrage as "zo'n vreselijke exotische verwensing"¹⁵⁵ (114), and begins to feel suspicious and anxious. In the end, Anansi gets his way, and he does not only trick the taxi driver into a lower price, he also gets his luggage carried up to his friend's door at the ninth floor (115f).

The story depicts the hope for a seamless transition from the safety in Suriname to an (already established) network of friends and family in the Netherlands – the wish for faithful friends who can be called in the middle of the night. Bawbaw does not resent Anansi's midnight call, but they exchange "braza's" (115), i.e. hugs, and cry tears of joy (116). The story also denotes the hope for adjustment in the new homeland, and the wish to be able to outsmart the Dutch who are presented as living in fear of anything exotic. Thereby, the story turns around the colonial stereotype of the colonised that is culturally and intellectually inferior – in the story, the colonisers lack understanding and are tricked by the colonised.

Lichtveld's story does not depict the difficulty of having to create new relations, a challenge that many migrants are faced with, but the comfort of already established relationships. In fact, Anansi changes little apart from his location. His sense of self is hardly challenged by migration. He retains the positive sense of relatedness with friends and family – he can even choose whom he wants to call upon his arrival. He also retains his sense of autonomy and competence. He is not only able to easily get from the airport to his friend's house, he is also capable of out-smarting the local taxi driver. Hence, in Lichtveld's depiction of migration nothing actually changes apart from the place – the sense of relatedness, autonomy, and competence remains the same for Anansi.

Lichtveld's "Anansi Zakt op Schiphol" cannot easily be analysed with concepts such as hybridity and diaspora, because the story focuses more on the desire that *nothing will change*, rather than any adaption to changes. Therefore, it

154 'a specimen of the so-called laid-back (*gezellig*) people of Amsterdam' (113).

155 'one of these dreadful exotic imprecations' (114).

should rather be interpreted as an account of the fear of change and the desire for an easy adaptation to the new country. Hence, the story might tell more about the psychological self-enhancement motive as well as the need to maintain a positive self-esteem and an unambiguous sense of self than about an actual experience of migration.

6.3.3 *Broken Dreams – Edgar Cairo’s “‘Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!’” (1980)*¹⁵⁶

Unfortunately, life does not always fulfil wishes – hopes concerning migration are not an exception. Edgar Cairo’s short story “‘Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!’” portrays how easily hopes and dreams can be frustrated in the context of migration. The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator, but with a strong focalisation on Fine, the main character (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). Furthermore, the story resembles an oral narration. The story is written in a Surinamese version of Dutch. Specific Surinamese expressions, like “*bakra*”, i.e. white person, “*Mi goedoe*”, i.e. ‘my god’ (Cairo, “Hierzo”, 168), give the reader the unambiguous impression that narrator and main character are both Surinamese.

Cairo’s text is a story about the migration and the Dutch housing market – but also about racism and self-esteem. Although the main character, the newly migrated Fine, can also count on her sister’s and her brother-in-law’s help, she and her three children cannot live with them or other friends for ever (168). Fine does everything to find a suitable apartment for her and her children (170). However, not only the weather is cold; the whole atmosphere in the Netherlands seems cold and hostile, “als of je in een ijskast bent komen wonen”¹⁵⁷ (169). Every day she goes to the centre for public housing with her crying children; she calls at every apartment that is advertised for rent, but she never gets an apartment – she only receives insults from the landlords: “Rot op zwartje” and “Ik moet geen

156 ‘T’is Here Where I Lived!’ ([my translation] Cairo, “Hierzo”, 168). Edgar Cairo was born on 7 May 1948 in Paramaribo to a Creole family. He moved to the Netherlands in 1968 to study Literature. He started his literary career with *Temekoe*, a collection of short stories written in Sranantongo (van Kempen 2003, 1018f, 1085f). His short story “Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!” was first published in *Amsterdam: Zestig liefdesverklaringen zwart op wit* (1980). Cairo died in Amsterdam in 2000.

157 ‘as if you came to live in a refrigerator’ ([my translation] Cairo, “Hierzo”, 169).

ongedierte in m'n huis"¹⁵⁸ (171). Despite these disappointments, Fine tries not to concern herself with these insults. She does not have time to think about colonial history and the fact that it is the Dutch's own fault that now so many Surinamese people come to live in Holland (169). She tries to tell herself that she is adorable, and that she can tend to the psychological damage later (170). However, when she finally finds an apartment, she becomes a victim of fraud. The suspiciously friendly landlord turns out to be an imposter (171). He pockets the money that she paid while she is evicted by the police who act on behalf of the real landlord (172). The impostor, however, is not prosecuted for his fraud, and Fine never gets a penny back (172). Although, in the end, Fine finds a place to live, the story keeps its sombre undertone, and the Netherlands seem to remain a hostile place.

In Cairo's account of Fine's arrival in the Netherlands, nothing that was hoped for in Lichtveld's *Anansi tori* is fulfilled. Fine is ripped off, her family and friends are as helpless as she is, and all of them are at the mercy of the ruthless Dutch authorities. Furthermore, Fine's positive self-regard and self-esteem are trampled on by the continuous insults and degradations. Hence, all the sense of relatedness, autonomy, and competence that was depicted in Lichtveld's story turns out to be a delusion in Cairo's story. Fine benefits little from her relatedness to her sister. Her sense of competence is challenged when she realises that she became a victim of fraud. Furthermore, her sense of autonomy is frustrated by the powerlessness she experiences in the face of the ruthlessness of the Dutch authorities. Her sense of self-esteem and emotional security are challenged by the manifold but undeserved insults she receives – and which remain the only thing that she gets from most of the landlords she asks for housing. Hence, in contrast to all the hopes and dreams that migration was supposed to fulfil, migration becomes an entirely unsettling and alienating experience that has many negative psychological consequences for the migrant.

Some of the postcolonial concepts that could be used for the analysis of Cairo's story seem limited, because they fail to address the psychological hardships in detail. Although diaspora as a concept seeks to address the circumstances and alienating experiences of migrants, it has too little emphasis on

158 'Go and rot, blacky' and 'I don't want filthy vermin in my house' (171).

the migrant's desire to reverse these experiences and to find a new home. However, supplementing the concept of diaspora with psychological perspectives that focus on what migration actually does to the self offers powerful analytical tools that can address both the circumstances and as well as the psychological consequences of migration.

6.3.4 *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay – Migration and Gender in Rodney Russel's "Uit het Voorgeborchte" (1970)*¹⁵⁹

Before the negative psychological consequences for the migrants will be discussed in more detail, another aspect of migration needs to be considered. Migration does not only involve those who leave, it also affects those who stay. This aspect of migration is also linked to another important aspect of migration: gender. Although in Cairo's story, the migrant is a woman, in many cases, migrants were male. Hence, migration did not only result in an immense number of frustrated (male) migrants. Migration also entailed a myriad of children, wives, and relatives that were unhappily left behind. This tension between those who are left to stay and those who take their opportunity to leave is portrayed in Rodney Russel's "Uit het Voorgeborchte". The story depicts "één uit het legioen van vaderloze gezinnen"¹⁶⁰ (Russel, "Voorgeborchte", 173), i.e. the average Surinamese family: many children, no (or a rarely visiting) father. The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f) who ponders his childhood and youth. When the narrator is still a child, his own infamous father immigrates to the Netherlands and disappears from the family's life for good (Russel, "Voorgeborchte", 175). Raised by an embittered mother, the main character soon follows the footsteps of his father. Hardly pursuing an education, he spends his days as a "*meidman*" (178), i.e. a womaniser (my translation). Within years, he gloats himself with having started a considerable amount of families of his own (178). Of course, he only fulfils an initial function, he never

159 'From Limbo' ([my translation] Russel, "Voorgeborchte", 173). Rodney Russel was born on 3 May, 1946 in Paramaribo to a Creole family. His first short story was published in 1969 in *Suriname*. Other pieces of his literary work was published in (among others) *Suriname, De Vrij Stem, De Gids* (van Kempen 2002 IV, 481f). His short story "Uit het Voorgeborchte" was first published in *De Gids* in 1970.

160 'one of a whole army of father-less families' (173).

commits himself or stays to participate in family life (178). His ulterior objective – something he shares with all his friends – is to immigrate to the Netherlands. In the end, he does, leaving his mother and his smaller brothers and sisters behind (179f).

The story conveys that migration does not only pose challenges for migrants, but also for those who are left behind. In addition to the feeling of loss entailed by the distance to their relatives, those who stay suddenly have to grapple with many issues all by themselves. Although the migrants face new and other problems, they also leave problems behind, or create problems with their departures. Furthermore, this issue is imbalanced in terms of gender. Many that stay are women who cannot leave due to the obligations to their children. In addition, many women are suddenly faced with the task to raise and provide for a complete family all by themselves. The main character's mother is depicted as wearied by having to bring up her children all by herself. The climate within the family is rather tense, or even hostile. She considers her children to be “haar straf, een strop rond haar nek, levende herinneringen aan even zovele domheden, incarnaties in miniatuur van”¹⁶¹ (174) the children's father. She lets her children feel her embitterment and frustration entailed by the fathers' absence. Hence, migration also creates negative psychological consequence for the wives and children who are left by the migrant.

The currently popular concepts of the Black Atlantic, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism tend to neglect or even conceal this aspect. With their focus on movement and everything ‘trans’, such concepts are in danger to eclipse the social and psychic realities of those who cannot or do not want to move due to financial reasons, or due to their responsibilities at home. For example, the tropes of the ‘ship’ and the ‘sailor’ with which the Black Atlantic is advocated and which associate it with seafaring (which is predominantly a male endeavour) create a focus set on movement and uprootedness – and on *male* subjectivity. Therefore, the unconditional praise of the Black Atlantic, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism as ‘non-normative’ starting points for alternative identities should be approached with caution – particularly in relation to class and gender. Hence, the

161 ‘her punishment, a millstone around her neck, living reminders of just as many foolish transgressions, little incarnations of’ (174).

psychological consequences of migration (for migrants as well as for the people that migrants leave behind) seem to be more adequately represented from a psychological perspective. Psychological theories provide a theoretical framework that encompasses both, the feeling of alienation and isolation of migrants, as well as the loss, inadequacy, and frustration that is experienced by those who cannot or do not want to leave. From a psychological perspective, the frustration and embitterment of the main character's mother is an aspect of migration that is equally important as the frustrated hopes and dreams of the lovers, husbands, and sons who leave. However, in postcolonial studies, the psychic reality of those who stay is often eclipsed by the discourse of those who leave.

6.4 *Interim summary*

Neither migration, nor travelling back and forth between different countries seems to have made these authors adopt a specific attitude that could be associated positively with the concepts of cosmopolitanism or diaspora. In contrast to the cosmopolitan sense of being at home in the cosmos, i.e. everywhere, migration is portrayed as entailing a debilitating sense of not-being-at-home. Their texts do not portray a sense of new "obligations to others [...] that stretch beyond [...] the ties of kith and kin" (Appiah 2006, xv). In fact, in their texts, only the ties of kith and kin are those that seem to persist – if any ties persist at all. In their texts, the *Moetete* authors mostly depict migration as a deeply unsettling and alienating experience that causes hardly anything else but trouble and loneliness.

Therefore, well-known theoretical concepts of postcolonial theory, such as cosmopolitanism, diaspora, and the Black Atlantic, are not fully adequate for the analysis of these texts. Psychological concepts such as the self-enhancement motive, the need to maintain a positive sense of self (Sedikides 1997), and the fundamental psychological needs of relatedness and belonging (Ryan and Desi 2002) offer a crucial theoretical perspective for the analysis of the issues presented in these texts. Migration is not depicted in terms of a positive and liberating experience, but migration seems to entail debilitating consequences for the migrant. Deprived of their sense of relatedness and competence, the migrants mainly experience loss and alienation. Although cosmopolitanism and diaspora

remain ‘good to think’, they offer a limited perspective as analytical tools for the texts that were presented above, because they do not sufficiently address psychological consequences of migration.

7. *Alternative Identities*

Nevertheless, there are texts which challenge traditional notions of identity and belonging. For these, postcolonial concepts provide suitable analytical perspectives. Notwithstanding the texts’ focus on psychological conditions, there are indeed some texts among those written by the *Moetete* group to which the concepts of the Black Atlantic or cosmopolitanism offer meaningful additional insights. I will offer two examples which will show that identity should not only be interpreted in psychological terms, but has certain aspects to it that can be interpreted with the post-structuralist perspective of postcolonial studies.

7.1 *Desire for the World – Anticipation and Loss in Rudy van Lier “Fragmenten” (1947)*¹⁶²

Rudy van Lier’s short story “Fragmenten” shares much of the teleological optimism that Aisha Khan sees in postcolonial concepts (see Khan 2007, 654). The narrative mode in which the story is presented is autodiegetic, but switches back and forth to a heterodiegetic mode of narration, i.e. the narrator sometimes refers to himself and the main character as ‘he’, and sometimes as ‘I’. These shifts already convey a certain peculiarity of the identity that is depicted. The narrator seems shifting back and forth between inward and outward perspectives. These shifts in narrative mode can also be related to the last sentence of the story: “Zo leef ik in herinnering en voorgevoel”¹⁶³ (Lier, “Fragmenten”, 29). The story expresses the impossibility to get hold of the moment. It also conveys that identity is always created retrospectively; hence, identity is a narration that makes sense of

162 ‘Fragments’ ([my translation] Lier, “Fragmenten”, 27). Rudie van Lier was born on 24 August 1914 in Paramaribo. He studied sociology in Paris and New York. He worked as a lecturer for sociology in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles at the university in Leiden in the Netherlands. As a writer, he mainly published poetry and short stories (van Kempen 2003, 605f). His text “Fragmenten” was first published in his collection of prose *Praehistorie* in 1947. He died in 1987.

163 ‘Hence, I live in-between memory and anticipation’ ([my translation] Lier, “Fragmenten”, 29).

our past (Schachter 2011). In addition, identity is anticipated, i.e. identity is the narrative structure through which we can imagine ourselves in the future. Moreover, the story conveys a 'loss of self' that this notion of identity implies: with the passing of time, each experienced self is lost with the moment. What remains are the remembrance of the past selves and the anticipation of the future selves. This continuous loss and anticipation is a fundamental characteristic of the narrator's life: "Reeds zijn de koffers gepakt en reeds heeft hij afscheid genomen van allen met wie hij was de nacht tevoren"¹⁶⁴ (29). However, the story does not portray this loss as a debilitating one, but each loss denotes a new possibility: he "zag de wereld ondergaan en zie[t] voor [z]ijn ogen een nieuwe wereld komen"¹⁶⁵ (28). For the narrator, each loss is also saturated with anticipation. The narrator expresses a "verlangen naar de wereld"¹⁶⁶ (28), and hence, each loss is also a gain. Furthermore, the narrator does not feel alienated. In fact, there is something "vervreemd"¹⁶⁷ (29) inside of himself that kindles his desire for even more 'world'. Moreover, he does not feel lonely or isolated, because "[z]ijn liefde zal hem blijven leven en zij zal hem altijd terugvoeren"¹⁶⁸ (29). Hence, the story conveys there is a fundamental strangeness that evokes desires for the strange and new inside the narrator. Furthermore, life is depicted as a journey, a continuous travel from world to world during which one's internal love for what one has lost is not a negative experience, but this love provides a basis for contentedness.

The notion of identity that is portrayed in van Lier's text can be related to the theoretical perspectives on identity proposed by hybridity, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism. The fundamental inner strangeness of the main character, his desire for 'world' can be related to the notion that identity is a process of constant change. His notion of identity reflects fundamental ambiguity and ephemeral nature of identity that is suggested by Bhabha's notion of hybridity (Bhabha 1994). Furthermore, Lier's depiction of identity resembles Clifford's notion of a "traveling or hybridizing" postcolonial discourse (Clifford 1994, 306). The

164 'the bags are already packed, and he already said good bye to the ones with whom he spent the previous night' (29).

165 'saw one world go down, and another one rise before his eyes' (28).

166 'desire for world' (28).

167 'estranged' (29).

168 'his love will stay alive, and it will always lead him back here' (29).

identity described in the story is indeed a travelling and hybridising one, a condition which Clifford considers constitutional in his concept of diaspora. Furthermore, although identity is considered a construct, the story also expresses the need for affiliation and relatedness. Hence, the identity that is depicted can be related to cosmopolitanism and the concept's teleological optimism. Similar to the Derrida's notion of cosmopolitanism, van Lier's depiction of identity strives for "new horizons of possibility" (Derrida [1997] 2005, 7), while still appreciating others and keeping loving memories of those who are left during this identitarian journey. Therefore, van Lier's story seems to have left the restricting notions of nationalism behind in favour of a more transnational, ever-changing notion of identity.

However, van Lier's story is one of the few Surinamese stories that convey such a notion of identity. Furthermore, although the story's depiction of identity could be interpreted as a progression from an anti-colonial to a postcolonial mindset (Shohat 1992), this seems quite unlikely because van Lier's text was written in 1947. Hence, it was not created under the influence of the nationalist discourse of the 1960s and 1970s. This instance also questions the concept of a teleological progression from restrictive (anti-colonial) to ever less restrictive (postcolonial) notions of identity in postcolonial discourses (Shohat 1992). Hence, the adoption of a nationalist agenda and the *Moetete* group's nativist mindsets might be related to psychological and political aspects, rather than a relapse to a former stage of philosophical or conceptual thinking.

Furthermore, the story receives a less optimistic undertone when the first part of the story is considered. Although the story's main topic is indeed the 'desire for world', this desire can also be read in a negative way, considering that the main character seems to be a Surinamese man who has been desiring to travel to the Netherlands all his life: "Ik wil naar Holland, ik wil naar Holland. [...] Holland leek mij het onbereikbare"¹⁶⁹ (28). Hence, the 'desire for world' could also be interpreted as the desire for the colonial centre, i.e. the Netherlands, away from the colonial periphery, i.e. Suriname. Although the identity which is depicted in the story is not a nationalist one, it remains unclear if the desire of

169 'I want to go to Holland, I want to go to Holland. [...] Holland seemed unreachable to me' ([my translation] Lier, "Fragmenten", 28).

History” (1979).¹⁷¹ Notably, Bhāi’s poem was written approximately ten years before Walcott’s. The poem refers to an ‘I [that] live[s] [...] | at the bottom | of the sea’ (Bhāi, “Between the Seashells”, ll. 13-16). Similar to Naipaul’s *The Middle Passage*, the poem appears to allude to the atrocious practices of the slave trade and its casualties. In remembrance of those who died on board of the slave ships or were cast into the water of the Atlantic because they were ill or dying, a common origin needs also refer back to this common history that remains invisible at the bottom of the Atlantic. In this sense, Bhāi’s poem evokes associations with the Afro-Caribbean texts that Gilroy analysis in *The Black Atlantic* (1993). Bhāi’s poem, too, denotes an identity that defies national claims on identity based on a dubious ‘son of the soil’ ideology. The ‘dark silence’ (l. 9) of colonial history and the invisible deaths of the colonised ancestors becomes a site for identification. Although, ‘hidden’ (l. 4), ‘without eyes’ (l. 6), and ‘without a mouth’ (l. 7), the past is still alive ‘at the bottom | of the sea’ (ll. 15-6). Reflecting Suriname’s colonial past, Bhāi provides a possibility for national identification, outside the clear demarcation of national territories and the visibility of historic monuments. Although hidden, i.e. not immediately visible, the common history of loss and hardship offers a common basis for identification suitable for the cultural and historical specificities of Suriname’s people.

However, considering Bhāi’s Hindustani background, the Black Atlantic and its focus on the colonial African slave trade can hardly be adopted as a suitable concept for the analysis of Bhāi’s poem, because it does not embrace the colonial history of people from Indian descent living in the Caribbean. Thus, Bhāi’s poem seems to express a kind of ‘coolitude’ *avant la lettre* (Carter and Torabully 2002). Although Bhāi’s poem shows some thematic similarities with Black Atlantic literature, it could also be read in a different way, namely as an indication of the neglect of Indian perspectives in postcolonial discourse. Hence, the poem could be interpreted as an indication of the Hindustani’s discursive silence, and thus, a counter-discourse to the ethnocentric focus on an African

171 Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
 Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
 in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
 has locked them up. The sea is History.
 (Derek Walcott, “The Sea is History”, l. 1-4).

presence and history in Caribbean. The invisibility of Hindustani history remains something that is truly hidden in postcolonial discourses today – and is something that still needs to be addressed more openly (see also Carter and Torabully 2002).

A similar conceptual issue can be related to Bhāi's poem "Yahân se Dur". Although the identity that is described could be seen as diasporic, there does not seem any comfort in this condition:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Ginds, ver van hier bloeien de amandelbomen met hun brede bladeren. Daar heb ik veel verloren wat ik nimmer hervinden zal. | 5 | There, far from here, the almond trees blossom with their wide leafs. There, I have lost much that I will never find again. |
| (Bhāi, "Yahân se Dur," 15) | | ([my translation] Bhāi, 'From Here to There', 15) |

Similar to the first poem, "Yahân se Dur" is written in free verse. There is no discernible pattern of metre, and the lines do not rhyme. In fact, the poem is comprised of two sentences presented in verse form (in six lines).

Although even the title "Yahân se Dur", i.e. 'from here to there', suggests a transition, a transgression of the border between here and there, the speaker does not associate anything positive with this transgression. Bhāi's poem does not seem to confirm that postcolonial identities can easily do without 'a real or symbolic homeland' as Clifford suggests with his concept of *diaspora* (Clifford 1994, 306). Quite the contrary seems to be the case: the poem laments the painful loss of a homeland – i.e. India, in Bhāi's case, where 'the almond trees blossom' (Bhāi, "Yahân", l. 2). Furthermore, Bhāi does not praise the mobility and openness that supposedly comes along with postcolonial identities. What Bhāi emphasises, is that 'from here to there' ([translation of title] 15) something (that one might not wish to lose) gets irretrievably lost. Being or becoming hybrid seems to come with certain costs – costs related to a loss of psychological security and a stable sense of identity which should not be easily swept aside.

The celebration of transnational, open post-structuralist notions of identity conceals the actual lamentation of the loss of affiliation and security that can be observed in postcolonial literatures. Although the concepts of diaspora,

cosmopolitanism, and Black Atlantic try to offer a sense of community in the face of the disseminating repercussions of colonialism, they disregard the possibility that the wish remains for unambiguous affiliations to home and country. From a psychological perspective, the loss of defined relationships to a real or imagined home or community has mainly negative consequences. The lack of fixed relationships also threatens the very possibility of a stable identity (Erikson 1956, 57). Correspondingly, this loss negatively affects a person's sense of security and potentially induces anxiety (Kelly 1955, 486-534; Kristeva 1993, 2). Moreover, without a connection to a greater cause or whole, a person's sense of self potentially lacks meaning and purpose (Guibernau 2004, 135-6; McAdams 2001, 117). Hence, the psychological consequences of this loss can be devastating.

7.3 *Interim Summary*

Van Lier and Bhāi describe identities in their texts which defy notions of fixed identities. However, these texts remain the exception, not the rule during the 1960s and 1970s. Van Lier's text was even written as early as 1947, and hence, it cannot even be considered representative of the literature written under the influence of the nationalist discourse. Although Bhāi's poem "Tussen de Schelpen" was published in *Moetete* II, it remains more or less the only one that could remotely be associated with non-national identitarian alternatives. Although "Tussen de Schelpen" can be related to coolitude and the attempt to find an adequate representation for the psychic and social past and realities of Indo-Caribbeans, the poem does not create a positive basis for identification. Furthermore, his poem "Yahân se Dur" does not indicate that diasporic identities could do without a 'real or symbolic homeland', but that, in fact, the loss of home is devastating. Hence, although postcolonial theories offer a helpful set of analytical tools that help to make sense of the texts at hand, they should be used critically. Furthermore, to fully grasp the different (and sometime contradicting) dimensions within narratives of identity, they should be supplemented with other analytical perspectives. Although postcolonial theories might be suitable for the analysis of some postcolonial texts and contexts, they remain largely insufficient for the analysis of the texts written by the *Moetete* authors. For them, migration

bears little positive connotations and has mainly negative consequences. Moreover, although these writers can be considered ‘hybrid’,¹⁷² their texts do not reflect this aspect of their identity in a positive way.

8. *The Un-homely Hybrid*

In addition to the psychological consequences of the obvious strains associated with migration, there are other, more subtle factors associated with migration that cause psychological distress. These factors are not so much related to the obvious issues of migration, such as the distance to the loved ones, the pains of having to find appropriate housing, adapting to a foreign language and culture, enduring discrimination, etc., but they are related to more personal issues of identity.

Judith Butler states in *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* that the idea of migration (in the context of Butler’s statement: forced migration) is constituted by a teleological narration involving leaving one discrete place and arriving at another (Butler and Spivak 2007, 16). This idea of migration, that starts with leaving and ends with arriving, generally determines our understanding of narratives of migration. Alienation and loneliness is presumably caused by leaving *a home* and arriving *somewhere* foreign and unknown. Within the logic of this narrative, alienation could be cured by *assimilation* (*ad* – towards + *similis* – similar). Assimilation can be considered an act of making oneself at home in the foreign, or making the foreign homely. However, the foreignness depicted by the following stories does not appear to be determined by external circumstances (residing at home or elsewhere), but seems to refer to a feeling of a fundamental inner un-homeliness.

In general, these internal consequences of migration seem to be associated and explicable with Bhabha’s concept of hybridity. For Bhabha, this “‘unhomeliness’ [...] is a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition” (Bhabha 1994, 13). Although he points out that “to be unhomed is not to be homeless” (Bhabha 1994, 13), this un-homeliness should not be understood as a liberation from all norms and constraints that come with identity and its

172 In terms of their cultural and ethnic affiliations.

categorisations. Notwithstanding the politically subversive and psychologically liberating potential of his concept, hybridity does not only seem to have positive consequences for ‘the hybrid’. Although this inner feeling of un-homeliness is expressed in many postcolonial texts, being or becoming hybrid is not only depicted in a positive or potentially subversive way. In the following section, I will try to elaborate on the feeling of inner estrangement and un-belonging which are recurring themes in some of the texts of the *Moetete* authors.

8.1 *The Need to Belong – The Alienated Intellectual in Leo Ferrier’s “Notities van een Vriend” (1973)*¹⁷³

In Leo Ferrier’s short story “Notities van een Vriend”, the narrator experiences a fundamental feeling of estrangement and alienation. The story describes the psychologically unsettling consequences of re-immigration. With a certain autobiographical overtone, the story is written from the perspective of a teacher who is also a pianist and a writer (Ferrier, “Notities”, 140, 144). The story is presented by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f), and resembles two diary entries or two quickly written notes; the first part is dated to 15 April 1973 in Leonsberg, the second to 7 July 1973 in Combé.

The central topic of the story is the narrator’s fundamental loneliness and alienation from his homeland:

Bijna twee jaar terug in Suriname. Niemand! Niets!! Geen vrienden. Steeds erger ervaar ik mijn alleen zijn als een hinderlijke eenzaamheid, die ik niet langer wens te aanvaarden. Waarom heb ik niemand? Gewoon een ander, die voor mij een ‘iemand’ is (Ferrier, “Notities”, 140).¹⁷⁴

Although the first part of the story focuses on the relation between Creoles and Hindustani, the rest of the story is not so much about the ‘total insecurity’ (139) of a Creole, but rather depicts a specific kind of loneliness and alienation which seems to derive from the repercussions of his re-immigration to Suriname. However, considering that he *re-immigrated*, his isolation cannot derive

¹⁷³ ‘Notes Written by a Friend’ ([my translation] Ferrier, “Notities”, 140)

¹⁷⁴ ‘almost two years back in Suriname. No-one! Nothing!! No friends! More and more, I experience my loneliness as an inhibiting isolation that I do not wish to endure any longer. Why do I not have anyone? Simply an other who means something to me?’ (140).

unambiguously from his status as a foreigner. As a re-immigrant, he probably should know people from the time before his emigration. In addition, two years of loneliness seem quite a long time, even for a migrant. Nevertheless, he feels fundamentally *un-homely*.

Notably, Ferrier's story does not only depict the kind of alienation that results from migrating. The alienation that the narrator experiences appears to be related to a difference in his way of thinking and being, i.e. the narrator seems to suffer from an inner difference that makes him unable to socialise in a way that is satisfying to him. Specifically, this inner difference could be related to him being an artist or intellectual. Although living in the middle of Leonsberg (139, 145), and despite frequenting the local bar(s) (145), the narrator is unable to socialise in a way that *means* something to him. What is significantly striking, is his conspicuous un-specific need for 'an other' who might mean something to him. He even claims that if you do not have someone who *means* something to you, or just any other, "dan behoor je eigenlijk te creperen"¹⁷⁵ (141). Unfortunately, the narrator's condition deteriorates. He becomes depressed, and he thinks that his 'depression creates despair and insecurity' ([my translation] 143) which results in even less motivation to socialise.

The story can be interpreted in relation to the hybrid position that members of the Creole elite in Suriname belonged to. As mentioned earlier, although the *Moetete* group wanted to be seen as 'organs for the people of Suriname', they were hardly apt to be considered representative. Hence, what Ferrier's story expresses could be interpreted as the alienation felt by the hybrid elite who were indeed 'neither one', i.e. part of rural Surinamese culture, 'nor the other', i.e. fully part of the elite Dutch culture, and hence, had to suffer from the consequences of *being in-between*. Despite the fact that the Creole elite can be considered "a sign of the productivity of colonial power" (Bhabha 1994, 159) whose likeness to colonial culture reveals the imperfection and hybridity of colonial culture itself, the Creole elite described in Ferrier's story does not seem particularly subversive. The intellectual in Ferrier's story seems to feel un-homely and in-between, but not on a good sense. In fact, the narrator's only wish is *to belong*.

175 'then, you should rather die' (141).

In relation to this wish to belong, the end of the story needs to be considered. Although the story does not really have a plot, but is presented as a loose sequence of statements and accounts (which are not really centred around the people in Leonsberg, but on the narrator himself). The story ends thus: “Leonsberg ontvangt een nieuwe zuiverheid in de harten van haar bewoners. Wij”¹⁷⁶ (149). Accordingly, the narrator’s remedy for his despair and insecurity seems to be a sense of ‘we’, a greater whole that provides a sense of belonging and relatedness. The story does not offer any suggestions of how this ‘we’ should be achieved, but creates it out of a fifteen-line description of a New Year’s Eve firework. This *rite de passage* laden with anticipation seems as an almost mystical promise of change, and it is this mystical moment in which the ‘we’ is created.

Correspondingly, the story expresses the fundamental psychological need for relatedness and belonging. The alienated intellectual appears to have found an effective remedy for his lack of relatedness and feelings of belonging by relating himself to a common ‘we’ of the people. The end suggests a positive change in relation to the possibilities to feel related and integrated in greater societal unity. Considering that the narrator complained about psychologically negative conditions throughout the story, the ‘we’ seems to have psychological benefits – probably not only for the narrator, but for all that are included in this common identity. Thus, the story suggests that the creation of a feeling unity and one-ness has positive psychological consequences. This perspective is supported by the psychological theories presented in the theory chapter: the integration into a greater whole does not only create a sense of purposefulness and meaning (Guibernau 2004, 135-6), they also provide a sense of security which has positive effects on a person’s psychological well-being (Ryan and Desi 2002).

176 ‘Leonsberg receives a new purity in the hearts of its residents. We.’ (149).

8.2 *In-Between – The Loss of Home in Shrinivāsi’s “Dehati”* (1961)¹⁷⁷

A similar feeling of un-homeliness is described in Shrinivāsi’s poem “Dehati”:

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| Opgebezemd uit de modder met koemest aan de hielen heb ik de drempel van de Stad overschreden. | 5 | Swept up from the mud with cow dung at the heels I have stepped over the doorsill of the city. |
| Ik heb een nieuw geloof beleden van Caritas Justitia. Maar de patriciërs braken het brood nimmer met elegast. | 10 | I professed a new belief of Caritas Justitia. But the patricians did not break the bread with elegast anymore. |
| Toen keerde ik terug naar de rook van de stallen vreemd en verstoten onder mijn eigen volk. | 15 | Then I returned to the smoke of the stables alienated and cast out among my own people. |
| (Shrinivāsi, “Dehati”, 31) | | ([my translation] Shrinivāsi, ‘Land’, 31) |

Shrinivāsi’s poem is written in free verse; hence, there is no regular metric pattern, and no rhyme scheme. There are three strophes of six, seven, and five lines which are connected via enjambement. There are several very short lines comprised by only one or two words. Together with the metre, these short lines create a rugged rhythm.

Migration may not only refer to moving to another country, but also to moving within a country. In Shrinivāsi’s poem “Dehati”, the speaker is a person that grew up in a rural area (Shrinivāsi, “Dehati”, ll. 1-6) but who decided to ‘step[...] over | the doorsill of the city’ (ll. 5-6). The derogatory comment, ‘with cow dung at the heels’ (ll. 3-4), denotes that the speaker has a rather dismissive attitude towards the countryside, and that they prefer to live in the city where ‘new’ (l. 8), i.e. modern, beliefs of ‘Caritas’ (l. 9) and ‘Justitia’ (l. 10) are practiced.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Land’([my translation]). The poem was first published in 1961, and then republished in *Moetete I* in 1968.

However, the speaker does not seem to be welcomed in the city either, and his/her ideological expectations are disappointed. The city's elite does not appear to live up to the ideals of charity and justice: 'the patricians | did not break the bread | with Elegast¹⁷⁸ anymore' (ll. 11-13). Therefore, the speaker had to return to the countryside where now she/he feels 'alienated and cast out among [his/her] own people' (ll. 17-18).

Similar to the narrator in Ferrier's story, in Shrinivāsi's poem, the speaker ends up feeling alienated and un-homely. Despite the ideological reasons for which the speaker left his/her home, her/his expectations are disappointed, because the beliefs of the elite appear corrupted. The speaker is unable to feel accepted in the city. However, the speaker cannot return home easily. In fact, it seems that there is no home for her/him at all anymore, because he/she is 'cast out among his/her own'. However, the speaker's feeling of un-homeliness is not a result of having no place to live, but derives from the inability to identify fully with either the people in the city or their own people. Similar to the alienated intellectual in Ferrier's story, the speaker's alienation resulted from an inner change, an inner difference in comparison to her/his 'own people' – a difference that makes him/her unable to feel at home anywhere. In contrast to the liberating connotations associated with in-betweenness and hybridity, the speaker does not experience any benefits from his/her 'cultural' transgression. She/he does not become a cultural go-between who is able to mediate between both cultures, but the speaker ends up with not being able to identify with any of both cultures. In the end, the speaker feels fundamentally alienated and alone.

Accordingly, the intellectual possibilities of the elite postcolonial hybrid come with psychological costs: alienated from their home, they must realise that their intellectual ideals are not as uncorrupted as they wished. They are deprived of both their sense of community and purposefulness. Correspondingly, this situation threatens both their need for security and self-esteem – which results in anxiety and negative emotional states (Sedikides 1997; Ryan and Desi 2002).

178 Elegast is a character in the Medieval Dutch epic *Karel ende Elegast*. Elegast has supernatural powers, and he possibly is the king of the elves. True to, but rejected by Charlemagne, he lives in the forest stealing from the rich and giving it to the poor (Meijer 1971). The allusion to Elegast can be interpreted as a reference to fairness and loyalty.

8.3 *Becoming Hybrid – The Threat of Meaninglessness in Thea Doelwijt's Short Story "In den Vreemde" (1970)*¹⁷⁹

A similar case of fundamental estrangement is presented in Thea Doelwijt's short story "In den Vreemde". I will discuss this short story in more detail, because it is quite interesting from a narratological perspective.

A couple, Orlo and Alena, emigrate from the Netherlands to Suriname. Despite the similarities between the two countries, e.g. the common language (Doelwijt, "Vreemde", 85), they feel distinctly "vreemd"¹⁸⁰(85) which causes a feeling of fundamental foreignness.¹⁸¹ Therefore, after some time, Orlo decides that they should go "naar huis"¹⁸² (93). Back in the Netherlands, they feel the same strangeness that they felt in Suriname, and "[het viel] de mensen op hoe vreemd zij waren"¹⁸³ (93). Although they are 'back home', their emotional condition is dominated by a distinct *un-homeliness*, and the story ends on a rather pessimistic note: "Buiten hing menige nacht een vreemde mist waarin de bomen onherkenbaar waren"¹⁸⁴ (93). The emotional alienation does not seem to be entailed by the specific differences between Suriname and the Netherlands, but the story conveys that these feelings are *inner* repercussions of migration which produces – or rather reveals – an *inner* foreignness.

Hence, the story's main theme is 'foreignness' which is not only created through the repeated use of the word "vreemd"¹⁸⁵ (85), but also by themes related to not-knowing and unintelligibility. Superficially, the logic of the text seems to be created through a dichotomy of 'vreemd' and "eigen"¹⁸⁶ (93). However, 'vreemd' is used much more often than words associated with 'eigen'. In the

179 'In Foreign Parts' (see translation in *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*). Doelwijt's short story "In den Vreemde" was selected for the *Van Der Rijnprijs* in 1970. Although it was not chosen as one of the two winning stories, it was included in the short story collection *Isa Man Tra Tamara?! In 2001, an English translation of the story was included in Stewart Brown and John Wickham's The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*. Accordingly, the story can be considered part of the Surinamese literary canon, and even the Caribbean short story canon.

180 'strange' ([my translation] Doelwijt, "Vreemde", 85). Strangeness is the main theme of Doelwijt's story.

181 Mainly in Orlo, or at least we only can be sure that it causes a feeling of alienation in Orlo as the story focuses on his perspective.

182 'back home' (93).

183 'people noticed how strange they were' (93).

184 'many nights, there was a strange mist outside which made the trees unrecognisable' (93).

185 'strange' or 'foreign' (85f).

186 'own' or 'familiar' (93).

beginning, Orlo and Alena are in “een vreemd zonnig land”, they live in “een vreemd huis”, wear “vreemde kleren”, and eat “vreemde spijzen”¹⁸⁷ (85). However, Doelwijt’s presentation of the relationship between ‘vreemd’ and ‘eigen’ is not as dichotomous as it seems. In fact, the story seems to question the binary opposition of strangeness and familiarity, because the story conveys that there is an uncanny strangeness within familiarity. Hence, the feeling of familiarity seems to be easily corrupted or even *fake*. In fact, they are ‘vreemd’ *despite* the fact that “de mensen spraken er dezelfde taal als zij”¹⁸⁸ (85). The story creates an uncanny feeling in the reader that even the familiar is in fact foreign. In the course of the text, it becomes more and more obvious that the dichotomy between ‘vreemd’ and ‘eigen’ is only an illusion in the text, and that ‘eigen’ is only a reflection of ‘vreemd’. This violation of the fixity of the binary opposition of ‘vreemd’ and ‘eigen’, hence, self and other, is created on different levels of the story and through various narratological techniques.

The narrative mode, in which the plot of the story is presented, is heterodiegetic but with an internal focalisation on Orlo (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). This mode of narration is supplemented through shifts in the focalisation towards other characters (e.g. “Mij krijgen ze niet klein, dacht de muskiet grimmig”¹⁸⁹, 85). In terms coined by Franz Stanzel, it can also be claimed that the story is mainly mediated in *reflector-mode*, rather than in *teller-mode*, because the presented mode of narration creates an “illusion of immediacy” (Stanzel [1979] 1984, 141) of the narrated events. The illusion of immediacy is created by the implementation of direct and indirect speech, as well as free indirect speech. Orlo is characterised through direct and indirect speech, through reflected and (less often through) told accounts of actions and feelings. Furthermore, parts of his thinking are presented in free direct speech. The animal characters are presented in almost the same way. Moreover, the animal characters are depicted as ‘native’ Surinamese characters because they swear in Sranantongo. Their feelings and actions are mainly mediated in reflector mode. Only Alena’s thoughts and perceptions are never directly expressed. Verbs of perception such as “kijken”,

187 ‘a foreign, sunny country’, ‘a strange house’, ‘foreign clothes’, ‘foreign dishes’ (85).

188 ‘people spoke the same language as they did’ (85).

189 ‘I won’t back down, the mosquito thought grimly’ (85).

“zien”, “luisteren”, and “voelen”¹⁹⁰ (85f) are only used in relation to Orlo or the animal characters. Alena is almost solely characterised by Orlo’s perceptions.¹⁹¹

The complex narrative structure and shifts in mode of narration are used to create ambiguities concerning the identity of the characters. Some passages of free direct speech can be interpreted as means of blurring the distinction between narrator and character (“Dat heb je in een vreemd land, al voel je je geheel thuis, je doet toch anders, totdat je niet meer weet was en wie je bent”¹⁹², 86). Further confusions are created through the focal shifts between Orlo and the various animals he encounters. Furthermore, differences between reflecting and telling are used to present character-dependent differences and incoherence in the perception of the same event. The alternation of different modes of telling and (mainly) reflecting, as well as the shifts of focalisation, create an impression of simultaneity that is however rife with chronological and other kinds of ambiguities.

Such synchronicity and ambivalence is reflected by the general presentation of time within the story. Generally, the story is segmented into two parts, the first takes place in Suriname, the second in the Netherlands. Both parts begin with similarly structured sentences. These sentences contain almost the same words, but the position of the words is slightly altered, and some are exchanged by antonymic words (“Zij waren in een vreemd zonnig land, maar de mensen spraken er dezelfde taal als zij, dus viel het niemand op hoe vreemd zij waren”¹⁹³, 85; “Zij waren in hun eigen land, maar het was een vreemd wolkig land. Ze spraken gewoon hun eigen taal, toch viel het de mensen op hoe vreemd zij waren”¹⁹⁴, 93). Due to similarly structured sentences which have more or less the opposite meaning, the story conveys the impression of strangeness within sameness.

190 ‘look’, ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘feel’ (85f).

191 Only in the beginning when Alena’s attractiveness for men is described, it is also said what she *desires*, i.e. Orlo. However, it remains unclear if the narration indeed focalises on Alena and her desire, or if the narration remains within the focalisation of Orlo who wants Alena’s desire to be unambiguously directed towards him.

192 ‘That’s how it is in a foreign country; you already start feeling at home, but you become different, you act differently until you don’t know what and who you are anymore’ (86).

193 ‘They were in a strange, sunny country. But the people spoke the same language as they did, and hence, not one noticed how strange they were’ (85).

194 ‘They were in their own country, but it was a strange, cloudy country. They spoke their own language, as usual, but people noticed how strange they were’ (93).

Further ambiguities are created by the succession of events and the time that is covered in the story. The story, which is told in past tense, begins when Alena and Orlo are already in Suriname and ends after they returned to the Netherlands. However, the main part of the narration covers the time frame of one evening of pondering. The presentation of most of Orlo's thoughts and actions during that evening are immediate. The coherence of thoughts and events is interrupted by flashbacks of earlier events – presented immediately in form of (free) direct speech or as Orlo's narrated mental recollections – and shifts in focalisation towards the animal characters. In that way, some events are told twice from different perspectives, either successively, e.g. the incident with the rat, or simultaneously, e.g. the incident with the bug. The insertions of flashbacks and different perspectives create a narrative structure of ambivalences, rather than a teleological, coherent presentation of succeeding events.

The ways in which the characters are depicted together with the presentation of time in the story create a structure of ambiguity and synchronicity. In relation to identity, ambiguity and synchronicity present a threat, because identity's fundamental principles of continuity and contrast are violated. Hence, the story conveys that identity is challengeable, and that the absolute distinctness of two seemingly oppositional identities might *not be real*.

The main theme of the story, namely the notion that familiarity is saturated with strangeness and vice versa, stems from the connection of several smaller themes. Foreignness receives a connotation with danger by being associated with darkness, savagery, hostility and death within the text. Hence, considering that the reader is mainly presented with Orlo's perception of events, Orlo perceives foreignness as detrimental and precarious. There are allusions to 'darkness' throughout the story, as the main part in which "Orlo was [...] aan het peinzen"¹⁹⁵ (87) takes place in during the night. After ten o'clock "alle huizen in de buurt [zijn] donker"¹⁹⁶ (87). Darkness is presented as possessing an almost debilitating omnipotence personified in the "donkere gang [...] die daar stond alsof hij God

195 'Orlo was [...] pondering' (87).

196 'all houses in the neighbourhood [are] dark' (87).

was”¹⁹⁷ (90). Furthermore, darkness is associated with death: the dog that Orlo sees next to the road has a “zwarte doodgebloede gat in de hals”¹⁹⁸ (88).

The savagery of foreignness is expressed through the other characters in the story next to Alena and Orlo: animals. Next to Orlo, the thoughts of “een rat” (86), “een tor” (88), “een kakkerlak” (89), “een vlinder” (89) and “mieren” (92)¹⁹⁹ are presented in the text. The threat that Orlo associates with the animals is created through their connection with darkness. The “kikkers” flee into “donkere schuilhoeken”²⁰⁰ (90), and the most savage, and therefore most dangerous animals are those who live in the night: “de nachtdieren”²⁰¹ (89). In the eyes of Orlo, wilderness and savageness are dangerous, as most animals are associated with death. Although rats and insects are generally associated with death in most Western countries, the text even creates more explicit connotations. Orlo thinks of “ratten die soms [...] een plotselinge dood sterven”²⁰² (85), and he makes a connection between rats, hostility, and foreignness, by pondering how ‘vreemd’ it is that “ratten [...] kijken je aan met ogen vol haat en walging”²⁰³ (85f). Suicide, death, and murder are repeated topics in the text: “muskieten waren de eerste die [Orlo] geleerd had te doden”²⁰⁴ (86), the bug “verstijft in doodsangst”²⁰⁵ (87), the butterfly “heeft zelfmoord gepleegd”²⁰⁶ (89) in the “dodelijke [...] draad van de spin”²⁰⁷ (89) and the ant carries a “dode vlieg”²⁰⁸ (92). He tries not to think of “de dode hond” with its “opgezwollen lijf [en] de dode ogen”²⁰⁹ (88).

The danger of the night and its darkness, as well as the animals and their (deadly) savageness can be associated with colonial discourses in which darkness and savagery opposes Western enlightenment and civilisation. Accordingly, the atmosphere created in the story is uncanny and threatening, because Orlo

197 ‘the dark hallway [...] that stood there as if he was God’ (90).

198 ‘a black, deathly exsanguinated hole in his neck’ (88).

199 ‘a rat’ (86), ‘a bug’ (88), ‘a cockroach’ (89), ‘a butterfly’ (89) and ‘ants’ (92).

200 ‘frogs’ flee into ‘dark dens’ (90).

201 ‘the animals of the night’ (89).

202 ‘that die a sudden death’ (85).

203 ‘rats [...] look at you with eyes full of hatred and contempt’ (85).

204 ‘mosquitoes were the first ones that Orlo learned how to kill’ (86).

205 ‘is scared stiff in fear of death’ (87).

206 ‘committed suicide’ (89).

207 ‘deathly web of the spider’ (89).

208 ‘dead fly’ (92).

209 ‘dead dog’ with its ‘swelled body and dead eyes’ (88).

perceives it as threatening. However, the dichotomy of darkness / light and enlightenment / savagery is not presented as obvious or naturally given. One of the most important aspects of Doelwijt's story is that dichotomies and the fixity of meanings are continuously challenged. The story's assault on binary oppositions is created by another theme in the story: incomprehension.

Incomprehension and unintelligibility are the most pervasive themes in the story. Orlo, and the animals can neither "begrepen", nor "herken[nen]"²¹⁰ each other (86). The mode of the narrative perspective creates an effect of perceived misunderstanding. The shift in focalisation leads to the impression that no one understands the other. Orlo thinks that rats stink, but the rat he encounters actually was trying to take a bath (86). Orlo tries to save a bug from dying in an ashtray, but the bug is scared stiff in fear of death (87). Orlo would like to think himself as the God of the ants, but the ants do not react and "kropen door alsof Hij niet bestond"²¹¹ (91). Furthermore, general expressions of incomprehension are frequently used in the text: "Ik weet het niet"²¹² (92, 94); "[...] wat gebeurt er nu weer"²¹³ (87); "Ik begrijp er niets van"²¹⁴ (86); "Ze kenden Hem niet, ze zagen Hem niet, ze herkenden Hem niet"²¹⁵ (91); "[...] vleermuizen die onder het dak een hem onbekend bestaan leidden"²¹⁶ (91), "– Wat? –"²¹⁷ (93). The frequent incomprehension creates an atmosphere of insecurity and ambivalence. However, although this atmosphere of ambivalence challenges the fixity of meanings and the stability of binary oppositions, the lack of understanding and clarity has negative consequences for the characters: they feel lost and anxious. In relation to the psychological functions of identity, the anxiety that is expressed by the characters can be related to their lack of knowledge and understanding of self and other (see also Kelly 1955, 486-534). Identity serves the function of self-understanding and several important psychological mechanisms such as self-enhancement and self-evaluation are bound to self-knowledge (Sedikides 1997;

210 'understand' nor 'recognise' (86).

211 'go on as if he did not exist' (91).

212 'I don't know' (92, 94).

213 'what is it now, what's happening' (87).

214 'I don't understand' (86).

215 'They did not know Him, they did not see Him, they did not recognise Him' (91).

216 'bats that lead a life under the roof, unknown to him' (91).

217 '– What? –' (93).

Ryan and Desi 2002). Since Orlo is unable to comprehend neither himself nor others, he is afraid and feels insecure.

In all this incomprehension, Orlo is desperate for sense and meaning. Therefore, he resorts to a typically Western method of sense making: empiricism. He tries to *create sense* through observing and listening: “Hij probeerde de vreemde geluiden van het land te herkennen”²¹⁸ (87). As he realises that he cannot make any sense of them, “was hij bang, al wist hij (uiteraard) niet waarvoor”²¹⁹ (87). His anxiety indicates that sense and meaning provide a certain psychic security. By connecting incomprehension to foreignness and fear, e.g. “[v]reemd, dat [de kikkers] kleiner worden”²²⁰ (91), sense and meaning are connected to security and other beneficial psychological functions. Accordingly, Orlo becomes obsessed with observing in order to create sense, and deviations in this routine cause distress: “Ik moet naar de w.c., terwijl ik kikkers zou moeten bestuderen”²²¹ (91). Orlo’s fear and anxiety is not created by a factual menace emanated by the animals, but his fear is a product of his inability to understand what he perceives. Occurrences which seem totally illogical, such as the frogs becoming smaller (which violate normal, natural growth process) are particularly distressing. However, the most disturbing consequences of their emigration (at least for Orlo) is that Orlo does not understand himself anymore: “Dat heb je in een vreemd land, al voel je je geheel thuis, je doet toch anders, totdat je niet meer weet wie je was en wie je bent”²²² (86). Orlo’s insecurity and anxiety are not only created by ‘outward’ factors such as the perceived darkness and the animals (they only create a basic atmosphere of uncanniness and threat), but mainly by the apparent lack of sense that he experiences.

Orlo’s desperate reaction is that he tries to familiarise the foreign by imposing *his* sense onto it – he tries to make things his own. He tries to erase his fear caused by the dark hallway by making the hallway *his*: “– Doe toch gewoon, zo bijzonder ben je nou ook weer niet. Toegegeven, je bent lang en hoog, maar je

218 ‘He tried to recognise the strange sounds of this country’ (87).

219 ‘he was scared, but (of course) he did not know why’ (87).

220 ‘strange that the frogs become smaller’ (91).

221 ‘I have to go to the toilet although I need to observe frogs’ (91).

222 ‘That’s how it is in a foreign country; you already start feeling at home, but you become different, you act differently until you don’t know what and who you are anymore’ (86).

bent en blijft van mij, zonder mij heb je niets te vertellen –”²²³ (90). He is happy after – as he thinks – having helped the ants, and he feels as “de Goede God” of the ants who is satisfied with glory of his creation: “Alles is duidelijk opeens, het is volbracht”²²⁴ (93) – and his statement reflects his need for unambiguity and closure. The ants’ unawareness of his existence reveals the irony and the deeper significance of Orlo’s thoughts. ‘Alles is duidelijk opeens’ does not refer to the ants’ revelation, but a process of sense-making that is conducted by Orlo for Orlo. As the foreign country remains incomprehensible, dark, and threatening, he imposes his own sense by taking the position of god, the ultimate provider of sense and hermeneutical authority – even if he is merely god to some ants and even if their relation is determined by mutual incomprehension.

Eventually, he seems not to be able to cope with the foreignness he encounters. As a consequence of his inability to make sense of the foreign country, Orlo decides that they should go home – which can be interpreted as Orlo’s eventual desperate attempt to get hold of something that makes sense to him. However, after their return to the Netherlands, Orlo’s feelings of foreignness and alienation become worse, not better. The foreignness appears to have infiltrated the familiar. The own country has become dark and foreign: “Ze waren in hun eigen land, maar het was een vreemd wolkig land”²²⁵ (93). They find all the detrimental and disturbing characteristics of foreignness in their own country. Their feeling of inner strangeness has even aggravated. In fact, *they* have become foreign: “Ze spraken gewoon hun eigen taal, toch viel het de mensen op hoe vreemd zij waren”²²⁶ (93). They are unable to feel at home. Not only do they live in “een vreemd hotel”, but the hotel also has “vele kamers waarin mensen leefden die je nooit zag” and who just “fluisteren”²²⁷ (93). Again, Orlo is unable to gain empirical knowledge of his environment, as the people they surround them can neither be seen, nor be properly heard. Although their own country does not contain deathly savageness and foreignness, it seems to be dead: “de zon [scheen]

223 ‘Don’t show off like this; you’re not as special as you think you are; I have to admit that you are wide and dark, but you are mine, without me, you have nothing to tell’ (90).

224 ‘the merciful God’, ‘Suddenly, everything makes sense; the work is done’ (90).

225 ‘They were in their own country, but it was a strange and cloudy country’ (93).

226 ‘They spoke their own language, but people noticed how strange they were’ (93).

227 ‘a strange hotel’, ‘many rooms in which people lived that you never saw’, ‘whisper’ (93).

niet meer“, they walk through “bruine bladeren”²²⁸ (93), and it is getting “kouder”²²⁹ (94). Again Orlo does not feel at home: “hij kende de geluiden niet meer, de bladeren spraken een andere taal, de wind klonk vreemd door de bomen”²³⁰ (95). During a walk outside, Orlo tries to find ants in another attempt to be god, to make sense of the un-homeliness of their home, but he does not find any ants: “Dieren zag [Orlo] nooit, geen levende, geen dode. Geen enkele keer wist hij zich God”²³¹ (95). Eventually ‘vreemd’ and ‘eigen’ have become indistinguishable for Orlo, but not in a positive sense. Orlo does not feel at home in the foreign country and he feels foreign in his own country. He has become unable to relate himself to the world outside. He has become unable to make sense, to recognise what he formerly considered his own: “Buiten hing menige nacht een vreemde mist waarin de bomen onherkenbaar waren”²³² (95).

The indistinguishable character of own and foreign, self and other is also promoted by the repetition of similar narrative structures and sentences. In the beginning they are in “een vreemd zonnig land, maar de mensen spraken er dezelfde taal als zij, dus viel het niemand op hoe vreemd zij waren”²³³ (85). At the end, they are “in hun eigen land, maar het was een vreemd wolkig land. Ze spraken gewoon hun eigen taal, toch viel het de mensen op hoe vreemd zij waren”²³⁴ (93). The similar structure creates an uncanny similarity between ‘vreemd’ and ‘eigen’, but homeliness is neither felt in the foreign location nor at home. Furthermore, several sentences are repeated in exactly the same wording, but in relation to other characters: “God, wat had ik een dorst, dacht [de muskiet] / Orlo tussen twee slokjes door”²³⁵ (85, 91), “– Ik weet het niet, – zei de gewonde mier / Orlo, – ik weet het niet. –”²³⁶ (92, 94). Through this narrative structure, the

228 ‘the sun did not shine anymore’, ‘brown leaves’ (93).

229 ‘colder’ (94).

230 ‘he did not recognise the sounds anymore, the leaves spoke another language and the wind whispered strangely in the trees’ (95).

231 ‘Orlo never saw any animals, neither alive nor dead. Not a single time did he feel like god’ (95).

232 ‘many nights, there was a strange mist outside which made the trees unrecognisable’ (93).

233 ‘in a strange, sunny country. But the people spoke the same language as they did, and hence, not one noticed how strange they were’ (85).

234 ‘in their own country, but it was a strange, cloudy country. They spoke their own language, as usual, but people noticed how strange they were’ (93).

235 ‘God, how thirsty I was, the mosquito / Orlo thought in between two sips’ (85, 93).

236 ‘– I don’t know, – the injured ant / Orlo said, – I don’t know. –’ (85, 93).

distinction between self and other, foreign and own, different and same becomes blurred. The binary oppositions that secured the distinctness of the identities of self and other have been deconstructed. Impenetrable ‘sameness’ appears impossible. The story even conveys that there is a deathly-ness in sameness, since the butterfly commits suicide because he cannot stand the thought of “*weer dezelfde dingen te denken en te doen*”²³⁷ (89). The security of defined borders is deconstructed by the unintelligibility of differences which causes positive and negative characteristics to overlap and become indistinguishable.

Accordingly, the real threat and source of fear in “*In den Vreemde*” is not *foreignness*, but the loss of meaning, the *void*. From a psychological perspective, Orlo’s fear is not caused by some real danger within the foreign, but by his inability to make sense of himself and the world around him (see also Kelly 1955, 486-534; McAdams 2001, 117). The fear of the void and meaninglessness is expressed by Orlo’s thoughts concerning animals of the night (87). His thoughts reveal the constitutional role they assume, providing stability and sense: “*Waarschijnlijk bestaan ze niet eens, waarschijnlijk moeten ze alleen maar fluisteren om te laten weten hoe stil de nacht is*”²³⁸ (87f). Furthermore, the foreign animals of the night do not even present the real source of danger, but they conceal the “*dreigendste geluiden*”²³⁹ (88) and the void silence of the night. Accordingly, Orlo’s restlessness is not caused by foreignness, but by meaninglessness. Although Orlo’s failure to make sense empirically challenges Western notions of the impeccability of positivistic empirical science, his loss of the ability to make sense has mainly negative psychological consequences. For him, the lack of (self-)knowledge and (self-)understanding mainly produces ambiguity and anxiety.

Although Orlo’s anxiety could be related to the inability of Westerners to accept ambiguity, the story should not *only* be read in relation to postcolonial subversion. Although the unsettling experience of migration reveals the constructedness of identity, it should not be concluded that unveiling the fictional

237 ‘do the same things and think the same things again’ (89).

238 ‘Probably, they do not even exist, probably, they only have to whisper to let you know how silent the night is’ (87f).

239 ‘most threatening sounds’ (88).

nature of identity implies that the borders of identity will be easily or willingly crossed and overcome. The story could rather be read as a story about what it means to migrate, and what it means to become hybrid. The resolution of binary oppositions and the meaning that is bound to them does not have a liberating effect on Orlo, but he feels threatened and alienated. Hence, challenges to one's identity cause distress and anxiety. Postcolonial concepts tend to neglect the psychological functions of borders of identity (such as the binary oppositions that construct meaning), and they conceal the psychological consequences of challenging these borders.

As a conclusion, it can be said that "In den Vreemde" is a peculiar story in relation to the national discourse in pre-independence Suriname. The story emphasises the psychological necessity for intelligibility and meaning for self-understanding – which is also important for the related concepts of self-evaluation and self-esteem (see Erikson 1956; Sedikides 1997). The story shows that having revealed that there is no fixed stability of meaning and identity in our world does not imply that identity has lost its significance for psychological functions. Accordingly, the story also offers an explanation for the appeal of nationalism, because nationalism provides borders and defines identities. By depicting the complexity of the relation between borders and security, meaning and ambiguity, identification and alienation, the story can be seen as an interesting account of what it means to become hybrid.

8.4 *Interim Summary*

Particularly the last three stories showed that being or becoming hybrid has less psychological benefits than the positive connotations with the concept seem to suggest. Neither the two intellectuals in Ferrier's story "Notities van een Vriend" and Shrinivāsi's "Dehati", nor the couple in Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde" appear to benefit psychologically from their hybridity. Particularly Doelwijt's story depicts all the negative psychological consequences of hybridisation. Especially the loss of meaning appears to have negative repercussions; in Doelwijt's as well as in Ferrier's story. Ferrier's narrator grapples with a profound feeling of alienation that derives from his status as a migrant and intellectual. Orlo's main

source of anxiety and restlessness is related to his inability to make sense of himself and his surroundings. Hence, the ambiguity of meaning and identities, that is a core element associated with the concept of hybridity, does not have liberating consequences for Orlo, but produces debilitating psychological consequences such as depression and anxiety.

Notwithstanding the nativist ideology that many of the *Moetete* authors embraced, the nationalist identity that they created in their text remains a narration. Hence, the link between identity, ethnicity, national territory and history is made to make sense by integrating them into one coherent narrative. However, the *Moetete* group did not only write about their nationalist identity; their texts also embrace topics that challenged the impermeability of the national identity that they advocated in other texts. The stories and poems presented above deal with migration and with what it means to be hybrid – aspects that challenge the integrity and apparentness of national identities. Although cosmopolitanism, diaspora, the Black Atlantic, coolitude and hybridity might be useful concepts for the analysis of other postcolonial texts, they lack the psychological perspective that is needed to fully analyse the emotional and psychological aspects in the texts presented above. The *Moetete* authors associated migration mostly with trouble and loneliness, and their hopes and dreams concerning migration are not fulfilled. Migration is mainly presented as a threat to a person's positive sense of self, because the migrant has to grapple with discrimination, hardship, and loneliness. The migrant is left lonely and insecure which results in a fundamental feeling of un-homeliness. The process of becoming hybrid has no real benefits for the migrant, not even for the intellectual elite who seem to be able to leave and come as they want. Even those who stay behind are affected negatively. They are left to resolve all issues by themselves which makes their life harder and not easier.

Hence, the usual theoretical concepts of postcolonial theory might present adequate alternative identities that are 'good to think', but they might not be representative of the identity and the related issues that are described in the *Moetete* author's texts. Many of their texts seem to be concerned with the need to maintain a positive sense of self and the fundamental psychological needs of relatedness and belonging rather than subversive political agendas. Hence, the

characters in their texts might be unable to make use of their subversive hybrid potential because they are restrained by the devastating psychological consequences of their experiences as migrants or hybrids. As the previous analyses have shown, integrating a psychological perspective into postcolonial theory might help to fully understand the psychic and social reality that is described in postcolonial texts.

9. *Final Summary: National Surinamese Identity and its Discontents*

Identity presents an important topic within discourses of the 1960s and 1970s in Suriname. The political discourse seemed to strive for one main goal: the independence of Suriname and the establishment of an own independent Surinamese nation. In the course of the realisation of the political agenda, there were several cultural aspects that were deemed necessary for the achievement of independence. Independence was not only understood in terms of political independence, but also in terms of a cultural independence. Hence, many political activists promoted a raised awareness on the specificities of Surinamese culture and identity. This nationalist agenda was supported by many cultural projects that sought to revive and channel Surinamese ‘volksidentiteit’. Surinamese identity was a prominent topic in the newspapers, political debates, theatres and literatures.

Within this cultural-political climate a specific group of people stood out: the *Moetete* group. Considering their manifold involvements (as journalists, politicians, teachers and artists) in the political discourse of the time, it seems obvious that many of the political notions of the discourse are also reflected in the literature of the *Moetete* group. Accordingly, their literary magazine, *Moetete*, was thought to present a ‘feeding bowl’ full of mind-setting texts that would nourish the Surinamese ‘volksidentiteit’.

Not only did they write directly against colonialism as in Vene’s poem “[Er is één grote verrader]”, but they also sought to disclose the social grievances created by the current political regime (that was still dependent on the Netherlands) as in R. Dobru’s short story “A Prasi foe Bigi Dorsi / Het Erf van Bigi Dorsi”. However, in order to create a sense of Surinamese community, they did more than pointing out grievances and political shortcomings. In their texts, they also tried to

emphasise the importance of community in the face of a common enemy, i.e. the former colonisers, to achieve independence. R. Dobru's "4-juni Overpeinzing", Bea Vianen's "Over Nonnen en Straffen", and Marcel de Bruin's, i.e. Rodney Russel, "Dagorder" call for such a community that overcomes individual differences for a common cause.

But the *Moetete* authors wanted more: a common cultural identity – and they considered themselves and their texts to contribute to the creation of such an identity. They also did not hesitate to emphasise their importance for creating such an identity. In his introduction to *Moetete* I, Robin Ravales was very clear about the writers' crucial function in the national discourse: they were promoters and organ of the identity of the people. In "Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe", Rudi Kross leaves no ambiguities about how this Surinamese identity should be created. In his opinion, it is clear that a common Surinamese identity can only be transported through a founding myth, a narration that tells the story about Surinamese people and their identity. A similar notion is presented by René de Rooy in "De Edelstenen van Oom Brink". The main character would rather live in poverty than selling the gems of Uncle Brink. Despite their worthlessness, they are tokens of his identity and origin, and hence, they present the link between his past and current self.

Furthermore, the *Moetete* group created a certain kind of identity in their texts. A striking aspect is the nativist, primordialist notion of identity that is conveyed in their texts. Josef Slagveer's poems "Totness" and "Ik", as well as Eugene W. Rellum's poem "Sranan" present a speaker whose Surinamese identity is an inalienable part of themselves, based on a natural link between the speaker's ethnicity, Surinamese soil, and history. Surinamese is presented as some kind of birthright that is based on an inalienable bond between land and identity. In this context, the peasant becomes the emblem of nationalist identity. Their allegedly natural connection to their homeland is presented in a romanticised way. This specific attitude is conveyed by Paul Marlee's poem "Landbouwer" and in Eddy Bruma's short story "De Fuik". In addition, Bruma also presents the detrimental forces of the modern Western world that alienate the peasant from their natural way of living in harmony with the Surinamese soil and their 'true' identity.

A further, conspicuous aspect of many of the *Moetete* group's texts is the connection between Surinamese culture and Creole culture. Most references towards the alienable bond between national soil and identity are made in the context of Creole culture and Creole identity. In Thea Doelwijt's texts "13 Spelen met Land" and "De Nacht van de Winti" the sense of community that is equated with national cultural unity refers specifically to Creoles and Creole culture. Notwithstanding the positive consequences of these depictions for Creoles, the 'natural' association between Creoles and Surinamese-ity had negative consequences for other identities that were not Creole. Particularly people with an Hindustani background were presented negatively.

In Rudi Kross's "Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe" and Leo Ferrier's short story "Notities van een Vriend", it becomes clear that Hindustani were not only considered as a political opposition for the Creoles, but their identity was presented as *not as* rooted in Surinamese soil and history as Creole identity. The notion of the sly contract worker who secretly supported the colonial Dutch regime was also adapted to the discourses on national identity of the 1960s and 1970s. The Hindustani were presented as not as Surinamese as the Creoles. In Kross's text, they are even depicted as anti-nationalist. Furthermore, Ferrier suggests that they were unable to live up to their responsibilities as the ethnic majority in Suriname, and their supposed lack of nationalist feelings made them unsuitable as a driving force in the nationalist discourse. Although the last RTC supposedly failed due to a lack of support of the Hindustani, this lopsided depiction created a rather distorted picture of the social and psychic reality of the Hindustani in Suriname. However, this picture persevered tenaciously in the Caribbean. Jit Narain's short story "De Contractant" and Frank Martinus Arion's text "The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness" exemplify the preservation of the notion that Hindustani are the Creoles' inhibitory antipode. Narain's text also reveals the psychological consequences of this perspective.

However, there are also stories written by *Moetete* authors that present a different picture. Shrinivāsi's short story "Kila" conveys that Hindustani culture is as rooted in Suriname as Creole culture. His texts presents a positive notion of homeliness and community that resigns from depicting a dichotomous relation

between Hindustani and Creoles, but it conveys a sense of community that embraces all ethnic origins in Suriname. Benny Ooft's short story "Shaantidevi (Een Idylle)" suggests that harmony between both groups can be achieved, and this harmony will only make Suriname stronger. Corly Verlooghen's poem "Dit Wankel Huis" also makes clear that both groups are needed for a Surinamese future in a common Surinamese nation.

From a psychological perspective, the *Moetete* group achieved to create a psychologically beneficial identity. Identity is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the three basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Maslow 1941; Erikson 1956; Desi and Ryan 2002). By creating an independent national culture based on a common national identity, the *Moetete* authors addressed these needs. Furthermore, they presented their identity in a particular favourable light; hence, the identity they created served the motive of self-enhancement and positive self-evaluation. In their texts, it also became clear that identity functions according to continuity and contrast (Erikson 1956, 56), and a person's understanding of self and other is embedded in a web of dichotomous, value-laden meanings (Kelly 1955, 56f, 59f, 64f). Their texts created identity through a coherent narration that streamlined the connection between Creole ethnicity, Surinamese history, and Surinamese soil (McAdams 2001, Schachter 2011). However, the psychological benefits of the created Creole identity were overshadowed by the consequences of how this identity was created. Adhering to the principle of contrast (Erikson 1956, 57; Kelly 1955, 59f), identity was built upon a constitutive outside – in this case, this role was assigned to the Hindustani in Suriname. The discrimination that was entailed can be related to in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Tajfel and Turner 1986; 2010) as well as in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999).

Despite the positive consequences of identity for the Creoles, the texts show that identity is in fact a fiction. Identity is created according to certain psychological and structural principles that ultimately serve psychological functions. However, identity is vulnerable to factors that reveal its constructedness and challenge its integrity. As many psychological benefits derive from the instance that identity is perceived as if it were innate and inalienable, challenging

the impermeability and integrity of identity can have negative consequences for the person whose identity is challenged (Kelly 1955, 486-535). In the second part, certain challenges to the inalienability and impermeability of identity were presented. Notwithstanding their nativist, primordialist notion of identity that the *Moetete* writers promoted in their texts, many of them lead a life-style that seemed to be at odds with their political ideologies. Many of them lived in a country other than Suriname for some time or emigrated for good. This aspect did not only have consequences to their self-understanding as Surinamese writers. Their texts also present the negative consequences that migration had on their identity. In this part, I also discussed the adequacy of the analytical tools of postcolonial theory for the analysis of these texts. Although they presented a valuable access to several aspects of the texts that were discussed, they only were able address certain aspects.

Not much of the critical optimism that is often associated with the postcolonial concepts of cosmopolitanism, hybridity, and diaspora is found in their texts. Although Thea Doelwijt's "Hoppen in de Caribbean" depicts a journalist who is jet-setting through the Caribbean, the text does not reveal aspects of the journalist's identity that could be actually associated with the notion of cosmopolitanism. It is rather the likeness towards the own home-country that makes the journalist able to feel at home in the foreign. Furthermore, Noni Lichtveld's *Anansi tori* "Anansi Zakt op Schiphol" does not depict a real account of migration. It rather represents the hopes and dreams that accompany migration: the hope for a fast and easy integration. Thus, the story does not depict an alternative, potentially transitive, and more open identity. In fact, it depicts an identity that does not change at all, also because there is no need for it to change. In contrast to Lichtveld's story, Edgar Cairo's short story "'Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!'" depicts a the full blown portion of negative experiences in relation to migration. The main character is insulted, discriminated, and ripped-off. Even her relatives and friends cannot offer real support, because they are as help- and powerless as the main character. Correspondingly, migration is not seen to bear any positive or liberating consequences for these people's identity. Migration mainly results in insecurity, a feeling of worthlessness, alienation and loneliness.

In addition, Rodney Russel's short story "Uit het Voorgeborchte" depicts the consequences of migration for those who stay which is often neglected. The dominant focus on travelling, movement, and change in postcolonial theories privileges certain kinds of identity, i.e. male and middle class, and conceals the intersection of postcolonial discourses with those of class and gender. Even those texts that seem to present an alternative identity do not only depict a positive image of migration in relation to its consequences on identity. Although Rudie van Lier's text "Fragmenten" seems to depict a positive alternative that can do without a real or imagined homeland, the main character's enthusiasm could also be interpreted in terms of a desire to move from the insignificance of the colonial periphery to the colonial centre. Furthermore, although Bhāi's "Tussen de Schelpen" could be connected to coolitude, the poem conveys rather negative emotions. Furthermore, his poem "Yahân se Dur" does not do away with the need for a real or imagined homeland, but it exemplifies that the loss of a home is always painful, even if it is only an imagined homeland.

Notwithstanding the positive and liberating accounts of migration, the experience of migration is mainly described negatively in the texts of the *Moetete* authors. Similarly, hybridity is also depicted as rather negative. In Leo Ferrier's short story "Notities van een Vriend", the re-immigrated intellectual cannot make much of his hybrid position, but he longs for a sense of belonging and unity. A similar disappointment is felt by the speaker in Shrinivāsi's poem "Dehati" who is left unable to feel at home, neither with those whom he considered to be ideologically close, nor with his own people. Finally, the most extreme depiction of the fundamental estrangement and alienation is depicted by Thea Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde". The anxiety and depression experienced by the main character seem to be related to his loss of the ability to make sense of himself and of others.

In this context, integrating a psychological perspective in the analytical process offered meaningful insight into the psychological aspects of the stories. Although postcolonial theories provided a basis for the discussion, the psychological perspective offered supplementary insights on how identity serves the function of (self-)knowledge and (self-)understanding. The psychological theories provided a means to understand the psychological consequences that

were depicted in those texts in which national identity and common notions of identity were challenged. Therefore, becoming a hybrid, a process that challenges the borders of identity, had serious negative consequences on the character's sense of self and self-identity. The deconstruction of the borders between self and other, own and foreign produced anxiety and depression. Although the texts revealed that identity is a construct and that identity should be considered as 'essential' in cognitive terms, they also showed what it meant psychologically if identity was challenged.

The literary texts of the *Moetete* authors presented an interesting perspective on identity in relation to the role of nationalism within postcolonialism. Nationalism is much more than a condemnable false consciousness, but it is saturated with the need for autonomy and relatedness, cognitive structures, and the desire to maintain a positive sense of self. The integration of psychological theories in the analysis of postcolonial texts offered a powerful tool to analyse the social and psychic realities which they present.

Part IV:

Case Study Guyana

Chapter 8

Guyana: Historical, Social, and Political Background

Guyanese imaginative literature [...] can be described not in terms of the themes and qualities Caribbean literature as a unit holds [...], but in terms of its own themes, principally ‘the search for identity’ (Sparer 1968, 24).

According to Joyce L. Sparer, Guyanese literature seems to be different from other Caribbean literatures (at least up to 1968, when Sparer’s article was written). Basically, she claims that Guyana’s search for its literary identity lacks political engagement and does not show any “Africanising tendencies” (Sparer 1968, 24). In contrast, Sparer sees as a “vigorous anti-imperialism”, a “substitution of ‘African values’ for European” ones, and a “strong emphasis on the barbarity of ‘white[s]’” in expressions of identity in other Caribbean texts (Sparer 1968, 24-5). In Guyana, however, she cannot discern any “‘clearly defined racial mystique’, no unparalleled attack on Western civilization, [...] no emphasis on the Negro as the guardian of humanity” (Sparer 1968, 24). Hence, in contrast to the openly anti-colonial messages that accompany articulations of identity in other Caribbean literatures, Sparer argues that, in Guyana, identity is expressed through the literary characters’ *feelings*: “feelings about themselves, their group, other groups, and mankind” (Sparer 1968, 23). For her, Guyanese identity is an expression of the “necessity for each Guyanese to have a ‘sense of belonging’ in society as a

whole”, and apart from that, there are no common motives and themes to be identified (Sparer 1968, 59, 61).

Hence, identity may be expressed differently in Guyanese literatures than in other parts of the Caribbean. However, Sparer herself also points out that the “[t]he imaginative literature of a country provides a window [...] into the social problems that bedevil it” (Sparer 1968, 23). Therefore, I would caution to agree with her on the importance of political ‘Africanising tendencies’ within Guyanese literature. Sparer’s description of identity as an almost innocent ‘need for a sense of belonging’ does not take into account the ethnic tensions and political uproar in Guyana in the 1950s and 1960s. Although nationality, ethnicity and other “doctrinal propaganda” may be expressed less explicitly and differently (Sparer 1968, 25), it would be premature to consider them as absent. Political culture in Guyana has always been very pronounced, and Guyana’s anti-colonial movement in the 1950s was one “with a radical intellectual elite that spawned a creative intensity unmatched in the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean” (Poynting 2005). Moreover, Guyana’s political discourses of identity have always been strongly divided along ethnic lines. However, in Guyana ‘race’ and ethnicity are not mainly matters between people of African and European descent. ‘Ethnic tensions’ mainly pertain to issues between the Afro- and Indo-Guyanese populations. Apart from the short period in the 1950s, when ethnic dissent was shortly eclipsed by the formation of the *People’s Progressive Party* (PPP) which initially presented both main ethnic groups, “Afro- and Indo-Guyanese assert[ed] their identity by drawing negative stereotypes of each other” (Wilson 2012, 91). Moreover, as the 1960s progressed, the ongoing strikes, riots, political unrest and, finally, independence re-ignited and exacerbated ethnic tensions. Ethnicity also became a matter of national cultural hegemony – which from 1964 until 1992, was dominated by the Afro-Guyanese *People’s National Congress* (PNC).

Therefore, this study of Guyanese literature sets out to analyse notions of identity in Guyanese literatures by considering both the psychological as well as the socio-historical aspects that may be inscribed in literary texts. The literary expressions of Guyanese identity may speak of more than a simple need to belong; they are saturated with ethnic and national politics. ‘Africanising tendencies’ may not only be a matter of how exactly identity is expressed in Guyanese literatures;

the ethnically divided national politics could also determine what was included and excluded in the national narrative of identity. Although I will engage with the psychological need for a ‘sense of belonging’ in my analysis as well, I will not neglect the political nature of the discourse on (national) identity. Instead, I will try to offer an approach which combines literary and psychological perspectives on Guyanese literature. I will look at both the cognitive and psychological mechanisms, as well as the socio-historical context of literary expressions of identity in Guyanese literature between 1950 and 1980.

1. Overview of the Historical Background, Demography, and Political Climate

Guyana is a “Cooperative Republic”¹ located at the South American continent nested between Venezuela at its west and Suriname at its east, and with the Caribbean Sea at its northern and Brazil at its southern borders (Westmaas 2009, 119). Before its independence on May 26, 1966, Guyana was an English colony, and the official language is English still. Guyana comprises 214,970 km². The landscape is diverse with low coastal plains, rain-forested highlands, and savannahs in the southern region (CIA 2014). Approximately 8.4% of its territory is water, and some sources state Guyana derives from the Amerindian name for the territory meaning ‘land of many rivers’ (Arnold 2001, 97). Currently, Guyana’s population comprises 735,554 people. However, Guyana has one of the highest migration rates in the world (between 157,826 and 202,865 people per year left Guyana in the 1990s [CCDP 2002, 23]), and approximately 55% of its citizens live abroad (CIA 2014).

1.1 Population

Similar to Suriname, Guyana is the home of people from different ethnic origins. Guyana is also referred to as the ‘land of six peoples’: Indian, African, Amerindian, Portuguese, British and Chinese (Arnold 2001, 99). The majority of people are ‘East Indians’ or Indo-Guyanese (43.5%). The other ethnic groups are denoted as: ‘Black’, ‘African’, or Afro-Guyanese (30.2%), referring to people of

1 I will explain later what cooperative means in this state form.

African descent; ‘mixed’ (16.7%), i.e. people from mixed ethnic origins;² Amerindian (9.1%); and ‘other’ (0.5%) pertaining to ‘White’, Portuguese, and Chinese (CCDP 2002, 26). Note that, in comparison to Suriname, people from African descent are called ‘Afro-Guyanese’, ‘African’, or ‘Black’, and not ‘Creoles’ (UN Statistics Division 1956; CCDP 2002, 26). Although the population doubled between 1946 (375,701) and 2002 (751,223), the ethnic proportions did not change considerably (UN Statistics Division 1956, 261; Nation Census Report 2002, Guyana, 26).

With 9.1 per cent, Guyana has one of the largest populations of Amerindians in the Caribbean – in comparison, Suriname has only about two per cent. Nevertheless, the general ethnic composition of Guyana’s population (particularly in relation to their main groups, i.e. people of Indian and African descent) is comparable with Suriname.

Yet, it needs to be emphasised that there have hardly been any Maroon communities in Guyana (Price 1976). This instance is related to the specific approach that the British took in colonisation. One of the main goals of British colonisation was to spread British culture. All colonial subjects were considered British (although not all had the same rights), and as such, they were assimilated to British culture. This is particularly evident in the way the British dealt with slaves that ran away into the forests. In contrast to the Dutch, they went after the slaves – not to kill them, however, but to bring them back into the settlements. They pursued this policy for two reasons: on the one hand, the British feared that Maroon communities could be powerful cradles for revolts; on the other hand, according to Hyles, “[t]he very idea of a maroon village not practicing British values existing within the boundaries of the colony was unacceptable to British governors and colonists alike” (Hyles 2013, 37). Hence, the British did their best to eradicate deviant cultural influences, and the pressure to assimilate was high. Consequently, in contrast to Suriname, the Maroons did not play an important role in Guyanese culture (Price 1976).

2 In Guyana, this refers mainly to people with a mixed European and African ancestry (Hyles 2013, 121).

1.2 Languages

Due to the pronounced assimilatory cultural policy of the British, neither African nor the other immigrant languages have played a major role in the communication between groups. However, a small linguistic diversity exists. Local languages such as Arawakan- and Carib-based Amerindian dialects are still found in the Amerindian communities; local Caribbean adaptations of Hindi, Urdu, and Tamil are still spoken by some of the descendants of Indian indentured labourers; and also a local creole idiom influenced by African languages developed in Guyana (CIA 2014). However, the English influence is palpable in most of the local languages. Accordingly, in comparison to Suriname (where two very distinguished Creoles developed, Sranantongo and Sarnami, due to the lack of Dutch interest in acculturating their colonial subjects), in Guyana the acculturating, educational colonial practices had a strong influence on the linguistic variety of the country, and today, most people communicate in (local dialects of) English (CCDP 2002, 25).

1.3 Religion and Folklore

The religious affiliations in Guyana are similar to Suriname. Today, 28.8% are Hindus, 30.5 % belong to a Protestant church, 17.9% are listed under ‘other Christians’, 8.1% are Roman Catholics, 7.3% are Muslims, 1.1% are Jehovah’s Witnesses, 0.5% are Rastafarian, 0.1% are Bahai and 4.3% have no religious affiliation (CCDP 2002, 31; CIA 2014). *Obeah*, a syncretic religion with African as well as Christian influences is also practiced in Guyana. However, *Obeah* is less salient than *Winti* in Suriname, probably due to the rigorous acculturation practices of the British which also involved mandatory religious education (Hyles 2013, 44).

Nevertheless, *Obeah* plays a role in Guyanese folklore, particularly in relation to the notion of *Jumbees*, i.e. spirits or ghosts. Guyana’s folklore is particularly influenced by Amerindian and African mythology, and the main characters are: *Bakoo*, a little man living in a bottle who can help to obtain small fortunes; *Moon Gazer*, a tall, nebulous, thin man often standing at crossroads who should not be touched; *Bush Dai-Dai*, a small black furry creature who causes

people who see him to turn grey, go mad, or die; *Water Mama*, a mermaid-like women who may cause sudden drowning; *Masacurraman*, a huge creature living in black water who is deemed responsible for deaths in rivers; *Kanaima*, a force which expresses itself as vengeance in people or animals, preferably in a jaguar; *Water people*, happy, supernaturally gifted people living underwater; *Old Higue*, an old female vampire; and *Fire-Burn*, the Afro-Guyanese nemesis which can be inflicted on a wrong-doer by an *Obeah* man (Heath 1973, 91-3). The impact of the plantation system on Guyanese folk stories is particularly pronounced in two characters, *Coolie Jumbee* and *White Lady*. As an uncanny creature clad in *dhoti*,³ the former “seems to reflect the freed slaves’ anxiety in the face of the newly arrived indentured labourer” (according to Roy Heath 1973, 86-7). *White Lady*, a white woman who causes child death, evokes associations with the wives of plantation owners (Heath 1973, 87). Similar to *Winti*, the myths are considered as proof of cultural authenticity by many Guyanese writers (Carew 1977), and Heath praises them as “evidence of the life-force of [the Guyanese] nation” (Heath 1973, 91). A critical reflection of this perspective will be provided later in this chapter.

1.4 British Colonial History

After years of territorial quarrels among the Dutch and British colonisers, peace and the British rule over Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice was officially established in 1814 with the Convention of London (Hyles 2013, 38). From 1831, the three regions became known under the name of ‘British Guiana’ (Hyles 2013, 38). Although the slave trade was abolished in 1807, the English continued to bring slaves into the colonies (Hyles 2013, 42). In addition to the slaves that had already been brought to the region under Dutch rule, the British imported another 72,658 African slaves between 1776 and 1842 (Estimates Database 2009b). Hence, at first, the emancipatory movements in Britain had little impact on the colonies. In fact, after the *Abolition Act* was passed in 1808, there was a short increase of slave influx into the colonies (Estimates Database 2009b; Hyles 2013, 42)⁴. With slavery being the backbone of the English plantation system, and fearing the loss of the basis of their economic existence, planters and slave traders wanted to

3 Traditional Indian attire for men.

4 See also Table 2; appendix 1, page 518.

import as many slaves as possible before the Act would be implemented in the colonies (Hyles 2013, 42). As a result, the slaves highly outnumbered the White colonisers in the early 19th century, and the Whites lived in a constant fear of revolt (Hyles 2013, 43).⁵

To maintain peace in British Guiana, the colonisers took a cultural approach: from 1825, slaves received religious education in accordance with Christian British cultural ideals (Hyles 2013, 44). Furthermore, when slavery was finally abolished in 1833, the British colonisers allowed the freed slaves to purchase abandoned plantations to prevent riots.⁶ However, less and less workers remained at the plantations, and a substantial part of the freed slaves turned to the cities to find other work opportunities. This created a shortage of labour on the still existing sugar, cotton, and coffee plantations (Hyles 2013, 48). Furthermore, a democratic system of “Free Negro Village[s]” emerged: free slaves were allowed to buy land where they could work and live more or less freely, but where they were still under the educational and ideological influence of the British (Hyles 2013, 45). By 1852, a new middle class of Afro-Guianese people had emerged which, by then, owned and farmed a significant proportion of British Guiana’s soil (Hyles 2013, 47). Thus, although violence and turmoil were not completely absent, the British created a comparatively peaceful transition into the post-slavery period.

Still grappling with shortage of labour, the British tried to foster immigration from other countries, and by 1847, 12,237 people from India, 12,898 people from other West Indian countries, 8,645 from Africa, and 16,000 from Madeira had arrived (Younger 2009, 57). However, these 50,000 people were hardly enough to solve the labour shortage issues. Promising to improve conditions for immigrants, the British recruited 238,909 Indian labourers between 1884 and 1914 (Younger 2009). Lured by promises, such as better housing, medical services, and the prospect to return with a small fortune, the Indians arrived with high expectations (Hyles 2013, 48). However, the conditions were

5 Slave revolts, such as the *1763 Berbice Rebellion*, had been frequent incidences under Dutch rule (Hyles 2013, 38).

6 After the abolition of slavery, many plantation owners had to abandon their estates because of a labour shortage (after a transition time of six years, the slaves were not obliged to work at the plantations). As a result, of the 230 sugar and 174 coffee plantations that existed in 1829, only 180 sugar and sixteen coffee plantations were left in 1849 (Hyles 2013, 47).

nothing near of what they expected, and the labour on the plantations was excruciating. Although the colonialists had “replaced the coercion of the whip by the letter of the law” by abolishing slavery, the Indian indentured workers were hardly ‘free’ and suffered under the conditions of the new plantation labour system (Cross 1972, 5; Younger 2009, 58-9). The Indian indentured workers even lived in the same barracks that were formerly used to house slaves (Younger 2009, 58).

With all these newly arrived, ethnically diverse immigrants, the British again put an emphasis on cultural assimilation. Acknowledging the necessity for educational measures for successful acculturation, the colonisers passed a decree in 1876, the Compulsory Education Ordinance, that obliged all children of immigrants and former slaves to attend school (Hyles 2013, 51). Hence, although British Guiana featured one of the smallest proportion of people with European descent, the British asserted their cultural hegemony. The common denominator between ethnic groups became a unifying British culture. Therefore, despite its ethnic plurality, today, Guyana’s cultural diversity is not very pronounced.

Nevertheless, tensions between ethnic groups emerged – particularly (but not only) between people from Indian and African descent. Although Hyles notes that Guyanese Indians and Africans today are more alike than different, i.e. an Indo-Guyanese has more in common with an Afro-Guyanese (and vice versa) than with any other Indian or African respectively, the groups have had a rather uneasy shared history (Hyles 2013, 122). The animosity between these two groups emerged from the British policies concerning the plantation system. Cross writes, “there was from the first an inherent conflict of interest between the African and the Indian” (Cross 1972, 5). Although slavery had been abolished, the wages on the plantations were still very low, and the arrival of the indentured workers crushed the prospect of better working and payment conditions (Cross 1972, 5-6). Although the indentured workers suffered from the devastating conditions and low wages as much as the freed slaves, the latter did not only blame the indentured workers for inhibiting further emancipation, but also denounced them for a lack of loyalty to a common cause against the colonisers (Cross 1972, 5). As a result, the legacy of the plantation system induced an ethnic division of labour. At the beginning of the 20th century, the rice and sugar industry was mainly in the

hands of Indo-Guianese workers; the workforce in the bauxite and gold mining industry, and later the civil service, was mainly comprised of Afro-Guianese (Cross 1972, 7). Small retail was in the hands of the Portuguese and Chinese (Cross 1972, 7). Despite some shared interests, the ethnic division of labour fostered the creation of ethnic stereotypes, prejudice, animosities and even violence.

1.5 Social Structure Before Independence

In the first half of the 20th century, the British slowly lost their political influence in the colony. Although many positions of power were still held by a small, mostly White elite, other ethnicities began to work their way up the power-hierarchy (Hyles 2013, 102, 123). Initial changes began with the formation of fledgling unions and workers' organisations which sought more rights, higher wages, and better conditions for the plantation workers – and other trade unions followed (Hyles 2013, 123). The two main labour unions were the *British Guiana Labour Union* which attracted mainly Afro-Guyanese workers, while the *Man Power Citizen Association* represented the interests of Indo-Guyanese workers (Cross 1972, 10). Hence, despite some ethnic overlap between the workforces of the different industries, these unions were again divided by ethnicity.

Further changes resulted from the increasing educational levels among the Indo- and Afro-Guianese population. Due to the colonisers' focus on British education, the population in British Guiana was relatively well educated: in 1947, 92.8% of children at the age of ten went to school. Most children, however, left school before 14 (UN Statistics Division 1956, 597). Particularly Indo children were largely underrepresented in secondary schools, because many planters still needed Indian child workers for "weeding and manuring on their estates" (Cross 1972, 8). As a result, the Indo-Guianese were generally less educated, and hence, they had less chances to obtain better paying or different jobs outside the plantation system (Cross 1972, 6). In contrast, refusing to continue their work at the plantations, many Afro-Guianese either worked in higher ranking jobs at the plantations, or they moved to the bigger cities where they received better educational and job opportunities (Cross 1972, 6). An exemption was the bauxite

and gold mining industry whose workforce was mainly comprised of Afro-Guianese (Cross 1972, 7).

Emancipating themselves from the plantation system, the Afro-Guianese and Indo-Guianese did not only increase their influence and share of export products, such as bauxite and sugar, they also took other professions. Already by 1915, the majority of employees in British Guiana's legislature were non-Europeans (Hyles 2013, 102). Although, in 1947, almost half of the 147,052 economically active population were still listed as 'farmers and related workers', the other half were employed as professionals and technicians (4,732), clerks and managers (9,013), sales workers (6,965), miners (3,229), craftsmen (35,409), and service workers (15,556) (UN Statistics Division 1956, 478). However, as mentioned earlier, mainly Afro-Guianese people moved to the cities where better jobs and education were available; therefore, the majority of civil servants were Afro-Guianese (Cross 1972, 8).

Thus, the majority of people who were able to send their children to renowned secondary schools, such as the *Queen's College* in Georgetown, primarily belonged to the White elite, or to the Afro-Guianese population. However, also a small number of Indo-Guianese families went to secondary schools and received higher education. The Queen's College, for example, not only produced salient political and cultural figures from the Afro-Guianese elite, such as Forbes Burnham, the novelist Wilson Harris, and the poet Martin Carter, but also PPP leader Cheddi Jagan. Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of Indo-Guianese children in secondary schools persisted until the middle of the 20th century. Thus, labour and lives were divided along ethnic lines which also led to socio-economic differences between Afro- and Indo-Guianese. The Indo-Guianese mainly lived in rural areas which provided jobs in the sugar and rice industry, but restricted educational possibilities; while the bigger cities with its higher paying jobs and better education were mainly populated by Afro-Guianese. In 1931, only 8 per cent of the police force and only 7 percent of teachers were Indo-Guianese (Cross 1972, 8).

Due to the ethnic division of labour, professions, and wealth, economic hardship fostered social issues. When the sugar market became less stable at the beginning of the 20th century, ethnic tensions became even more pronounced

(Hyles 2013, 52). Notwithstanding the cultural assimilation policy of the British, ethnic turmoil arose again and again (Hyles 2013, 52). Although Britain continued to asserting Britishness among its colonial subjects, the economic regression entailed by the two World Wars continued to drive ethnic quarrels (Hyles 2013, 103). The falling sugar prices spurred riots at the plantations, and the aggravating social conditions incited protest in the cities. Mainly organised by the different workers' organisations, the social protests were again divided by ethnicity. Hence, although British Guiana had a more uniform culture in comparison to Suriname, ethnic rivalries emerged and persisted, particularly in the context of the economic issues that the colony faced in the first half of the 20th century.

1.6 Towards Independence

The cultural influence of the English continued, but their political power steadily weakened over the course of the 20th century. Although the British tried to re-assert their power after World War I by constitutional reforms that kept the new Legislative Council under British control, their influence waned (Hyles 2013, 102). The exacerbating economic situation during World War II fostered the emergence of political groups willing to tackle local issues. One of the most prominent figures emerging from these groups was Cheddi Jagan. Jagan was the son of an Indo-Guyanese sugar estate foreman who had studied dentistry in the U.S. (Hyles 2013, 103). On his return to British Guiana, he became politically active. In respect to the different ethnic groups, Jagan pursued a conspicuously integrative policy – he believed in an egalitarian, pluralistic, independent Guyanese state (Jagan 1961). In 1947, he was elected to the Legislative Council in East Demerara. With his political statements against ethnic disparities, he also gained respect with people from other groups, and in 1950 he became co-founder of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) together with Forbes Burnham, a politician of African descent (Westmaas 2009, 109). Uniting large proportions of the middle and lower classes, the PPP gained power. In addition, anti-colonial and anti-British voices grew louder. Fearing to lose their colony, the British first granted the right to vote in 1952, followed by a new constitution in 1953 which allotted more power to the colonial subjects, while still preserving British hegemony. The PPP won elections in 1953, but the executive and legislative

power still remained with British authorities. However, the anti-British atmosphere among the ethnic groups in the colony remained (Hyles 2013, 104).

Notwithstanding its growing influence, the PPP split in 1955 – along political and (again) ethnic lines. While the Indo-Guyanese Jagan had moved into an explicitly Marxist direction, the Afro-Guyanese Burnham promoted a milder form of Socialism. Most Indo-Guyanese people continued to support the PPP, while Burnham founded the People's National Congress (PNC), a new party that represented the interest of the Afro-Guyanese population. However, the elections in 1957 were won again by Jagan's PPP. Overshadowed by the two big ethnic parties, the United Force (UF) was founded in 1960, with the Portuguese Peter D'Aguiar as their front man (Premdas 1973, 14). The PPP had won the elections again in 1961, but the ethnic tensions intensified – also due to foreign interventions. In the face of the Cold War, the British and US government perceived Jagan's openly Marxist-Leninist ideology as a threat and tried to infringe the power of the PPP. Riots and strikes among the sugar and bauxite workers were allegedly funded and spurred by the CIA to debilitate Jagan's power. Burnham's policy was more in line with the political positions of the West, and hence, the PNC received foreign support (Westmaas 2009, 110).⁷ In 1964, the PNC eventually won the elections – also because the party formed a coalition with the UF. However, racial issues intensified. Escalating violence and further riots between 1962 and 1965 prompted the British Colonial Officer to offer negotiations on independence.⁸ Supposedly, a colonial British Guyana under the rule of the Leninist-Marxist Jagan was less preferable than a free Guyana under the opportunistic but seemingly more moderate Burnham (Westmaas 2009, 110). Jagan drifted more and more to the political left, also radicalising the PPP's policies in relation to gaining political power by violent means (Cross 1972, 11).⁹ However, Burnham's policy also was about to change. When in 1966, on May 26, British Guyana was granted independence, the newly formed state looked into an uneasy future (Hyles 2013, 104-5).

7 Allegedly, the CIA played a role in the 1964 elections (Westmaas 2009, 110).

8 The colony had become less important to the British who had focussed on their colonies on Africa. With the conference on independence, the British wanted to distance themselves from the politically motivated ethnic quarrels (Hyles 2013, 105).

9 Allegedly, the PPP conspired to set Georgetown in fire in 1957, when adult suffrage had been suspended (Cross 1972, 11).

1.7 *Solidification of Ethnic Tensions*

Spurred by the political dissent between Jagan and Burnham, tensions between the people of Indian and African descent were re-fuelled in Guyana. Considering that by 1964, still only 20 per cent of the police force was of Indian descent, the riots and strikes on the sugar and rice plantations were also perceived in ethnic terms (Cross 1972, 8). The violence of the police during these riots was not only interpreted as a show of force by British Guiana's executive authority, but as an act of ethnic violence. Hence, when in 1964, quarrels concerning union representation of sugar workers escalated, they incited outbursts of ethnic violence. The general cry for decolonisation and the rejection of British hegemony exacerbated the situation. The political debates reflected an anti-colonial aspiration for independence, but also a contest for a new ethnic hegemony. Donald Horowitz observes that elections in Guyana were dominated by ethnic voting, i.e. most Indo-Guyanese voted for the PPP, while most Afro-Guyanese voted for the PNC (Horowitz 1985, 319). Reportedly, the Commonwealth Observer Team that supervised the elections in 1964 called the event a "racial census", and Westmaas describes the net effect of the elections of 1957, 1961, and 1964 as "sustain[ing] the ethnic divide" (Westmaas 2009, 109). This was specifically encouraged in the political discourses of both sides, and a specific term for the practice came up: *apan jhatt* which can be translated as "vote race" or "vote your own" (Wilson 2012, 82). While both parties tried to evade ethnic references in their manifestos, the political choices of voters and political policies were driven by ethnic affiliations (Premdas 1992, 23). Accordingly, the political debates between the supporters of the PPP and the PNC became a struggle for ethnic national supremacy.

After the division of the PPP, the PNC slowly but certainly gained power. Succeeding Cheddi Jagan as Premier (still under British rule) in 1964, Forbes Burnham was to become the first Prime Minister of independent Guyana in 1966. Although the PPP was not explicitly discredited in ethnic terms, Burnham had an explicit idea of how a new independent nation should look like – an independent state integrated into a common pan-African cultural community of West Indian states (Burnham 1976). Hence, the national discourse not only became

increasingly anti-colonial, but also explicitly Afro-Guyanese and pan-African. The general national motto was: “One people, one nation, one destiny” (Mahabir 1996, 284) – and according to PNC members, this destiny should reveal itself under one common Afro-Guyanese denominator (Seymour 1973, 5).

The PNC seized more and more power. Allegedly, the PNC rigged elections in 1968 and also took other measures to systematically keep the Indo-Guyanese from regaining political influence (Westmaas 2009, 111). The (non-fatal) shooting of university professor Joshua Ramsammy in 1971, the land rebellion as well as the Rampersaud Toll Gate Shooting in 1973 exacerbated ethnic tensions, and another surge of ethnic violence followed (Westmaas 2009, 117). After another rigged election in 1973, Burnham introduced the doctrine of “the paramountcy of the party” (Westmaas 2009, 119). Disguised as ‘cooperative socialism’ – hence, Guyana’s classification as ‘cooperative republic’ – this policy granted the PNC supremacy over the state and all other parties: basically, Burnham seized power over all state related organs, including the press (Westmaas 2009, 119). According to Premdas, “the police, army, secret services, judiciary, public service etc. were purged of political enemies who usually were also mainly from the opposing political [and hence, opposing ethnic] group” (Premdas 1992, 14). Burnham limited the freedom of the press and academia, and violent political repression as well as corruption infringed democracy in Guyana (Westmaas 2009, 119). Hence, he employed means of seizing power which are usually associated with dictatorships.

The ethnic divide also had an impact on how national identity was presented. The dominant discourse on national identity was subtly, but pervasively biased towards Afro-Guyanese culture. In this discourse, the Afro-Guyanese were presented as the true people of Guyana who had earned greater rights to Guyanese land, because they arrived ‘long before’ the Indian indentured workers. Considering the political and cultural dominance of the PNC, Indo-Guyanese culture was mis- and under-represented. The experience of slavery was presented as the key to understanding Guyana’s past and present, providing the Afro-Guyanese with a sense of continuity and historical importance, while moving the cultural impact of other groups into the background (Thompson 2006, 1997). For example, Burnham depicted the 1763 Berbice Rebellion, a shortly

successful revolt of African slaves against the Dutch colonists, not only as the basis of his cooperative republic, but also as a “forerunner” of the Haitian revolution under Toussaint L’Ouverture which led to Haiti’s independence in 1804 (Burnham 1970, 69). The Guyanese historian P.H. Daly even claimed that the cooperative republic “is the inevitable extension of the February Revolution” of 1763, and, therefore, a demonstration of the historical continuity of African culture in the region (Daly 1970, 86). Cuffy, the leader of the Berbice slave revolt, was elevated to the status of a national hero (Thompson 2006, 197). Thompson argues that among Afro-Guyanese, Cuffy became “a reference to all things that are deemed noble in the struggle for dignity, progress, development, and positive self-image” (Thompson 2006, 200). Furthermore, despite Jagan’s contribution to the political climate of the 1960s, the success of the PNC to achieve independence was presented as Burnham’s achievement alone – also neglecting the role of the UF. Hence, in the Burnham era, Guyana’s history and culture was presented in a way that emphasised achievements and cultural elements of the Afro-Guyanese population.

At first sight, Jagan’s notion of national identity and national unity seemed more egalitarian and integrative: in 1961, he called on his fellow Guyanese to “unite to triumph over the enemies of the nation” by embracing “the utter extermination of all segregation and racialism” and by “wiping out all discrimination” (Jagan 1961). However, I am not sure if I agree with Kumar Mahabir who identifies a general egalitarian tendency in Indo-Caribbean nationalism: “Indians believe that the state in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society should strive toward the achievement of peaceful and egalitarian pluralism” (Mahabir 1996, 291).¹⁰ Ethnic tensions were fuelled by both sides. In his regular column, *Straight Talk*, in the magazine *Thunder*, Jagan accused “the PNC to fool the people and to hold back the political advancement and economic development of British Guyana” (Jagan 1959). In the face of *apan jhatt* dividing party supporters according to ethnicity, Jagan’s comment does not help to reduce ethnic

10 Taking into account that Kumar Mahabir was born in Trinidad and had Indian ancestors; his evaluation of the cultural policies of the Indo-Guyanese may be tainted by his own political affiliations and his perspective on the ethnic tensions in Trinidad. The same may be true, of course, for Ralph Premdas and Nigel Westmaas; hence, I do not suggest that the information provided is unreliable or their judgements inadequate, but the information may be presented with a specific agenda in mind.

animosity. Furthermore, while PPP politicians have generally seemed to acknowledge the importance of slavery, Cuffy, and other Afro-Guyanese people in Guyanese history, their acceptance of Afro-Guyanese culture can also be related to their unfavourable political position after the PNC seized power (Thompson 2006, 208). Interestingly, after Jagan was re-elected in 1992, the importance of Afro-Guyanese heroes for Guyana's political present was depicted differently. Thompson refers to a children's book, *Children's Stories of Guyana's Freedom Struggles*, written by Janet Jagan, Cheddi Jagan's wife, in 1995 which completely omits Cuffy and other important Afro-Guyanese people (Thompson 2006, 210). At the same time, she explicitly mentions the Indo-Guyanese *Rambarran*, *Surujballi*, *Harry Jug*, *Pooran* and *Lala Bagee*, and even depicts them as the *real heroes* in Guyana's struggle for freedom (Jagan 1995; Thompson 2006, 210). Hence, the depiction of Guyana's national past and present as well as its national identity (mainly) remained a matter of the perspective of those in power, irrespective of ethnicity.

Nevertheless, although ethnic tensions certainly existed, they were presented as more prevalent and extreme in the discourses on national identity than they probably were. Prem Misir (2010) cautions to uncritically accept the representations of ethnic tensions in Guyana by politicians and the media. Although ethnic violence certainly existed, there are many examples of ethnic collaboration, such as the multiethnic Working People's Alliance under Walter Rodney (Misir 2010, 40). In addition, Misir argues that the social inequality that bedevilled Guyana in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was more related to class than to ethnicity (Misir 2010, 42). Thus, although the discourse of national identity and culture certainly bore an ethnic imprint, it may not have been related to the social reality of the people. Misir points out that, in rural areas, ethnic mixing and peaceful cohabitation were far more common than ethnic segregation and ethnic violence (Misir 2010, 41). Hence, although the majority of people working for the civil service and the police were of African descent, the real social inequalities derived from the massive gap (in terms of power and money) between social classes in Guyana. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the ethnic tensions presented in the literary texts do not mimetically reflect the social or psychic reality of the people living in Guyana.

1.8 Post-Independence and Contemporary Political Climate

Guyana entered its post-independence era in the wake of the ethnic quarrels of the early 1960s. Despite the newly won independence, ethnic tensions and political turmoil continued. Due to Burnham's 'paramountcy of the party', the influence of other political voices, i.e. other ethnic groups, dwindled. The political climate was dominated by discrimination, mistrust, and accusations. Stacey-Ann Wilson notes that "[t]here have been allegations of fraud and irregularities in every election since independence" (Wilson 2012, 76). The political and economic maturation of the country was cut short by restrictive policies that were centred on the preservation of power, not on its equal distribution. As a result, Guyana has a weak infrastructure, poorly developed economics, and a conspicuously uneven distribution of wealth and power (Wilson 2012, 76). Although Burnham actively fostered a political and cultural convergence with other Caribbean states by emphasising West-Indian cultural, regional, and historical similarities (e.g. Burnham 1976), he did not try to create a cultural unity within Guyana that also integrated Indo-Guyanese cultural values. Strong stereotypes and mistrust continued to exist between ethnic groups. Cross observed that, in the 1970s, Indo-Guyanese still depict the Afro-Guyanese "as thriftless and irresponsible with a contempt for the land and a general hedonistic outlook on life"; while the Afro-Guyanese's stereotypic view of the Indo-Guyanese sees them as "mean and cunning and [...] preparing themselves for 'taking over' the country" (Cross 1972, 5). Thus, racial prejudice and power struggles persisted even after Guyana's independence.

However, not all Afro-Guyanese shared Burnham's vision of Guyana, and also Indo-Guyanese groups rejected the rigid ethnic politics of Jagan. The dissatisfaction with the two-party-system in Guyana and the associated ethnic divide, corruption, and economic hardship led to the formation of a counter-discourse, i.e. socio-political movements that have been summarised as "new politics" breaking with the dominant political discourses (Westmaas 2009, 107). These movements discussed political alternatives and sought solutions to the socio-political, ethnic issues in Guyana (Westmaas 2009, 108). There were several political and cultural groups that can be related to these 'new politics':

ASCRIA, IPRA, WPVP and *Ratoon*. The *African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa* (ASCRIA) was a socio-political society concerned with African culture and Guyanese national issues. Founded in 1964, the ASCRIA initially supported the PNC out of 'African solidarity' (Westmaas 2009, 113). From 1970 onwards, however, the society became an engaged critic of the PNC government and took a stance against corruption and the rigid two-party-system in Guyana (Westmaas 2009; 113). The *Indian Political Revolutionary Associates* (IPRA) can be considered ASCRIA's Indo-Guyanese counterpart. Under the auspices of Moses Bhagwan, the IPRA engaged in attempts to resolve racial issues and to foster inter-racial and social cooperation (Westmaas 2009, 114). In 1969, a group of students and professors of the University of Guyana came together and formed *Ratoon*. With its multi-racial composition, *Ratoon* made a stand against the ethnic divide of the times and created a platform where ethnic, political, and academic issues could be debated (Westmaas 2009, 112). However, this multi-ethnic unity was tainted when the group invited Stokely Carmichael, a strong proponent of the *Black Power* movement, in 1970. In his speech in front of the ethnically diverse *Ratoon* audience, Carmichael argued that the *Black Power* movement was only for people of African descent, alienating and upsetting the Indo-Guyanese members, e.g. Paul Nehru Tennassee, of the group. However, when Walter Rodney joined *Ratoon*,¹¹ the group was re-consolidated under his focus on local, ethnic imperatives which emphasised the necessity of a multi-ethnic socio-political solution (see also Rodney 1969). Other prominent members of the group were Clive Thomas, Josh Ramsammy, Omawale, Bonita Harris, Zinul Bacchus, and many of them would play an important role in the political events to come (Westmaas 2009, 127).

The 1970s started with a new outburst of violence and protests. Joshua Ramsammy, a member of *Ratoon*, was non-fatally shot in 1971. Allegedly, PNC leaders were involved, and a cry of outrage from both ethnic groups ran through the press. Eusi Kwayana, a prominent member of ASCRIA, condemned the shootings as political bankruptcy (Westmaas 2009, 114). Moreover, due to aggravating working conditions, bauxite and sugar workers went on strike. Hence,

11 Rodney, originally an Afro-Guyanese, was a strong proponent of the Black Power Movement in Jamaica. However, after he had been denied re-entrance to Jamaica after a conference in 1968, he returned to Guyana in 1973 (Appiah and Gates 2004, 599).

both Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese demonstrated side by side during the ‘land rebellion’ in 1973 for a better political representation of their interests. However, the hopes for a more multi-ethnic political orientation were smashed by the rigged elections in 1973 which, again, were won by the PNC (Westmaas 2009, 118). Nevertheless, the Ramsammy shootings, the land rebellion, and the exacerbating democratic conditions led to an increased political activism of the groups. For ASRCIA, IPRA, and *Ratoon*, the necessity to abandon the old ethnically divided politics became even clearer. In 1972, the IPRA initiated a joint, multi-ethnic approach together with the ASCRIA and established the *Race Commission* which set out to discuss racial issues with the rural population. In 1974, the ASCRIA, the IPRA, Ratoon, as well as the *Working people’s Vanguard Party* (WPVP) and the *Guyana Anti-Discrimination League* (GADM) formed a multi-ethnic alliance, the *Working People’s Alliance* (WPA). The newly established party sought to take a “stand against race based elections, violent political repression, worsening economic conditions of the masses, cancerous corruption and denial of academic and press freedom” (Westmaas 2009, 120). Although the WPA assembled many important political thinkers of the time, e.g. Walter Rodney, Clive Thomas, and Eusi Kawayana, the organisation chose a collective leadership, again making a statement about its multi-ethnic, egalitarian orientation (Appiah and Gates 2004, 599). Despite the WPA’s high ambitions and good intentions, its impact was meagre and limited to a “politics of criticism” against the overwhelming power of the PNC (Westmaas 2009, 120). The votes of Guyanese people continued to be divided according to ethnic lines, and the ethnic tensions persisted. The assassination of Walter Rodney in 1980 contributed to the party’s declining influence (Appiah and Gates 2004, 599). The WPA’s greatest political impact was reflected in only two parliamentary seats in 1985. Nevertheless, the party needs to be acknowledged for taking a multi-ethnic stand against the ethnically divided two-party-system in Guyana (Westmaas 2009, 120-4). However, although, the socio-cultural impact of the WPA should not be neglected, its impact on literature is relatively small.

Issues of race, ethnicity, and cultural hegemony have persisted in the political discourses of Guyana. Under the rule of the PNC, the Indo-Guyanese PPP perceived the Afro-Guyanese PNC as threatening and violent; after the PPP

won the elections in 1992, the PNC began to see Afro-Guyanese as the victims of Indo-Guyanese retaliation politics. Accordingly, the long reign of Burnham and the PNC as well as the more recent dominance of the PPP has only exacerbated the ethnic tensions within the political discourses of Guyana: “every attempt to foster an environment of peaceful coexistence has failed as no group of politicians trusts that the others are acting in good faith” (Wilson 2012, 76) – despite the fact that peaceful coexistence and ethnic mixing may present a strong aspect of the social reality of Guyana (Misir 2010). Nevertheless, aggravated by the country’s poor economic situation and people’s resulting dissatisfaction, violent outbursts and discrimination are frequent occurrences in Guyana (Wilson 2012, 76). However, despite the division of Guyana’s political parties along ethnic lines, the ethnic issues in Guyana should be considered politically oriented, rather than driven by socio-cultural discrepancies (Wilson 2012, 76). Interestingly, despite the cultural similarities between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese, the British acculturation politics did not contribute to a peaceful national unity after independence.

2. *Guyanese Literary Culture*

In the wake of the growing influence of local political parties in the 1950s, literary culture was strongly influenced by the political developments in Guyana in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the diversity of literary institutions was less pronounced in Guyana than in Suriname, Guyana had a flourishing literary culture and artistic culture. Similar to Suriname, the cultural production was influenced by the explicitly nationalist discourses of the time.

2.1 *Literary Associations, Magazines, and other Institutions*

From the early 20th century onwards, several literary groups existed in British Guiana. The 1930s and 1940s saw the founding of the *British Guiana Literary Society* by the Afro-Guyanese Norman Eustace Cameron (Benson and Conolly [1994] 2005, 177), the *British Guiana Writers Association*, and the *PEN*. Initiated by the Afro-Guyanese Arthur J. Seymour in 1945, the *British Guiana Writers*

Association issued *Kykoveral*,¹² the country's first literary magazine which featured most of its top-notch writers, but also included contributions from other Caribbean authors. Politics intruded here too: *Kykoveral* ceased to exist in 1961 after a disagreement between the Afro-Guianese Seymour and British Guiana's Premier, the Indo-Guianese Cheddi Jagan, on Seymour's political role (Hughes 1979, 68), but it was re-launched in 1984, still under the auspices of Seymour.

In the 1940s, cultural life flourished in Georgetown due to the *British Guiana Union of Cultural Clubs*. The Union's pronounced goal was to make everyone "aware of the history, origins, and backgrounds of the six racial groups in Guyana", and it organised public debates, readings, and small festivals (Seymour 1978, 27). Young intellectuals from different ethnic backgrounds regularly met in the Union's clubs, such as the *Science Club*, the *Photographic Society*, the *Music Teachers*, and the *Writers' Association*. After seven successful years, the Union's function was taken over by the British Council and the Extramural Department of the University of the West Indies (Seymour 1978, 28). Accordingly, a vivid public cultural life had developed in Guyana within ten years.

In the 1950s, cultural events were mainly in governmental hands. The government organised annual *History and Culture Weeks* which, among other things, had the specific goal "to create solidarity between rural and urban areas [... as well as] among ethnic groups [...] and] to conserve the nation's heritage" (Seymour 1978, 28). In addition, the government realised the educational value of national cultural production and its potential to contribute to social change. Consequently, regional cultural centres were founded, and the *Institute of Creative Arts* (ICA) was initiated as "the teaching arm of the National History and Arts Council" (Seymour 1978, 28). After the death of Edgar Mittelholzer in 1965, one of the country's most renowned writers of the time, the government inaugurated several Memorial Lectures which were supposed to "promote a sense of national pride" (Seymour 1978, 31). Accordingly, in Guyana, cultural production was encouraged, but also massively influenced by governmental institutions and the ostensibly nationalist agenda.

The governmental influence on literary culture became even more pronounced after independence. From 1965 until 1985, the literary periodical *Kaie*

12 Named after the Dutch fort Kyk-Over-Al, established in 1616 (Daly [1945] 1995, 29).

was published by the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture, and thus, it was highly influenced by the politics of the PNC and Burnham. In 1972, as “a direct result of the initiative of the prime minister”, Forbes Burnham, the first festival for the creative arts in the Caribbean (*CARIFESTA '72*) was held in Guyana (Seymour 1978, 58). In 1973, the Department of Creative Writing was set up as a division of the Institute of Creative Arts which was responsible for the organisation of workshops in creative writing, lectures for teachers (Seymour 1978, 31). In 1975, another cultural festival, the *Guyanese Festival of Arts* (*Guyfesta*), was organised under the motto ‘*My Community, My Nation*’ (Seymour 1978, 47). Although the government promoted national culture by these cultural initiatives, they also kept a tight grip on what was produced and literature was under their influence as well.

2.2 *Printing*

In the 1960s and 1970s, the printing of books was in governmental hands as well. There were approximately seven governmental ministries and departments involved in editorial activities. The Government did not only print educational books for schools and universities, but also published literary work from Guyana. In addition, important works (particularly from Caribbean authors) were translated and republished (Seymour 1978, 37). There was no independent publishing house in Guyana until recently, when *The Caribbean Publishing House* was launched in 2008 (CARICOM secretariat 2008, 2B). Accordingly, authors who could accommodate their work among the different publications initiated by the government had to rely on self-publication or foreign publishing houses.

2.3 *Mass Media*

The pervasive governmental influence of the PNC was also extended to the mass media. Radio programmes and newspapers were launched to “disseminate and popularize cultural values” (Seymour 1978, 52). In 1951, the main broadcasting stations were Radio Demerara, run by Rediffusion Ltd., and B.G. Broadcasting Service. The latter was purchased by the new independence government in the mid-1960s and renamed Guyana Broadcasting Service in 1972. Again, the government put an emphasis on shaping Guyanese culture; their pronounced

national agenda was to “chang[e] the society values inherited from colonialism” and to “creat[e] a sense of national identity by programmes based on Guyanese and Caribbean culture” (Seymour 1978, 53). However, the idea of a Guyanese national culture was shaped by Burnham’s ethnic-political agenda which emphasised Afro-Guyanese elements and neglected most other cultural influences (Thompson 2006). In addition, it also needs to be noted that the governmental influence on the media was seen as a strong infringement of the freedom of the press (Westmaas 2009, 120).

In the 1960s, the printing press was taken over by the government as well. Before the 1950s, there were some newspapers with “expatriate editors”, such as *The Chronicle* and *The Argosy*, and in the 1950s and 1960s, “other foreign press magnates invaded Guyana” (Seymour 1978, 54). However, after independence, this foreign influence was about to cease, and in 1978, there was “one morning and one evening paper, both owned by public corporation” (Seymour 1978, 54). Next to these daily newspapers, political and religious institutions printed pamphlets and religious writings (Seymour 1978, 54).

As mentioned above, Guyana had two magazines which published literature in their volumes: *Kyk-Over-Al* (1945-1961, 1984-present) which was published by the *British Guiana Writers Association*, with Arthur J. Seymour¹³ as its editor; and *Kaie* (1965-1985) which was in the hands of the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture. *Kyk-Over-Al* was published biannually and included poetry, short stories, as well as literary criticism and cultural comments. In comparison to *Moetete*, the agenda of *Kyk-Over-Al* was more humble:

Kykoveral we hope will be an instrument to help forge a Guianese people, and to make them conscious of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities. There’s so much we can do as a people if we can get together more, and with this magazine as an outlet, the united cultural organisations can certainly be build, we believe, some achievement of common pride in the

13 Arthur J. Seymour was a key figure in the making of Guyanese literature. He did not only write poetry, but mainly functioned as an editor, commentator, and facilitator of literary productions in Guyana. Seymour worked for the civil service from 1933 onwards, and in 1955 he became Head of Government Information Services. He was editor of *Kykoveral* between 1945-61 and 1985-89, and he published several anthologies of Guyanese literature and literary histories (Seymour 1980, 72).

literary world, without detracting in the least from their group aims or autonomy (Seymour [1945] 1995, 27).

Hence, *Kykoveral*¹⁴ was also introduced as an instrument to forge national unity, but the aspirations are quite intellectual. Although literature is presented as a means to promote inter-group cohesion and as a source of common pride, the ‘autonomy’ of the different groups in Guyana is not questioned. However, it also needs to be considered that the first *Kyk* appeared in 1945, while *Moetete* was published in 1968, only seven years before independence. Presumably, the nationalist tendencies were already more pronounced in Suriname at the time when *Moetete* first came out. Nevertheless, Seymour explicitly emphasises the need for common cultural roots, and in his opinion, *Kyk* will present one of them: “If we are going to grow [...] as a people, we’ve got to have roots and *Kykoveral* is one of them” (Seymour [1945] 1995, 28). Notably, ten years later, *Kyk*’s agenda seems to have become more nationalist: in the foreword to *Kyk-Over-Al* 6,19, “the Editor must also ask himself to what degree does the selection help to build a feeling of national pride and to chronicle the achievements of the people of the country” (Seymour 1954, 6). Thus, ten years before independence, the nationalist tendencies have also become more pronounced in *Kykoveral*. In comparison to *Moetete*, however, *Kykoveral* also propagated a specific West-Indian notion of identity. Editor Seymour constantly emphasised the importance of Guyanese culture within the greater community of *West-Indian* culture (e.g. Seymour [1945] 1957; 1955a, 1955b; 1961). *Kykoveral* routinely featured short stories and poetry, literary criticism, and cultural comments from other Caribbean authors (Seymour 1980, 73).

Although Seymour asserts that “the main emphases in *Kykoveral* were on poetry and criticism” (Seymour 1980, 73), a focus on Afro-Guyanese culture was also palpable in *Kykoveral*. According to Seymour, it was appreciated by L. E. Brathwaite in 1966 that “the magazine move[d] from a purely Guyanese to a West Indian position [...] and became aware towards the end, of the importance of African culture in the region” (Seymour 1980, 72; Seymour 1986, 6). Seymour’s

14 Although the magazine’s title is written as *Kyk-Over-Al* at the front page, inside the magazine, Seymour refers to the title as *Kykoveral* or simply as *Kyk* (e.g. Seymour [1945] 1995, 27). I also use all three to refer to the magazine.

tendency to emphasise the importance of Afro-Guyanese culture may be related to his own ethnic and political affiliations. Although *Kyk* was initially criticised for not being radical and revolutionary enough, Seymour more and more sided with Afro-Caribbean culture. In 1961, discords with Jagan lead to the cessation of *Kykoveral*, and Seymour resigned his job in the civil service (Hughes 1979, 68).

Seymour lived in Puerto Rico between 1962 and 1965 where he worked as Information and Cultural Collaboration Officer for the *Caribbean Organisation*. Under Burnham, however, Seymour returned to Guyana and re-entered the political and cultural stage. He was assigned several important cultural and administrative positions (Dance 1986, 451; Seymour 1977). Although *Kykoveral* was only revived in 1984, its focus on Afro-Guyanese culture still persisted. For example, for the 1988 edition which celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the Arrival of East Indians in Guyana, the contributions of Indo-Guyanese culture to Caribbean culture is acknowledged, but its cultural importance is not presented as equal to the influence of Afro-Guyanese culture (*Kyk* 38 1988). After the introduction, which acknowledges the “East Indians, surviving and rising above indenture, as Africans survived and rose above slavery, have become an important part of [the West-Indian] social, economic and cultural mosaic” (*Kyk* 38 1988, 5), the first 40 pages of the volume discuss dancehall, calypso, and carnival which are elements generally related to Afro-Caribbean culture.

Edited by Celeste Dolphin, *Kaie* became the official organ of the National History and Arts Council (Seymour 1980, 76). From its very beginning, the periodical was used as a medium for political and cultural messages by the government. The first issue published in 1965 featured articles with messages from Prime Minister Burnham, the Minister of Education, Winifred Gaskin, and Lynette Dolphin, Chairman of the National History and Arts Council (Seymour 1980, 76). Next to comments, lectures, and articles about Guyanese national culture, history, and politics, *Kaie* also included articles about other Caribbean countries. Furthermore, *Kaie* published issues on the cultural outputs of *CARIFESTA '72* and *CARIFESTA '76* which Burnham praised as an important means for “the realisation of [a] Caribbean identity” and “the survival of the Caribbean as a unit” (Burnham 1976, 3). Hence, it should not come as a surprise that the kind of Guyanese / Caribbean identity that was advertised in *Kaie* was

again strongly Afro-centric. For example, in a contribution to *Kaie* 11, Arthur Seymour emphasises “the main element[.] in forging the authentic [Caribbean] voice is the resurrection of the image of the African slave” from which “the new and gathering strength of the values of the Afro-centred past” can be drawn to create a Caribbean “power and dignity not known before” (Seymour 1973, 5). In *Kaie* 16, P. H. Daly again praises Cuffy, the head of the 1763 slave revolt, as “a national hero and revolutionary strategist” while also (again) making a connection between Cuffy and Toussaint L’Ouverture (Daly 1979, 31). Although Indo-Guyanese contributions to Caribbean culture are also mentioned, they are often depicted as contributive rather than foundational elements (see Daly 1979, 31). Hence, the literary publications in *Kaie* need to be considered under the influence of the socio-political ethnically charged climate of the 1970s under Burnham’s regime.

2.4 Reception

In addition to the promotion of cultural and literary clubs and events, the government tried to make sure that the fruits of national culture could be accessed by everyone: in 1963, the University of Guyana¹⁵ library was established, and in 1972, the Public Free Library was turned into the National Library and the book stock was expanded until 1975 to 150,000 volumes (Seymour 1978, 33). Furthermore, the Guyanese Library Association was founded in 1968 to “promote and assist bibliographic activity in Guyana” (Seymour 1978, 35). Accordingly, the nationalist aspirations of the government included the promotion of literary reception in the population (which is also reflected by the various festivals and events that the government organised).

Although the first *Guyana Prizes for Literature* were introduced in 1987 by President Desmond Hoyte, the critical reception of literature had also played a role in *Kyk* and *Kaie* which routinely featured reviews of important publications of Guyanese and other Caribbean literatures. The importance of public reception of literature is also reflected in Seymour’s foreword of the first *Kyk*: “The issues of *Kykoveral* will depend largely upon public response. We may promise half yearly publication, with the hope readers will ask that the periodical appears

¹⁵ The University itself was founded in the same year (UoG 2014).

quarterly [...] and we would wish steady growth in quality and response” ([emphasis in original] Seymour [1945] 1995, 28). Accordingly, the reader was assumed to play a crucial role in the fate of *Kyk*, but Seymour also seemed positive about its success. Hence, the local audience played a crucial role in the publication of literature. There was a strong readership for newspapers and magazines (Seymour 1980, 28). Longer formats, however, such as the novel, were not produced and hardly purchased in Guyana; Seymour notes, the Guyanese “are not a book-reading or book-buying people” (Seymour 1980, 28). Nevertheless, short literary forms, such as poetry, short stories, and essays, which could easily be published in periodicals, were widely read (Seymour 1980, 28). This is also one important reason why the present study is based on analyses of just those short forms of literature which are seen to be foundational for a literary representation of cultural identity.

2.5 *Interim Summary*

Accordingly, from the 1960s onwards, the government had a tight grip on almost all cultural production in the country. With the PNC coming into power in the pre-Independence government of 1964, and remaining the leading party until 1992, the nationalist agenda in the governmental promotions had a tendency to emphasise Afro-Guyanese culture. Although Seymour’s report on Guyanese culture includes references to and acknowledgements of Indo-Guyanese culture, the notion of an “egalitarian society” (Seymour 1978, 23) and “solidarity among ethnic groups” (Seymour 1978, 28) bears a dominating assimilatory overtone. Seymour describes one of the major goals, the promotion of cultural activities, as “allowing all sections of the nation to identify with a common image and a national ethos” (Seymour 1978, 64). Although he acknowledges the presence of Indo-Guyanese culture, Seymour seems to imply that for the parts of the population of Indian descent, adopting a Guyanese identity entails overcoming their own cultural restrictions and customs (Seymour 1978, 64). He is less critical, however, in relation to the Afro-Guyanese population, probably due to his own ethnic and political affiliations. Seymour frequently emphasised the African roots of Guyanese culture (e.g. Seymour 1973; 1978). Accordingly, for Seymour, a local, national culture needed to have a pronounced Afro-Guyanese imprint.

3. *Comparison to Suriname*

Similar to the situation in Suriname, the discourse on national identity turned more and more Afro-centric. Despite the initial influence of Cheddi Jagan, eventually, the dominant cultural voice had a distinct Afro-Guyanese sound. When Burnham was elected Premier in 1964 and became Prime Minister in 1966, he slowly but steadily increased his influence over the state and national culture. His policy of the 'paramountcy of the party' evicted most Indo-Guyanese from positions of power, such as in the police and public services (Mahabir 1996, 285; Premdas 1992, 14; Westmaas 2009, 119). In addition, considering the influence of the government on almost all cultural activities, only few Indo-Guyanese artists and opinions deviant from the Afro-Guyanese mainstream received acknowledgement.¹⁶ Thus, similar to Suriname, 'Guyanese culture' mainly meant a common culture of different ethnicities assimilated to Afro-Guyanese culture (Seymour 1977, 52).¹⁷

A major difference between the cultural-literary agenda in Suriname and Guyana was related to Burnham's explicit political orientation towards other Caribbean states. Burnham's idea of Guyana was not only Afro-centric, but *West-Indian-oriented* (Burnham 1976, 2; Seymour 1977, 59). Accordingly, the kind of identity which should be created was one which aligned Guyanese national identity with a greater Caribbean cultural and regional identity. Therefore, the literary magazines did not only feature Guyanese, but also many other Caribbean authors. Furthermore, Burnham actively tried to foster a pan-African, pan-Caribbean notion of Guyanese culture through cultural events. In particular, *CARIFESTA '72*, *Guyfesta* (in 1975), and *CARIFESTA '75* were supposed to "project the dreams and visions of the region and help to foster and develop a

16 It is important to note that the same neglect pertains to female writers (). Hence, the discrimination in literature is not only related to Indo-Guyanese people.

17 As Misir (2010) has pointed out, it is important to note that the unequal, dichotomous representation of Afro- and Indo-Guyanese culture was mainly part of the political discourses of the times and did not necessarily reflect the social and psychic realities of the people living in Guyana. The policy of Burnham's paramountcy of the party also did not evict all Indians from the state services. For example, Rajkumari Singh, an Indo-Guyanese writer, worked for governmental services. However, even if the discourse on national identity did not reflect the reality of the people, the bias in favour of Afro-Guyanese culture cannot be denied. Nevertheless, it is difficult to interpret information sources correctly. Considering the academic debates on the role and importance of Indo-Caribbean culture, even scholarly articles (such as the ones by the Caribbean scholars Mahabir, Premdas, and Westmaas) may not be completely free from a political or cultural agenda.

Caribbean personality” (Seymour 1977, 59). Hence, national identity in Guyana involved both Caribbean and Guyanese aspects, connected through a common heritage of African culture.

Similar to *Moetete* in Suriname, this tendency to focus on Afro-Guyanese voices is reflected by the frequency of Indo-Guyanese appearances in *Kykoveral*. Although *Kyk* had Indo-Guyanese contributors, such as C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla and Brojo Bhattacharya, the majority of works published in *Kyk* were written by Afro-Guyanese writers.¹⁸ The dominance of Afro-Guyanese voices is also reflected in the critical reception of *Kyk*. For example, despite L.E. Braithwaite’s lament concerning the lack of *Kyk*’s revolutionary and radical tendencies, he praises the magazine’s turn towards Afro-Guyanese culture in the 1950s (Seymour 1995, 19). A similar agenda was perpetuated by *Kaie*. *Kaie* was directly affiliated to a governmental institution, and thus, its literary contributions were mostly in line with notions and opinions of the government (Seymour 1980, 76). In *Kaie*, Burnham openly propagated an identity that affiliated Guyana with other Caribbean states that were united under a common Afro-Caribbean influence (Burnham 1976). Hence, although his notion of national identity was conspicuously transnational, his focus on Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Guyanese culture led to a neglect of a representation of Indo-Guyanese culture in the national discourses and literary magazines of the times. The repercussion of this focus on Afro-Guyanese literature can still be found in literary anthologies and handbooks – even in recent editions. When talking about prominent literary figures of the 1950s and 1960s, mainly names of Guyanese authors with African roots such as E.R. Braithwaite, Jan Carew, Martin Carter, Wilson Harris, Roy Heath and Edgar Mittelholzer are mentioned (e.g. Kutzinski 2001, 15). Accordingly, the legacy of the ethnic-political conflicts and governmental influences are still palpable until today – and need to be critically addressed in this study.

Another distinction between the national discourse in Guyana and Suriname is the constitution of the group of writers who contributed with their

18 For example, of the first contributors to *Kyk* – namely Harold Stannard, Alan W. Steward, Oscar Wight, H.R. Harewood, N.E. Cameron, J.A.V. Bourne, Duncan Boyce, Vere T. Daly, Celeste Dolphin, Wilson Harris, Terence C. Holder, J.E. Humphrey, Jas W. Smith – not a single one was Indo-Guyanese. See also Figure 2 on page 519.

work. Although there were political and intellectual movements in Guyana who identified as a group, e.g. *Ratoon*, there is no writers' collective in Guyana that could be compared to *Moetete*. Although *Kykoveral* started off as the official organ of the *British Guiana Writer's Association* (Smith 1945), the periodical cannot be compared to *Moetete*. In comparison to the *Moetete* group, the agenda of the *British Guiana Writer's Association* was less political and more formal or practical. Their main goals were:

- (1) To foster and encourage British Guianese Literary Talent.
- (2) To make, by means of publications etc., a practical contribution to British Guianese Literature.
- (3) To protect the rights of British Guianese writers (Smith 1945, 149).

The explicit progressive and nationalist flavouring of *Moetete's* agenda was missing in *Kykoveral* – at least at the beginning. Furthermore, due to its affiliation with Burnham's government, also *Kaie* lacked the subversive tendencies of the *Moetete* group who had even quarrelled about accepting funds by the STICUSA. Furthermore, although *Moetete* also included members with political affiliations, the group was more diverse, and thus, also reflected a greater diversity in its literary contributions. However, the ephemeral existence of *Moetete* also proved the difficulties of publishing a politically oriented, literary magazine, while taking into account the different opinions and agendas of the diverse group members. After all, the discord between group members eventually led to a premature end of *Moetete's* ambitious intentions. However, these aspects also make it difficult to compare *Moetete* to *Kykoveral* which has been published for more than 20 years. Therefore, I will not refer to a '*Kykoveral* group'.

4. *The Literary Discourse*

For the selection of suitable literary texts, several factors need to be taken into account. There are specific aspects of the literary culture in British Guiana of the 1950s and 1960s as well as in post-Independence Guyana that influenced how the country's identity was depicted, who wrote about Guyanese identity, and whose notions of Guyanese identity were considered as important.

4.1 *The Influence of Arthur J. Seymour*

Although it may be difficult to talk about a *Kykoveral* group, there are some writers that played a prominent personal role in the shaping of a Guyanese literary identity. A salient figure in the country's literary culture was Arthur J. Seymour – Peepal Tree Press editor Jeremy Poynting even called Seymour the “doyen of Guyanese writing” (1998). Seymour did not only function as *Kykoveral*'s chief editor until his death in 1989, he also held other important cultural and political positions.¹⁹ After his return from Puerto Rico to Guyana in 1965, he first worked as a Public Relations Officer for the Demerara Bauxite Company. In 1972, he became Literary Co-ordinator for *CARIFESTA '72*; between 1973 and 1979, he held the position of Deputy Chairman of the Department of Culture and Director of Creative Writing; and between 1974 and 1975 he was Deputy Chairman of the *Guyana National Trust* (Balderstone and Gonzales 2004, 536; Dance 1986, 451; Seymour 1977). In addition, he also published anthologies and literary histories. However, his functions were not merely editorial or administrative. Seymour was also a renowned poet, and in addition to poetry, he also wrote short stories, literary criticism as well as cultural and political comments, e.g. for *Kykoveral* and *Kaie*. Although his poetry is sometimes dismissed as old-fashioned, Daryl C. Dance writes about Seymour that he is also a: “representative poet [...] whose lengthy career reflects quite accurately the major developments and shifts in the region's literature” (Dance 1986, 451). As both editor and writer, he had a major influence on the development of a cultural nationalism in Guyana (Dance 1986, 455).

Although Seymour's work and efforts to establish and foster a national literary culture in Guyana need to be acknowledged, his own agenda was not free from the ethnic-political issues of his times. In the literary and critical texts that he published, Seymour tended to emphasise Afro-Guyanese culture and promoted a cultural connection to other Caribbean states. Seymour's own notion of Guyanese cultural identity shared many aspects of Burnham's Afro-centric, West-Indian-oriented idea of Guyanese-ness (Seymour 1980, 76, see also page 275), and the compatibility of his own and the PNC's notion of Guyanese culture is reflected in

19 See page 283.

the influential administrative and cultural functions that he was assigned in the Burnham government. His cultural and political influence had far-reaching consequences on what is considered a Guyanese literary canon – even until today.

For example, it could be argued that *Kykoveral* was not so much the organ of a group of writers, but that, over the years, *Kyk* had become Seymour's personal pet project. *Kykoveral* was also a medium to vent Seymour's own political and cultural opinions, and his individual cultural-political agenda probably also had an influence on the contributions he selected for *Kykoveral*. In turn, the importance of *Kykoveral* as a platform for Guyanese literature also determined Seymour's impact on shaping a Guyanese literary tradition. In addition, Seymour's influence was not limited to *Kykoveral*; he also partially determined which texts would be considered as important Guyanese literature by assembling anthologies, writing literary histories, and texts for schools.²⁰ Thus, Seymour's editorial and administrative cultural functions made him an influential figure that actively shaped Guyanese literary culture and its reception inside and outside the classroom.

Due to Seymour's impact on the selection and publication of texts, Seymour's affiliations to other writers also had an influence on which texts would find their way into *Kykoveral*. Seymour was in frequent contact with other writers – and established somewhat of an old boys' network.²¹ He was a founding member of the British Guiana Writer's Association, and Seymour also reports that he formed "a group for discussion" in the 1940s with Wilson Harris, and Martin Carter; later they were joined by Ivan Van Sertima and Wordsworth McAndrew (Seymour 1980, 31). Although the group is not comparable to *Moetete* in terms of

20 There were several issues of *Kykoveral* that were published as anthologies of important Guyanese writing, such as the issues 19, 22, the "Golden Kyk" issue 33/34, or the issue 46/47 that was published on the occasion of *Kyk*'s 50th birthday in 1995. Hence, Seymour's influence on who would be remembered as an important Guyanese writer exceeded his death in 1989. In addition, he wrote an "Introduction to Guyanese Writing" for school-children which was published in *Kaie* in 1971. He also edited the anthologies *New Writing in the Caribbean* (1972) and *Independence 10: Guyanese Writing 1966-1976* (1976), and in 1980, he published the literary history *The Making of Guyanese Literature*.

21 The absence of female writers in Seymour's discussion group cannot be related to a general absence of relevant female writers; for example, Celeste Dolphin – who was to become editor of *Kaie* – was not part of Seymour's group, but appeared in seven out of the first nine issues of *Kykoveral* – with criticism and short stories. Interestingly, the frequency of her contributions declines significantly afterwards. However, the fact that she and other female writers were not included also may indicate sexist tendencies within the choice of contributions and honourable mentions (see also Figure 2 on page 519).

its size and agenda, three members of Seymour's 'discussion group' became the most prominent and most frequently published writers in Guyana. No other writers appear more often in *Kykoveral* than Harris and Seymour,²² and these two, together with Martin Carter and Jan Carew, are referred to as the most important poets of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in Seymour's own literary history *The Making of Guyanese Literature* (Seymour 1980, 40-43). Although this claim needs to be evaluated critically, it may already indicate whose work Seymour considered worth publishing and remembering, as well as worthy for being included in the special editions of *Kykoveral* that were presented as anthologies of Guyanese poetry. For example, interestingly, Seymour also mentions Ivan Van Sertima before other (allegedly less important) poets in his literary history, although Van Sertima only published eleven poems until then (Seymour 1980, 40-43). However, not only Seymour emphasises the importance of these writers. In most literary histories, at least Wilson Harris, Martin Carter, and Jan Carew are almost always included by default (Benjamin 1984). Although McAndrew was not a famous writer; but he still acted as a facilitator of Guyanese culture while working for the Guyana Information Services and the Guyana Broadcasting Station. Hence, the group around Seymour can be considered to have had a great impact on the formation of Guyanese literary culture.

4.2 *The Politics of Seymour's Discussion Group*

Although national politics seem to play a lesser role in the literature of the writers around Seymour (see also Sparer 1968), it needs to be taken into account that they had their own political ties and cultural agendas.

Similar to Seymour, Martin Carter first sympathised with the PPP, but joined the PNC after independence. In 1967, he became Minister of Information and Culture (Balderstone and Gonzales 2004, 118). However, in contrast to Seymour, Carter became concerned about the political direction of the PNC, and he resigned from his position in 1970. Afterwards, he politically sympathised with Walter Rodney and the Working People's Alliance (WPA). He became more and more critical of the PNC regime, and in 1978, he even took part in a demonstration against the ruling party (Dance 1986, 109; Robinson 2006).

22 See Figure 2, page 519.

Ivan van Sertima worked as a Press and Broadcasting Officer for the Guyana Information Services between 1957 and 1959, before he emigrated to the UK in 1959 where he attended the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London (RAAA 2015).

Wilson Harris was also shortly employed by the government. After his education at Queen's College in Georgetown, Wilson Harris worked as a government surveyor. He joined a task force to map British Guiana's interior, particularly along the great rivers. In 1959, however, he too emigrated to the UK (Dance 1986, 187-8).

Even though Jan Carew was not a member of Seymour's discussion group, Seymour considered him an influential figure in Guyana's literary culture.²³ Similar to Seymour and Carter, Carew initially supported the PPP. In 1962, he shortly held the position as Director of Culture in British Guiana under Cheddi Jagan. However, due to internal discords, Carew distanced himself from the PPP. Subsequently, Carew moved to Jamaica in 1962 (Balderstone and Gonzales 2004, 108; Dance 1986, 97).

Although Carter, Carew, Van Sertima and even Harris all held positions in the civil service at a time in their careers, their association with governmental politics was not as pronounced as in the case of Seymour. They even adopted a critical position against the PNC's politics (Dance 1986, 97, 109; 188; Figueredo 2006, 134; 144, 168-9). Nevertheless, there are two striking aspects that these writers had in common. First, all members of the group had African ancestors,²⁴ and for all of them, this heritage became a salient part in their work (Dance 1986, 97, 109; 188; Figueredo 2006, 134; 144, 168-9). Van Sertima and Carew even became important figures in the academic field of Pan-African and African-American Studies (Dance 1986, 97; Figueredo 2006, 133; Kwayana 2003; RAAA 2015). Hence, the writers all had a critical concern for their African roots. However, Harris and Carew did not only focus on African, but also on other aspects of Guyanese culture, such as Amerindian culture. Moreover, apart from Seymour and Carter, all other members left Guyana to settle somewhere else – Carew lived in Jamaica and the US, Harris in the UK, and Van Sertima in the UK

23 Furthermore, he had contact with Edgar Mittelholzer, who lived in his neighbourhood, and Wilson Harris who was his brother-in-law (Figueredo 2006, 143).

24 Wilson Harris has Amerindian ancestors (Figueredo 2006, 358).

and the US (Dance 1986, 97, 188; RAAA 2015). Thus, although Guyana always played an important role in their literature, their affiliation to national politics was not as pronounced as it was for Seymour (Dance 1986, 455).

4.3 *Marginalisation in Guyanese Literature*

The political and cultural dominance of the PNC and the influence of Seymour contributed to the marginalisation of specific groups and genres in the national literary discourse in Guyana, particularly from the 1960s onwards. Indo-Guyanese as well as female writers and also the short story as a genre were neglected in the literary discourse of the period.

4.3.1 *Indo-Guyanese Writers*

Strikingly, no members of the group around Seymour identified as Indo-Guyanese. This instance seems to depict a more general marginalisation of Indo-Guyanese writers in Guyanese literary culture. The marginal position of Indo-Guyanese literature is reflected not just in the proportion of texts written by Indo-Guyanese authors that were published, but also in how important their contributions were deemed. For example, although the work of important Indo-Guyanese writers, such as Sheik Sadeek, Chinapen, Ramcharitar-Lalla, and Brojo Bhattacharya had already been published in the earlier period of *Kykoveral* until 1961, their position was depicted as marginal by Seymour (Seymour 1980, 52).²⁵ In his literary history, *Making of Guyanese Literature*, Seymour states that there is only a “small group of Indo-Guyanese writers” (Seymour 1980, 52). Although Rajkumari Singh founded a literary group, the *Messenger Group*, in 1972, including Mahadai Das, Rooplall Monar, Guska Kissoon and Beatrice Muniyan (Figueredo 2006, 751-2; Peepal Tree Press 2015), Seymour mentions none of them among the most influential ones. This is also reflected by the frequency of their appearance in *Kykoveral* and in Seymour’s literary history. Hence, Seymour reserves these merits mainly for (male) Afro-Guyanese writers, such as himself, Harris, Carter and Carew, as well as Edgar Mittelholzer and E.R. Braithwaite.

As mentioned earlier, for Seymour, the “three major poets” were Seymour, Harris, and Carter – all of whom had African ancestors (Seymour 1980, 31). As

25 See also Figure 2 on page 519.

other important poets of the 1940s to the 1980s, he includes Jan Carew, Ivan Van Sertima, and Ian McDonald. In addition, he also mentions Milton Williams, John Agard, Ivan Forrester, David Campbell, and Wordsworth McAndrew – not a single one of them of Indian ancestry. Although Seymour does refer to important Indo-Guyanese poets, such as B. Ramsarran, C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla, Chinapen, Rooplall Monar, and Gowkarran Ramdial, they appear on page 52 of Seymour's literary history, i.e. the 25th page of the chapter on poetry, in comparison to Seymour, Cater, Harris and Van Sertima, whose names first appear on page 31, i.e. the fourth page of the chapter on poetry. A similar observation can be made in relation to other genres. Hence, although Seymour also acknowledges the work of Rooplall Monar, Sheik Sadeek, and Peter Kempandoo for other genres, the order in which the writers are presented give the reader the impression that Indo-Guyanese authors were of lesser importance in comparison to the unchallenged triumvirate of Harris, Carter, and Carew.

The focus on Afro-Guyanese cultural elements is also palpable in the way in which literature is evaluated: in relation to Guyanese poetry, Seymour emphasises “the emergence of black consciousness” in the texts of the 1960s which were “national as well as personal” and shaped the national literary identity of Guyana (Seymour 1980, 28). When speaking about the Guyanese novel, Seymour praises “the centrality of the African consciousness” (Seymour 1980, 31, 65). Thus, Indo-Guyanese writers were not only deemed marginal because of their allegedly smaller number, and likewise their relatively fewer contributions, but also because their literature lacked the link to an African heritage that was considered as a salient feature in Guyanese literary identity.

4.3.2 *Female Guyanese Writers*

Overall, Seymour *does* mention a considerable number of female writers. In the field of poetry, for example, he mentions Mercedes Pierre-Dubois, Njide, Joy Allsop, Edwina Melville, Cecile Nobrega, Frances Handy Piers, Doris Harper-Wills, Evadne D'Oliviera, Rosetta Khalideen, Sybil Douglas, Margaret Bayley, Eileen Mann, Pat Cameron, Sheila King and Helen Taitt. He even emphasises the importance of several female Indo-Guyanese poets of the 1970s, including Rajkumari Singh, Shana Yardan, and Mahadai Das (Seymour 1980, 46-8).

Paradoxically, although Seymour includes almost as many female poets as he mentions male ones, their contributions seem to be of secondary importance. Seymour does not list any female authors among the most important ones.

The reason, this time, lies in a particular gender bias (or prejudice). For Seymour, “there are special qualities to be found in women poets, qualities rooted in their femininity” (Seymour 1980, 46). Although he assures that they are of “excellent quality”, he apparently considers it necessary to make a distinction between female and male writers (Seymour 1980, 46). Female writers are mostly mentioned apart from male writers; thus, set apart from the most important ones (in Seymour’s estimate). For example, although the contributions to *Kykoveral* of Celeste Dolphin were also rather frequent, particularly in the earlier issues, those she is not mentioned among the more important ones in Seymour’s literary history.²⁶ Although Seymour also claims that “there is no male monopoly in the modern world”, his comments end with the remark that these female writers “may surprise us with many fine poems”, implying that the quality of their work is *astoundingly* high (Seymour 1980, 51). Thus, in the way that he writes about them always seems to imply ‘excellent – *for a woman*’. Hence, although there were female writers, their impact appeared to be considered of lesser importance. This is also reflected by the fact that Shana Yordan, Sybil Douglas, Sheila King, Evadne D’Oliveira published an anthology of poems by female writers, *Guyana Drum* (1973) after their contributions were neglected in the selection made for the publication of the *CARIFESTA* ‘72 (Herdeck, Lubin, and Laniak-Herdeck 1979, 229; LE 2014a; Persaud 2007). Hence, the gender bias in terms of publications and canonisation was also felt and criticised by the authors themselves.

4.3.3 *The Short Story*

However, not only groups of writers were marginalised; some genres too were portrayed as more or less important in Seymour’s individual and at the same time influential view. In *Making of Guyanese Literature*, Seymour, the poet, makes clear that, in his opinion, poetry is the most important genre in the Caribbean. Regardless of the publishing infrastructure that led to a shortage of novels being

26 Yet, he includes Ivan Van Sertima among the first ones that he mentions, although Van Sertima only published eleven poems by that time.

published in the Caribbean, “in every country”, he asserts, “the theory and criticism of the novel are inferior in both quantity and quality to those of poetry” (Seymour 1980, 28). The short story is seen as even less important. The short story, Seymour argues, can be seen as “the first flight of the novelist” in which “the writer [...] can try his hand at depicting an episode in his community life” before writing a longer novel (Seymour 1980, 66). His neglect of the short story is reflected in the amount of pages Seymour dedicated to the tradition of the short story in Guyana: only four pages out of ninety-eight are spent on the topic.

Moreover, these four pages fail to represent the actual richness and variety of stories that were produced in Guyana. In fact, and in stark contrast to Seymour’s historical representation, a comparatively high number of collections of short stories were published – not just by Afro-Guyanese but also by Indo-Guyanese writers, male and female (Benjamin 1984). In the face of the abundance of short story collections, Joel Benjamin bemoans the under-appreciated existence of the Guyanese short story. In “The Lesser-Known Tradition of Guyanese Fiction”, Benjamin provides a thorough overview of publications of short stories published between the 1940s and 1970s (Benjamin 1984). He mentions collections of well-known authors such as (again) Carew and Harris, as well as Edgar Mittelholzer and Eric Walrond, alongside lesser known authors such as Bertram Charles, Rick Ferreira, Hugh Warton, and John Why. Significantly, Benjamin also includes Sheik Sadeek as one of the most outstanding short story writers of the period. Hence, Benjamin’s list reveals another important aspect. Notwithstanding their neglect in many anthologies of Caribbean literature, Indo-Guyanese writers were anything but absent, despite their marginalisation. Benjamin here acknowledges the work of Rooplall Monar, Harry Narain, Ramcharran Sawh and Rajkumari Singh. However, many of them depended on self-publication; and notably, one of the most salient short story authors of the 1960s and 1970s, Sheik Sadeek, printed and published his work himself (*Kykoveral* 33/34, 144). Hence, the lack of appreciation and acknowledgement in literary histories, such as Seymour’s, did not only contribute to discount the short story as a genre, but also to the neglect of Indo-Guyanese writers as important contributors to Guyanese literary culture and identity. Unfortunately, this marginalisation of the Guyanese short story persisted. Although Benjamin’s

article appeared within the pages of *'The Golden Kyk'* in 1985, little has changed in the last 30 years. Although the importance of the short story for literary culture persisted, its neglect persisted as well – the short story has still not received the critical acknowledgement that it may deserve. Therefore, in my analyses, I tried to deal with this marginalisation in a critical way.

4.4 *Selection and Demarcation of Text Corpus*

Considering that Seymour depicts the Guyanese poem as a medium that transported the “tremendous welling up of social and political consciousness”, a medium that was powerful enough to “catch [...] the sympathy of all men of national goodwill”, poetry will play an important role in the analysis of national identity in Guyanese literature – particularly in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (Seymour 1980, 29). However, as mentioned earlier, the short story likewise played an important, yet neglected role, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s when self-publication of short story collections became popular – not only, but also among Indo-Guyanese writers (Benjamin 1984). Hence, the analyses of short stories provide a possibility to probe the notions of Guyanese identity – those circulating within the Afro-Guyanese mainstream; and moreover those from Indo-Guyanese voices, too. Furthermore, cultural comments, essays, and articles were also included in the analyses. This inclusion is supposed to offer additional material on the discourse on national identity and its impact on the evaluation of literature and culture.

Considering that Arthur J. Seymour, Wilson Harris, Martin Carter and Jan Carew are still considered as four of the most important writers of their time, several of their poems and short stories are included in the text corpus. First of all, the frequency in which their texts occur in *Kykoveral* until 1961 makes them representative of the literary discourse of the time. Poetry written by Seymour and Harris appears in almost every single edition of *Kykoveral* until 1961. Due to this constancy, their texts and poems also allow for an analysis concerning changes of their own notion of cultural and national identity. In relation to the historical and political developments that happened between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, changes in perspective might be of particular interest. In addition, texts from other authors of the same time period are included. If available and relevant to the

notion of Guyanese national or cultural identity, literatures of Indo-Guyanese and female writers were selected.

Acknowledging the role of *Kyk-Over-Al* as a literary institution that contributed significantly to the establishment of a Guyanese literary tradition, most of the texts were selected from this magazine. However, taking into account that there is a gap of twenty years between *Kyk-Over-Al* 9,28 and *Kyk-Over-Al* 29, other sources needed to be considered as well. For the period between 1961 and the early 1980s, texts from the magazine *Kaie* as well as from representative anthologies – such as *Stories from the Caribbean* (1965), *Caribbean Essays* (1973), *Writing in the Caribbean* (1972), *Independence 10: Guyanese Writing 1966-1976* (1976) and *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories* (2001) – were selected. In addition, short stories from self-published collections were included.

In total, eleven poems (P), eleven short stories (SF), and twelve essays or cultural comments (SNF) will be discussed in the following analysis. An overview of the of the texts discussed in each part of the literary analysis is provided in the following table:

| V. Representations of Guyanese National Identity in Literary Texts | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---|-----|
| 1. Nativism, Anti-Colonialism, and African Cultural Hegemony | 1.1. Territory – The Backbone of (National) Identity | Wilson Harris (1921 –) | “Tomorrow” ([1945] 1984) | SF |
| | | Arthur J. Seymour (1914 – 1989) | “Greenheart” ([1946] 1984) | SF |
| | | Roy Heath (1926 – 2008) | “The Peasants” ([1954] 1986) | P |
| | | Arthur J. Seymour | “Tomorrow Belongs to the People” (1946) | P |
| | 1.2 Shades of Nativism – Who is <i>More</i> Native? | Wilson Harris | “Fences upon the Earth” ([1947] 1986) | SF |
| | | Brojo Bhattacharya (n.d.) | “Rice Harvest” (1961) | P |
| | | Martin Carter (1927 – 1997) | “Listening to the Land” (1954) | P |
| | 1.3 Nativism and the Role of Afro-Guyanese Culture | Wilson Harris | “History, Fable and Myth in The Caribbean and Guianas” (1970) | SNF |
| | | Roy Heath | “The Function of the Myth” (1973) | SNF |
| | | Jan Carew (1925 – 2012) | “The Fusion of African and Amerindian Folk Myths” (1977) | SNF |
| | | Arthur J. Seymour | “Sun is a Shapely Fire” ([1952] 1958) | P |
| | | Arthur J. Seymour | “First of August” (1958) | P |
| | | Martin Carter | “Death of a Slave” ([1952] 1958) | P |
| | | McDonald Dash (n.d.) | “Greenheart Men” (1972) | P |
| | | Celeste Dolphin (n.d.) | “Trouble Music”([1948] 1986) | SF |
| | | Florence Cavigholi (n.d.) | “Lulu and de Camoodie”([1959] 1984) | SF |
| 2. West-Indianism | 2.1 Beyond the National Paradigm | Denis Williams (n.d.) | “Guiana Today” ([1949] 1986) | SNF |
| | 2.2 Is there a West-Indian Culture? | Arthur Waites (n.d.) | “Is there a West-Indian Culture” (1949) | SNF |
| | | Frank Williams (n.d.) | “Is there a West Indian Way of Life?” (1955) | SNF |
| | | Martin Carter | | |
| | | P. H. Daly (n.d.) | | |
| | | E. Pilgrim (n.d.) | | |
| | | Ruby Smalallsingh (n.d.) | | |
| | | E. Mittelholzer (1909 – 1965) | | |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|---|-----|
| | 2.3 The 1970s: <i>Kaie</i> and Burnham's West-Indianism | Forbes Burnham (1923 – 1985) | "Message to CARIFESTA 1976" (1976) | SNF |
| | | Arthur J. Seymour | "We must hear our brothers speak"; "Cultural Policy in Guyana" (1973; 1977) | SNF |
| | | P. H. Daly (n.d.) | "CARIFESTA, People's Culture and the Power Units" (1979) | SNF |
| 3. From the Margins – The East-Indian Perspective | 3.1 The Influence of Cheddi Jagan – The Story of a Neglect | Cheddi Jagan (1918 – 1997) | Various essays (1958 – 1978) | SNF |
| | | | | |
| | 3.2. Kheesaz ²⁷ of the Rice Fields – Presenting India's Past and Present in Guyana | C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla (n.d.) | "The Weeding Gang" ([1934] 1954) | P |
| | | Shana Yordan (1943 – 1989) | "Earth is Brown" (1972) | P |
| | | Sheik Sadeek (n.d.) | "Sugar Canes" ([self-publication] 1972) | SF |
| | | Mahadai Das (1954 – 2003) | "They Came in Ships" ([1977] 1996) | P |
| 4. Literary Representations of the Ethnic Tensions in Guyana | 4.1 Afro-Guyanese in the Eyes of the Indo-Guyanese | Rajkumari Singh (1923 – 1979) | "I am a Coolie" | SNF |
| | | | | |
| | 4.2 Paradigm Shift – From an Ethnocentric to a Class-centred Perspective on Social Issues in Guyana | Harry Narain | "The Man at the Bottom" (1981) | SF |
| | | Harry Narain (1950 –) | "A Letter to the Prime Minister" (1981) | SF |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | Rooplall Monar (1945 –) | "Cookman" (1988) | SF |
| | | Ian McDonald (1933 –) | "Dual in the Mercy Ward" (1984) | SF |
| | | Jan Carew | "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" ([1985] 1994) | SF |

²⁷ "Stories" (see Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", 29).

Chapter 9

Guyana: Representations of (National) Identity in Literature

The following literary analysis will focus on how national identity was presented in the pre-independence, independence, and the post-independence eras in British Guiana and Guyana respectively. The analyses will consider topics and recurring themes that constituted the discourse of national identity between the late 1940s and early 1980s. However, the analyses will not only concentrate on the contents of Guyanese identity; I will also consider the specific mechanisms according to which identity was constructed as well as the psychological functions the narratives about identity might serve. Furthermore, I will also reflect on the consequences which are entailed by focusing on a specific kind of subjectivity in an allegedly common nationalist discourse. The four main themes that I will analyse are nativism, *West-Indianism*, the position of Indo-Guyanese and their perspective as well as ethnic tensions.

1. Nativism, Anti-Colonialism, and African Cultural Hegemony

As mentioned in the historical background to this chapter, in comparison to other Caribbean states, the literature of British Guiana allegedly lacked the “vigorous anti-imperialism” presented in other Caribbean texts of the mid-20th century (Sparer 1968, 24-5). However, that does not imply that anti-colonialism was absent in the literature of British Guiana. In many cases, the call for national

independence went hand in hand with a growing sense of cultural autonomy. In line with Frantz Fanon who pointed out that for the “colonized race [...] the demand for a national culture and the affirmation of the existence of such culture is a battlefield” (Fanon [1961] 1969, 207), the assertion and recognition of an independent national culture became paramount. For example, Milton William’s poem “Here There’s a War On” (1958) and Ivan Van Sertima’s poem “Will” (1954) unambiguously demand independence. Literature was considered to play a crucial part in shaping a common sense of identity, and in literary texts, forming and acknowledging a common Guianese identity gained more and more importance. Hence, many of the texts written in British Guiana and Guyana tie in with the general anti-colonial, nationalist tendencies that emerged in former colonies in the 1960s. In these literatures, nativist accounts of nationalism were often used to vindicate legitimacy to rule. Hence, although transnational West Indian notions of cultural identity also emerged, there were many literary texts written in the pre-independence British Guiana that emphasised the inalienable connection between the land and the people who should rule it. However, nativism and other justifications of national identity were also adapted to suit the local and historical specificities of British Guiana. Hence, although the ‘inevitable tendency towards subversion’ in the literature of British Guiana may have been less pronounced, anti-colonialism and notions of a possible common national identity were discussed and negotiated through nativism in literary texts in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Considering that these tendencies were still palpable after independence in 1966, I will also include texts from Guyana written in the early 1970s.

1.1 *Territory – The Backbone of (National) Identity*

Territory played a crucial role in postcolonial struggles for independence – mainly due to its relation to nativism, nationalism, and the associated right for self-governance. Smith argued that, traditionally, nations have often been *perceived* as “given in nature, and therefore perennial and primordial” (Smith 2009, 3). Hence, nations are seen as predicated on a ‘natural’ connection to the land through birth and family lineage – a notion called nativism (Caputi 2006; Smith 1991; 2009; van den Berghe 1978). Allegedly, this natural connection (i.e. being native) does

not only determine the right to claim a certain territory as one's own, but also a person's inalienable, inherent identity. In this ideological framework, the common culture or cultural identity of one national group of people seems to be inevitably connected to the land that the population occupies. Accordingly, within the ideological framework of nationalism, a rightful (i.e. native) relation to the land is seen as a vindication for self-government and national independence (e.g. Smith 2009, 113). Accordingly, nativism, identity, and territory become matters of political power and the right for self-governance. Therefore, a 'named' or defined identity of one's own does not only denote cultural autonomy, but also assigns the right for self-governance and independence. This nativist notion of nationalism is also found in texts from British Guiana. Correspondingly, the specific regional characteristics of British Guiana did not only become a popular topic in Guianese literature for the sake of describing Guiana's natural beauty, but land(scape) also became associated with an autonomous cultural (and potentially national) identity (see also Smith 2009, 94). For example, in Walter Mac A. Lawrence's "O Beautiful Guiana" (1954a), in Wilson Harris's poems "Savannah Lands" (1946) and "Green is the Colour of the World" (1948), or in Arthur J. Seymour's poems "Name Poem" (1946), "Legend of the Kaieteur" (1954a), and "There Runs a Dream" (1954b) the description of Guiana's natural beauty can be related to evoking national pride. However, there are more explicit references to nativist notions of nationalism. In the following analysis, I will show how nativist arguments were employed in specific ways to justify self-governance and independence.

1.1.1 A Vision to Be Formed – Guiana in Wilson Harris's "Tomorrow" (1946)

At the beginning of the 1940s, the discourse on a national, cultural unity was not yet pronounced in the 'land of six peoples' (Arnold 2001, 99; see also page 263) – the different ethnic groups were not perceived as a cultural unity. However, in the wake of the political developments in the 1940s, the importance of cultural unity for national independence became more important in political as well as literary discourses. Although it was felt that a unity should be achieved, it was not yet clear how this common cultural entity should look like. Therefore, Wilson

Harris's short story "Tomorrow" should be read in the context of these new political developments, and it should be seen as an analogy for the search for a common Guianese cultural unity.¹

The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). The story begins with the narrator being offered shelter from heavy rain by an old man. At the apartment, there is a statue of a man that the old man created himself out of stone. The statue is beautifully crafted with "strength and beauty and sublimity in the limbs" and his "arms were lifted in prayer, in entreaty, in hope" (Harris, "Tomorrow", 63). However, despite its beauty, the statue's "face [...] was baffling [...] with blind eyes, tormented, struggling to be born, struggling for vision" (64). The old man explains that he has "been working on this thing for years [...] but] can't finish it" because "his blood is too old" (65). Therefore, the face has remained "incomplete" (65). Furthermore, he expresses his despair about not being able to complete his work; he "dream[s], in the night of this face [...] but he do[es]n't know how to [finish] it" (65). However, the old man has hope: "someone will come [...] and he will understand", and maybe someone will be able to finish what the old man cannot (65). He is confident that there will be someone who will "be one of the new people", and "[h]e will be a new story, a new beginning of a new heritage, the end of today, the beginning of the dream that will help to shape tomorrow" (65). While the old man and the narrator marvel at the statue, a woman, Mary, enters the old man's apartment. She has "the same lifted prayerful arms, the same obscure expression, the same dim potentiality for good and evil as the statue" (67). However, she admits having murdered her lover who was about to leave her and not come back. Despite her crime, she begs the old man and the narrator not to "give [her] up" (67). She contemplates her crime

1 Wilson Harris (24 March 1921 –) was born in New Amsterdam. He is an Afro-Guyanese novelist. After his education at Queen's College in Georgetown, Wilson Harris was employed as a government surveyor. In 1959, however, he immigrated to the UK (Dance 1986, 187-8). Harris is a critically acclaimed poet and novelist who won several awards and fellowships. Harris has written many celebrated novels, among them *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), the first novel of the 'Guyana quartet', also including *The Far Journey of Oudin* (1961), *The Whole Armour* (1962) and *The Secret Ladder* (1963); and the 'Da Silva Trilogy' including *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness* (1977), *The Tree of the Sun* (1978), and *The Angel at the Gate* (1982) (Dance 1986, 191-2; Figueredo, 369). In 2010, he was knighted by Queen Elisabeth II for services to literature – together with Ronald Harwood who was knighted for his services to drama (BBC News, 2010; Dance 1986, 194; Figueredo 2006, 368-9). His short story "Tomorrow" was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* twice, first in *Kyk 1* in 1945 and then in *Kyk 30* in 1984.

and reflects on her dependence on her lover. She realises that she has “been running away from [her]self too long all these years” (67) – and that she needs to take responsibility for her crime and her future. Her reflections become more general, and she maintains that “maybe it’s time that we start meeting ourselves, knowing ourselves” (68). When the police come to take her away, the “statue [is] looking at her, with understanding in its obscure eyes” (68). When the narrator leaves the old man, he interprets the situation as a foreboding. Entering the street, he sees a falling star and wishes for “[a] bright tomorrow” (68).

Harris’s story engages in Guiana’s history in an allegorical way. The characters in the story are rather stereotypical and flat, but they serve an allegorical function (see also Forster 1927). The characters can be interpreted as personifications of different aspects of Guiana’s past, present, and future. The old man can be seen as a part of Guiana’s old creative elite that appreciated the “power[,] [b]eauty[, and] [m]ystery” (64) of Guiana, but who is unable to fully realise the country’s potential. The narrator seems to be part of the current people of Guiana who are undecided about what should become of Guiana. The political climate bears potential for something that could either be “beautiful and grand and wonderful” or something “not so grand, so beautiful, so wonderful” – this ambiguity is realised by the narrator with a “queer shiver” (65). Mary could be understood as a symbol for Guiana’s struggle for independence. Mary finally kills her lover, i.e. frees herself from him for good, because he started “despising” her (67). She is ashamed that she was not able to leave him earlier, but she was “afraid” to be left alone and “the people all acted like strangers” (67). Hence, Mary could be read as an allegory for (post)colonial struggles for independence, in-between abandoning old colonial affiliations and looking for new ones. Importantly, the story also invokes the existence of ‘new people’ in whose hands the future lies – and who will be responsible for shaping ‘the face’ of the statue, Guiana. Importantly, the story ends with the wish for ‘a bright tomorrow’, suggesting that the ambiguity of the current situation (exemplified by the old man / elite’s inability to clearly envision a new Guiana and the colony / Mary’s fear about an independent self-responsible future) will be resolved towards the better by the current people of Guiana who have the potential to become the ‘new people’. Hence, although “Tomorrow” does not explicitly state what common

cultural unity in Guiana should look like, it calls upon the current people to actively start shaping a common Guianese future.

However, one aspect seems to be important: the respect of Guiana's natural beauty and power that "lies in men's hearts, waiting to be explored, given form and direction and purpose" (64). Hence, it is suggested that it is the spell of Guiana's powerful nature and territory that will unite the new people and give direction to a common cause. The story suggests that rootedness in Guiana's soil will play an important part in shaping Guiana's future which can be interpreted as a call for acknowledging the significance of one's own land, and thus, the significance of a nation of one's own. Thus, Harris's story employs a nativist line of argumentation: the story invokes a "sacred homeland[.]" (Smith 2009, 94) as common ground, and there is a link between territory and the 'men's hearts', i.e. their characters or true nature. Accordingly, although Harris's short story is not an assault on the old colonial rule, the story suggests that change is necessary and it also indicates which values should be embraced, i.e. local ones, to induce this change.

1.1.2 *Writing Guiana – The Political Importance of Literature in Arthur J. Seymour's "Greenheart" (1946)*²

Although Harris's story does not indicate how a common Guianese unity should be formed, the next story to be discussed is more explicit in relation to this matter. Seymour's short story "Greenheart" is programmatic in terms of how a united Guianese culture could be forged and what role will be played by Guianese writers in this endeavour. It is the story of a young writer, Matthews, who tells his vision of Guiana to his former trigonometry teacher and tutor, Jim, and Jim's sister, Edith. Hence, there is a frame story featuring Matthews, Jim, and Edith, as well as the embedded story that Matthews tells. However, throughout the narration the focalisation resides on Jim, his reflections on Matthews and Matthews' story. In addition, Matthews also reads out a poem. Towards the end,

2 Arthur J. Seymour (12 January 1914 – 25 December 1989) was born in Georgetown to Afro-Guyanese parents. Next to his work as an editor and cultural facilitator (see pages 291f), Seymour was also a renowned poet. He (self-)published several collections of poems, among them *Six Songs* (1946), *We Do Not Presume to Come* (1948), *City of Memory* (1974) and *Tomorrow Belongs to the People* (1975) (Figueredo 1975, 745). His short story "Greenheart" was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 2 in 1946 and *Kyk-Over-Al* 30 in 1984.

there is a prolepsis that provides a short outlook on what will become of Matthews. Overall, however, the short story is told by a heterodiegetic, extradiegetic narrator with a focalisation of Jim (Genette [1972] 1980).

In the beginning, Matthews tells a story about a Guianese woman and her five sons to Jim and Edith. Jim and Edith listen carefully. Matthews' story revolves around Ida Montague, a Guianese woman who made "a mission" out of raising her five sons she conceived from five (ethnically) different men "to be leaders in their racial groups and still be brotherly one to the other" (Seymour, "Greenheart", 40). Matthews' story begins at the end when Ida receives a reward "for outstanding work in bringing together the six people of British Guiana" in the presence of her sons who had indeed become "leader[s] of a racial group in the colony" and who had formed the "Guiana Committee [...] that had overcome all inter-racial feeling" (40). After the prolepsis to the happy ending of his story, Matthews tells Jim and Edith how Ida's mission came about. Her first three husbands, an Englishman, an African, and a Dutchman all died or divorced her. Becoming aware that she had three sons of three ethnically different husbands, "it dawned upon her" that she had become a "woman with a mission" to unite all six peoples of Guiana (40). She goes on to marry an Amerindian, who, unsurprisingly, dies after Ida gave birth to yet another son, and finally marries an East Indian with whom she lives for the last 22 years of her life (40). Although she never completes her mission to integrate the sixth ethnic group, i.e. the Portuguese (see Arnold 2001, 99), Matthews' story is an allegory of 'brotherly unity in Guiana.

Matthews' story provides a vision of Guiana, the 'land of six peoples', in which all racial tensions have been literally overcome through brotherly love. Although the story does not explicitly state how Ida's sons finally became leaders and how they could convince Guiana's ethnic groups to accept their agenda, Matthews mentions a set of ethical principles and cultural norms according to which Ida raised her sons. Not only brotherly unity and acceptance are important to Ida, her mission integrates locally specific Guianese cultural and natural elements. For example, Matthews states that Ida's "rigorous education plan [...] kept [her sons] growing straight like greenheart trees" (41). The analogy links ethical principles, such as honesty and mutual respect, to 'greenheart', a local

timber that mainly grows in Guiana. Hence, the analogy connects these ethical and moral principles to being rooted in Guiana's soil. Furthermore, it is suggested that Ida's mission serves something bigger than herself: "something had integrated in her personality [...] and she walked now like a panther" (41). The fact that Ida is compared to a panther, a local symbol of strength and power (Saunders 1998, 184, 192), emphasises the significance of her mission for Guiana. Thus, Guiana is personified in Ida who turns the unfortunate events of her early nuptial experiences (death and divorce) into a mission for the greater good. Eventually, the story suggests that racial tensions in Guiana can be overcome through a common, brotherly Guianese consciousness, rooted in Guianese soil.

Ida's story of raising sons of five ethnic origins is an analogy reflecting the need for more mutual love among the several racial groups in Guiana. However, not only Matthews' story is programmatic in relation to how 'all inter-racial feeling' could be overcome in Guiana: "Greenheart" provides a suggestion of how a common Guianese consciousness could be created – through the help of literature. Matthews and his literature will play an important role for Guiana. In his conversation with Jim and Edith it becomes clear to all of them that Matthews has a greater "vision of Guiana" and that he needs to "take greenheart [i.e. Guiana] as [his] theme" (43). Hence, Matthews intends to "write an epic that will fuse [them] all together and give Guiana direction for the next century" (43). Furthermore, in Matthews' story, Ida's Amerindian son "had in him the beginnings of a poet" (42), and Matthews imagines him to "brood upon Kaieteur³ and upon the top of Roraima⁴ [...] tell[ing] the story of Amalivaca⁵ as Homer would tell it" (45). Hence, he envisions the Amerindian son as an ingenious poet who draws his inspiration from Guiana's cultural and natural beauties. Accordingly, literature plays an important role in shaping a common, uniting Guianese consciousness in both stories told in "Greenheart". Matthews succeeds in writing "six novels"; however, the accomplishment "took [him] twelve years and it killed him too" (45). At the end, Jim and Edith attend Matthews' funeral, but not without acknowledging "the great job" that he did for Guiana (45).

3 A waterfall in Guyana.

4 A mountain at the border between Guyana, Venezuela, and Brazil.

5 Mythical figure/ god in Amerindian folklore.

Hence, “Greenheart” has a distinct meta-narrative aspect. Literature is depicted as a medium of inter-ethnic love that helps to overcome the tensions between the different ethnic groups in Guiana. Furthermore, literature also is depicted as a means to win Europe’s acclaim for Guiana’s local culture (45). The story ascribes an importance to literature that surpasses aesthetic criteria. Literature becomes an agent that forges political and cultural unity; and the writer is depicted as the martyr who gives his life for a greater cause. Hence, writing is compared to other kinds of politically committed actions that lead to a heroic death ‘in battle’. In the story, literature becomes a symbolic act of revolution that has significant long-term consequences.

Accordingly, similar to Rudi Kross’s notion of national literature and the national writer,⁶ Seymour puts literature at the heart of a cultural and political revolution. By blurring the lines between political activism and writing, text and author become important political agents shaping a new common Guianese consciousness, i.e. a new common Guianese identity. Hence, “Greenheart” does not only proclaim a literary agenda for the years to come, it also assigns a role to writers that will endow them with a sense of purposefulness and importance. Furthermore, it also indicates which values and themes to pick. ‘Greenheart’ does not only refer to a native tree, but is a symbol for Guiana as a whole. Hence, the writing about Guiana and Guiana’s local cultural and natural characteristics is depicted as crucial for shaping a unified Guiana.

Moreover, the story can be related to several psychological aspects. On the one hand, the national identity that is depicted in Seymour’s short story seems to promise unity, security, meaning and belonging. Hence, the text portrays the psychological benefits of narrative identity and its streamlining, inclusive effects (McAdams 2001, 121). On the other hand, the story engages with the self-esteem of the writers (Aberson, Healy, and Romero 2000; Rubin and Hewstone 1998). According to Seymour, the position of the writer in creating a national unity or identity is crucial. A sense of self-importance, belonging, and meaningfulness is assigned to the creators of the national narrative – which may have engaged positively with the writer’s need to maintain and create a positive self-esteem.

6 See page 160.

1.1.3 *The Noble Peasant – Landownership, Governance, and Morality in Roy Heath’s “The Peasants” (1954)*⁷

Notwithstanding Sparer’s claim that Guianese literature lacked anti-colonial tendencies, there are several ways in which anti-colonialism was communicated through literature. Guiana’s nature or land became an important theme in anti-colonial, Guianese literature. In Roy Heath’s poem, “The Peasants”, a connection is drawn between anti-colonialism and rural field workers.

The poem has two strophes with thirteen lines each. The lines are connected via enjambement, and together, they can be read as long sentences presented in verse form. The poem is written in verse paragraphs; hence, its metre varies in length and pattern, and the lines do not rhyme. The growing modernist influence on poetic form is noticeable in Heath’s poem, although it does not completely discard former European poetic conventions.

The beginning of the poem can be read as a clear statement against colonial rule:

1 The people plough the land
but do not own it.
Their children see the land
but do not inherit it.

Heath’s poem can be seen as a literary document of anti-colonial protest. The poem criticises that the people who toil on the land, do not ‘own’ the land, because they are under colonial rule. The parallel structure of the first two lines emphasises this point. The colonial societal hierarchies are portrayed as unfair, because the peasants who “labour beneath the ruthless sun” (l. 5) are not the ones who actually profit from their hard work. Although the ones who do own the land

7 Roy Heath (13 August 1926 – 14 May 2008) was born in Georgetown. He was an Afro-Guyanese short story writer, poet, novelist and cultural scholar. Like many of the other Guyanese writers in this study, he attended the Queen’s College. In 1950, he moved to the UK where he was influenced by other Caribbean writers, such as George Lamming, Sam Selvon, and Edgar Mittelholzer. In addition to his career as a writer, he studied at the University of London and became a high school teacher. Although he also wrote short stories, he is famous for his novels, such as *From the Heat of the Day* (1979), *One Generation* (1981), and *Genetha* (1981) (Dance 1986, 207-15; Figueredo 2006, 371-2). His poem “The Peasants” was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 6,19 in 1954.

and profit from the harvests are not explicitly mentioned, the poem implicitly conveys that they should not have the right to own and rule. Accordingly, the poem advocates nativist nationalist principles that connect the rights of ownership and government to a 'natural' connection to the land. Hence, it follows a political notion of nativism (Smith 2009, 66-7). In this case, the poem also has a certain Lockean-Marxist overtone. Similar to the propositions in John Locke's labour theory of property (Locke [1690] 1982), the link between land, ownership, and governance is created through field labour: the ones who work on the land should also be the ones who own it.

Furthermore, the poem has an even stronger moral overtone. The connection between labour and (self-)governance is endowed with a moral dimension. The poem idealises the rural workers as "noble peasants who know the pure and simple life" (l. 9). The life of the peasant is turned into a symbol of "of peace and hope" (l. 22) and an allegory of morality and integrity. Their moral integrity can be associated with the virtues of Roman political philosophy: frugality, prudence, dignity, *gravitas*, industriousness, and truthfulness (Graver 2009). The peasants are depicted as frugal, yet industrious, because they appreciate the "rich brown soil" (l. 7) although they do not become rich through their labour. The workers on the fields live an honest and simple life in harmony with nature and the land which emphasises their truthfulness and frugality. They are even depicted as a part of nature: "Like a tree so arched by the wind that its crown would kiss | the grass" (ll. 14-5), the peasant harvests the fruits of his/her work. Nature is depicted as a source of dignity for the field workers, and portraying the peasants as a harmonious part of nature reinforces the notion that they are the ones who *should* own the land. Heath's poem does not only set the scene for anti-colonial resistance, it also conveys what should be really important, namely living a truthful, dignified life in harmony with Guianese ground. The moral and cultural standards are not adopted from the colonial elite but they emerge from the rural culture of the peasants and their close relationship to Guiana's soil. Thus, the poem also indicates that the cultural paradigms should be shifted from foreign to local standards. This shift can also be related to a shift towards nationalist ideologies that linked the right for ownership and self-governance nativism or a 'natural' connection to the land. Although Roman virtues, the *Lockean proviso*, or

nationalism were not particularly local ideologies in British Guiana, such Classical ideas were fused with local codes of living that assigned legitimacy and dignity to the local population. Accordingly, nativism and land played a salient role in the discourses of national identity in Guianese literature.

From a psychological perspective, the poem can be related to Tajfel's and Turner's (1986; 2010) social identity theory and Kelly's (1955) theory of personal constructs. In general, the poem functions by contrasting those who work on the land, i.e. the Guianese peasants (the 'in-group' that the poem is directed to) against those who own the land, i.e. the old colonial elite (the 'out-group'). In accordance with Kelly's principles of the dichotomy and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 59f), the peasant's 'natural' connection to Guiana's soil is contrasted to (colonial) landowner's relationship to the land. They do nothing, but they still own the land and drive in the profits. The normative dimension in this depiction is implied by the moral dimension of ownership suggested by the poem. Similar to the themes identified by Sternberg (2003), the landowners' moral bankruptcy is exemplified by the fact that they own the land, but let others do the hard work. Another aspect can be related to need for self-esteem. By praising the moral superiority and essential goodness of the life of the peasants, the poem provides a possible re-interpretation of the Guianese peasantry's identity which offers positive self-esteem, rightfulness, and meaning.

1.1.4 Grassroots – The Importance of the Rural Working-Class in Arthur J. Seymour's "Tomorrow Belongs to the People" (1946)⁸

A similar link between land, labour, and the right to rule is created in Arthur J. Seymour's poem "Tomorrow Belongs to the People". The poem is written in verse paragraphs; metre and rhyme pattern of the poem are irregular. The sixteen strophes of varying length (seven, three, three, two, six, four, eight, one, nine, three, three, two, three, five, three and two lines). Most lines are connected via enjambement. Hence, a modernist influence is also noticeable in Seymour's poem.

8 Seymour's "Tomorrow Belongs to the People" was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 1,3 in 1946.

In the beginning, the focus of Seymour's poem is not so much on the land, but on 'the people'. However, it is important to notice which kind of 'people' are described:

Ignorant,
 Illegitimate,
 Hungry sometimes,
 Living in tenement yards
 5 Dying in burial societies
 The people is a lumbering giant
 That holds history in his hands
 [...]

'The people' are not the intellectual or political elite. 'The people' are the "ignorant" and "illegitimate [...] living in tenement yards" (Seymour, "Tomorrow", ll. 1-4). Hence, the poem begins with a reference to the poorest of the poor. However, they are not pitied, but in the rest of the poem, their work and effort is appreciated. Although "engineers" (l. 8), "chemists" (l. 10), and "millers" (l. 11) are also mentioned, the lower working-class is praised the most. Thus, Seymour's poem has a distinct Marxist overtone.⁹ The working people are "a hero, a vast army" (l. 14) because they are the basis of the economy "making the raw material for skill and machines" (l. 15), while only "pocket[ing] small wages with a sweating brow" (l. 18). Hence, it is the sweat of the "Indians", "cutting in cane fields" (ll. 40-1) and "Africans tramping aback for the provisions" (l. 43), whose "ignorant, illegitimate hands | [...] shape history" (ll. 20-1):

They grow the cane and the rice and the ground provisions
 They dig the gold and the diamonds and the bauxite
 They cut the forests and build the bridges and the roads and
 25 the wall to keep out the sea.

The anaphoric beginning of the sentences and the polysyndetonic syntax create the impression that the contributions of the working people are manifold. Hence, they suggest that these workers are the backbone of Guiana without whom the

⁹ Note that Marx did not explicitly embrace the idea of nationalism. Marx did not have a nation of the working people in mind, and his notion of solidarity and equality is conspicuously cosmopolitan (Avineri 1991).

colony would even be defenceless against the ruthless forces of the sea (l. 25). But also the “Chinese running their groceries and their laundry places” (l. 39) and the “Portuguese controlling the dry goods and the pawnshops” (l. 40) are mentioned, and their work is valued. “They are all heroes | They make history | They are the power in the land” (ll. 47-9). Therefore, Guiana’s “history doesn’t belong | to the kings, and the governors and the legislature” (l. 27-8). Similar to the previous poem, a Marxist-Lockean connection between labour, landownership, and political power is suggested by the poem.

Thus, Seymour’s poem conveys two important messages. First of all, Guiana’s future should be in the hands of the people who actually do work “with their hands” (l. 30) and “battle with the earth” (l. 31). Secondly, Guiana’s future does *not* belong to the people who merely rule and do not work on the land (l. 27). Hence, considering that the people who governed British Guiana were the British and people who belonged to the colonial elite, the underlying message is an anti-colonial call for self-governance which finds its legitimacy in merit and soil. Again, the poem can be related to the *Lockean proviso* and the right to own the land one is working on (Locke [1690] 1982). Hence, the poem also employs a specific nativist notion of nationalism in which a natural connection to the land is supposedly predicated on field work and the claim of landownership related to field labour. Correspondingly, manual work becomes a symbol for a natural, native connection to Guiana’s soil which provides the legitimacy for self rule – therefore, the logic according to which legitimacy to rule is assigned in the poem should not only be considered within a Marxist framework, but also in a nationalist one: due to the connection between field work and ownership, the right to rule is sanctioned by the soil. Hence, the poem conveys a nationalist ideology which claims that those who work the land should also be allowed to rule it.

Furthermore, Seymour’s poem also challenges the power hierarchies in Guiana’s society. The poem does not only make a connection between legislature and soil, but also between class and legislature. Despite the little actual power that the rural workers had in British Guiana in the late 1940s, Seymour’s poem puts power and also Guiana’s destiny in their hands. With its Marxist overtone, the poem can be related to the general political discourse of the 1940s and 1950s. Generally, the ‘grass-roots people’, a term that was often used to describe the

rural field and bauxite workers in Guiana, received more and more political attention in the years to come. ‘Grass-roots’ did not only denote class, but also a certain legitimacy to rule. Thus, the party who could claim to have the ‘grass-roots’ on their side was considered to assert itself (Westmaas 2009). Interestingly, in Seymour’s poem, no distinction is made between African, Indian, Chinese and Portuguese workers; they all are ‘the power in the land’ (l. 49). Hence, in Seymour’s poem a common cultural identity and political autonomy is not related to ethnicity – at least not yet.

From a psychological perspective, Seymour’s poem is similar to Heath’s poem “The Peasants”. Again, the poem works by contrasting two groups (Tajfel and Turner 1986): the colonial subjects who work on the land and the colonisers who simply own the land. The dichotomous depiction of landowner and field workers is based on the principles of Kelly’s theory of personal constructs. In accordance with the dichotomy and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 59f), the productivity of the workers is contrasted to unproductive, lazy ownership. With respect to Locke’s labour theory of property and the moral dimension associated with it, the colonisers are associated with moral bankruptcy (Sternberg 2003). In addition, by claiming that the workers are the real power in Guyana, they are offered a new kind of self-esteem and sense of importance that is not based on money and inherited property.

1.1.5 Interim Conclusion

Harris’s “Tomorrow”, Heath’s “The Peasants”, as well as Seymour’s “Tomorrow Belongs to the People” and “Greenheart” have a distinct anti-colonial agenda. They portray a clear vision on how a common Guianese cultural unity and political autonomy should be achieved: based on local values and predicated on people’s natural connection to the land. Particularly the poems by Heath and Seymour convey that those who work the land should also be allowed to rule it. Hence, they should be seen advocating a nationalist ideology in which the legitimacy to rule was justified in nativist terms. Furthermore, to enforce their political message, the two poems coloniser and coloniser were depicted as two mutual exclusive groups, or in-group and out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Following the principles of Kelly’s (1955) choice and dichotomy corollaries, the

positive characteristics of the peasants or workers (in-group) reinforced the moral bankruptcy or illegitimate rule of those in power (the colonisers) (see also Sternberg 2003).

From a psychological perspective, these texts are not only related to a political agenda, but they can also be related to the desire to create and maintain a positive self-esteem (Fein et al. 2003). By emphasising the connection between field work and ownership, the identity of the Guyanese field worker is endowed with power and dignity. Instead of the former association of field work with colonialism, slavery, and exploitation, the workers on the plantations are re-defined as the basis for an autonomous Guianese state and a common Guianese cultural identity. Hence, the texts do not only allow for a re-interpretation of the significance of the field worker, but also of their cultural identity as the basis of the nation. Furthermore, all texts seem to promote unity between the different ethnicities in the country. By emphasising the link between (field) labour, merit ownership and self-governance, all ethnicities have a share in shaping Guiana's future; and they are all part of a common Guianese national unity.

However, this egalitarian attitude was about to wane. The political events that happened in British Guiana in the 1950s and 1960s incited a political discourse that was mainly discussed in ethnocentric and chauvinistic terms. As was described above in the introduction to the political history of Guiana, ethnic tensions dominated politics in the following decades. Furthermore, the egalitarian attitude portrayed in the poems would also change in literary texts. Legitimacy to rule would not only be linked to working on the fields, but other characteristics were added as well. The focus would shift from an anti-colonial legitimacy directed against the foreign rulers and the colonial elite, to the question whose connection to the land is stronger and who has more rights to define Guiana's national identity.

1.2 *Shades of Nativism – Who is More Native?*

Primordialist notions of nationhood trace back nationalist movements to people's innate ways of feeling, living, and being (Conversi 2006, 15; Smith 2009, 8). Hence, for primordialist nationalists, the nation is an "emotional given", expressed in a common national culture (Conversi 2006, 15; Smith 2009, 9; van

den Berghe 1978). The common grounds of these aspects are rooted in a common history with the land, i.e. nativism. Characteristics of the land are considered to have influenced these specific ways of living, feeling, and being that a national people have in common (van den Berghe 1978). Thus, the *natives* are those people who have an actual history of permanent settlement in a specific territory, and therefore, they should be granted the right to decide about their territory's future (see also Smith 2009, 94, 113). In that sense, nativism is often associated with ethnic homogeneity. Based on the idea that ethnic affiliations are biological realities predicated on kinship, the nation becomes an extension of the ethnic community (Conversi 2006, 16; van den Berghe 1978). However, as mentioned earlier, primordialist notions of nativism and nationhood are rather problematic concepts in a society in which the connection between land, lineage, and culture are severed (see also Bhabha 1990; Conversi 2006, 17). Yet, that does neither mean that nationalist discourses do not exist, nor that nativism does not play a role in these societies. After all, nativism and ethnicity are mainly symbolic in the sense that they can be used as foundational myths to legitimate nationhood and to mobilise specific people for specific purposes (Anderson [1983] 2006; Bhabha 1990; Conversi 2006). As shown in the previous analyses, there were suggestions of how a specific notion of nativism was used as a discursive tool to vindicate self-governance and landownership. However, as the analyses will show, the kind of nativism that was conveyed in the following texts did not grant an equally legitimate connection to the land for all ethnic groups in British Guiana, as in "Tomorrow belongs to the people" or "The Peasants". Nativism was invoked in terms that would create a legitimisation for specific groups to claim cultural and political hegemony.

1.2.1 The Foreigners – Writing Back to the Intellectual European Base

Interestingly, there were quite a few texts written in British Guiana which engaged with the cultural heritage of the European colonisers. Due to the schooling system, many of the writers in British Guiana had received a rather traditional British education. Hence, many took the great European writers they knew as role models. Tropes and themes taken from European mythology and

culture were woven into Guianese texts. The influence of Homer's *Iliad*, for example, is palpable in the work of Wilson Harris who re-interpreted the Greek classics in poems such as "Troy" ([1957] 1958a) and "The Death of Hector, Tamer of Horses" ([1957] 1958b). Jan Carew's novel *Black Midas* (1958) is another re-interpretation of a figure of Greek mythology, and today, it is considered a modern Caribbean classic. Arthur J. Seymour wrote several poems in which he critically but appreciatively deals with Guiana's heritage of European culture, such as in "For Christopher Columbus" (1958a) and "Name Poem" (1946). However, most of the literature that engaged with European cultural roots can be considered as a case of 'writing back' against the colonisers (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989). By re-interpreting the themes of European classics and appropriating them to their own realities and world-views, these writers claimed the skill and cultural importance that is associated with the originals as their own. Hence, these writers show that their texts, skills, and knowledge are not inferior compared to Europe's. Thus, they challenged the belief that non-Europeans were unable to produce literature with the same aesthetic and cultural value as European writers. Simultaneously, by challenging these beliefs, they did not only show others what they were capable of – they could also prove to themselves that they were able to write aesthetic finesse, skill, and cultural wisdom as European writers. Hence, they also helped to create a more positive sense of achievement and cultural value for *themselves* – which can be related to an increase in self-esteem.¹⁰

However, although Europe's cultural and historical influence is recognised through the work of these writers, European culture is not presented as 'the new Guianese culture'.¹¹ In addition, there are hardly any texts that make a connection between Europeans and Guiana's soil. Considering Guiana's ethnic stratification, the few Europeans that lived on Guianese ground and the social position that most Europeans held, Europeans were hardly considered representative of the 'Guianese people'. Thus, despite the recognition of Europe's intellectual heritage for Guianese literary culture, people from European descent were mainly

10 Note that self-esteem should be considered as a "*sociometer*" that provides information about a person's feelings of being respected or rejected by others (Leary et al. 1995).

11 One exception is Edgar Mittelholzer who argued that Caribbean culture is a derivative of European culture (Mittelholzer 1955, 200-1).

considered as belonging to the (foreign) colonisers. Hence, in terms of nativism, Europeans did not play a significant role in Guianese literature – apart from being depicted as the ones who do *not* belong to Guianese soil.

1.2.2 *The True Sons of the Soil – The Amerindians in Wilson Harris’s “Fences upon the Earth” (1947)*¹²

In terms of the primordialist notion of nativism, it makes sense that the Amerindians were considered as the ‘true’ natives of Guiana, because they came to region way before the other ethnic groups (Conversi 2006, 15; Hyles 2013, 11; Smith 2009, 8-9; van Kempen 2002 II, 133).¹³ In Harris’s short story “Fences upon the Earth”, there is a clear link between the Amerindians’ “birthright” to settle on Guianese land and anti-colonial resistance (Harris, “Fences”, 88). The story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f) who reflects upon an encounter between an Amerindian and John Muir, “the representative of [a] big mining company” that he witnesses (87). The narrator and Muir belong to a group of people who “travelled on the South American Hinterland Road” to Guiana’s interior, probably to map or investigate the territory which was bought by “the big mining company from South Africa or Australia or somewhere [...] to work gold and diamonds” (87). At the lunch break, the narrator strolls off on his own into the forest and is immediately struck by the beauty of the nature that surrounds him: the trees “were solid, so timeless [...] their mighty roots thrusting farther and farther into the ancient earth” (87). He goes deeper into the forest and arrives at a small creek. There, he sees an Amerindian man drinking water from the small river. Struck by the natural power that seems to emanate from the person, the narrator hides to observe him. He feels like “a part of the pattern of the dynamic earth” has revealed itself, and what he saw in the man “def[ie]d art, or language” as if “[d]imensions [and...] [t]ime had altered” (87). The narrator

looks upon a human being standing upon the earth, not falsely, by force or subterfuge, or [...] any sort of empty pretension, but very simply, as though to own the earth were to carry the most natural and easeful burden in the world (87).

12 Wilson Harris’s short story “Fences upon the Earth” was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 1,4 and republished in *Kyk-Over-Al* 33/34.

13 Amerindians as tokens of a local Guianese culture can also be found in Celeste Dolphin’s “Waramurie” (1948) and Wilson Harris’s “The Laughter of the Wapishanas” (1971).

Then, suddenly, John Muir, the mining company representative, enters the scene. Muir is described as “too corpulent. His face was fat, and his hands were fat. He seemed a very alien and ridiculous figure to find in this part of the world” (88). The narrator’s description of Muir stands in stark contrast to the Amerindian whose presence and existence appears to be timeless. He seems to naturally belong to the land. Muir, however, starts to shout verbal aggressions against the Amerindian: “*What the hell d’ye mean by messing up my creek? D’ye know you’re trespassing? Get the hell off this land!*” (88; emphasis in original). However, the Amerindian is not impressed, “he stood very easy and quiet, as a man would, who stands by his own earth, waiting to greet the stranger who is within his doors” (88). However, the Amerindian’s “patience and dignity” makes Muir even angrier: “*I shall drive you off the land. I shall chase you and your people off the land. I shall put up fences. Fences to keep you off*” (88; emphasis in original). Although, for a “few moments”, there is a sign of “darkness on the face of the man standing by the creek [...] his hands filled with a terrible eagerness”, eventually nothing happens (88). The man regains his poise and simply wanders off. Although Muir laughs “a laugh of triumph” thinking that he has won “a battle of wills”, the narrator “saw the truth”: the Amerindian “had spoken to [him] in his wordless language” (88). He interprets the action of the Amerindian as a sign of a deep belonging to the earth which cannot be unsettled by “the stranger [and] his fences”: he “shall trust to the deep things that tie [him] to the earth to give [him his] rightful place in the sun” (89). When the narrator and Muir return to the truck, the narrator is sure that “the deep forest seemed alive and whispering. Everything was still the same as before” (89).

Overall, Harris’s story can be read as a de-legitimisation of foreign colonial power in Guiana. Although the actual colonisers, the British, are not explicitly mentioned, their presence is indirectly invoked through the mining company and its alleged affiliation to “South Africa or Australia or somewhere” else where the British have an influence (87). In turn, the criticism of colonialism as an illegitimate form of power and governance is stated quite bluntly:

Imagine a man living on a spot of land. He has lived there all his life. He is bound to the land by innumerable ties. His forefathers were there before him. They lived and died on the land. Would you dare to tell the

man, you would put fences upon his land? That you would drive him off the land? (88).

Hence, the question of ownership and the right to 'be' on a specific territory is vindicated through lineage and family. Accordingly, the story conveys a conspicuously nativist logic that connects the legitimacy to claim a specific territory to *being native* to the land. The alleged naturalness of this connection is reinforced by the tropes which are used to describe the Amerindian. He is not only "bound to the land by innumerable ties" (88), but his serenity and dignity stem from being *like* the land: "His limbs were powerful. They had the perfection of young trees that stand rooted in the forests" (88). Land and man are depicted as having the same qualities, "breathing forth an ageless symmetry in their being" (88). Hence, the story portrays a unity, a peaceful coexistence between the Amerindian and the land that his ancestors have lived on for generations. The story even suggests that the connection between the man and his land dates back to a mythical timeless age: the rootedness of the Amerindian in his land is "wordless", going deeper than any human could fathom (86).

In addition, the story ascribes a moral dimension to the natives' rightful existence on their territory that can be associated with the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, self-control and courage (see also Graver 2009). The local Amerindian is depicted as morally superior to Muir, the foreigner. The Amerindian is associated with moral integrity: he owns the land on which he stands, "not falsely", but "natural[ly]" and with "ease[...]" (86); his position is rightful and just; he acts prudently, "full of patience [...], dignity [...], and] magnanimity" (87); he practices self-control and decides against using violence against the foreign perpetrator because his "faith with the earth" tells him that "[n]othing can be built or preserved with violence" (89); and he is strong and courageous, being deeply connected to the ancient wisdom of "the deep things that [give him his] rightful place in the sun" (89). The foreigner John Muir, however, is depicted as morally corrupted, and he is linked with at least three of the cardinal sins of Christian ethics: wrath, gluttony, and greed. Muir is associated with gluttony through his fatness; he passes the narrator full of "wrath and belligerency" (87); and he is greedy, because he claims what is not rightfully his

to rob the earth of goods that can be turned into money: gold and diamonds (87). Hence, he essentially lacks prudence, justice, and self-control.

Accordingly, Wilson Harris's short story has two important messages: first of all, it suggests that the Amerindians are the ones who truly belong to the land. Based on their native connection to the land, they have the right to claim Guiana's territory as their own. Secondly, the story can be read as a criticism of the influence of foreign forces, such as colonialism. The story implies that is futile to put 'fences upon the earth' to demarcate one's territorial possessions because ownership and governance are legitimated by an inherent nativity, an inalienable connection to the land, not by artificial signs of power. Furthermore, it also associates those who disrespect this natural, inherent connection with moral corruptness.

Thus, the story leaves no doubt concerning which ethnicity is the most native: the Amerindians are portrayed as the ones who have an inalienable connection to Guiana's land, and therefore, they are the ones who would have the right to claim it. This notion can also be found in other literary texts of the time. The recognition of the importance of Amerindian culture for Guianese culture is also reflected in the many poems and stories about Amerindian mythology. Many writers have written poems about the mythological figure of *Kaietuk*, and also other Amerindian mythological figures frequent Guianese poetry.¹⁴ However, restricting native cultural identity and the right to rule to Amerindians would cause a problem for those who seek to motivate nationalist movements. According to this definition, the main proportion of Guiana's population would be considered as 'not as native' or 'not as Guianese' as the Amerindians. Furthermore, in the face of the small proportion of Amerindians in Guiana, the subsequent connection between nativism, nationalism, and self-governance would set the right for an independent Guiana on shaky grounds. Accordingly, nativism or the kind of 'natural connection' to the land was interpreted in various ways to function as a legitimising basis for self-governance and the creation of an autonomous national identity.

14 Just to name a few examples of writers who wrote about *Kaieteur*, *Kaietuk*, or other mythical figures: Cecil Clementi, "Kaietuk" (1954); Jan Carew, "Manarabisi" (1954); Walter Mac A. Lawrence, "Kaieteur" ([1920-42] 1954); P. Lawrence "Kaieteur" (1954); Arthur J. Seymour, "The Legend of the Kaieteur" (1954); Ivan Welch, "Kaietuk" (1954).

From a psychological perspective, the story can again be related to several cognitive principles. The story can be read in relation to Tajfel's and Turner's (1986; 2010) social identity theory. Adhering to the principles of Kelly's (1955) of the dichotomy and choice corollary, the essential goodness and naturalness of the Amerindians is carved out against the background of the rude, illegitimate, and morally corrupted foreigner. Hence, the depiction can also again be related to the narrative themes of out-group derogation attesting the enemy's moral bankruptcy (Sternberg 2003). Considering the positive effects of positive identity narrations (e.g. McAdams 2001; Kelly 1955), the story creates a basis for a positive identity and self-esteem for Amerindians by emphasising their rightfulness and moral superiority.

1.2.3 The Re-rooted – Asians and Rice Farming as a Continuity of Asian Tradition in Brojo Bhattacharya's "Rice Harvest" (1961)¹⁵

Considering that most field work, particularly on the sugar and rice plantations, was carried out by Asian (mainly Indian) labourers, the connection between nativism field work, and self-governance that was suggested in "Tomorrow belongs to the people" and "The Peasants" could have been used by the Asian population to communicate their role in Guiana's struggle for independence. However, in the Asian communities, nativism and Guianese-ness were not salient topics. Their discourses of identity centred more on the difficulty of keeping their old cultural roots alive while coming to terms with changes in their cultural identity. Nevertheless, movements against colonial exploitation found growing support in the Indo-Guianese population.

These tendencies are also present in the literature that was written by Guianese writers of Asian descent. Brojo Bhattacharya's "Rice Harvest" again centres on field labour. However, in comparison to "Tomorrow belongs to the people" and "The Peasants", the poem emphasises the specific link between Indian field workers, *their own history*, and Guiana. Furthermore, field work is

15 No detailed author information about the author available; but Seymour refers to Bhattacharya's poems "as the acknowledgement of the working of the genius of the place [British Guiana] upon the spirit of a son of India" (*Kyk-Over-Al* 9,28, p. 144). His poem "Rice Harvest" was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 9,28 in 1961.

not used as a trope for the Indian's original connection to Guianese soil, but to convey the continuity of Asian cultural traditions in Guiana.

Bhattacharya's poem is written in free verse; hence, it does not have a specific metre or rhyme pattern. It consists of five strophes (eight, seven, ten, fourteen and eight lines) in which the lines are connected via enjambement. Due to lists of one syllable words (e.g. l. 6) and the varying length of the lines, the poem has a rather rugged rhythm. In addition, there are other peculiarities in the poem's style and structure. Although the poem does not break with all poetic conventions, the modernist influence on the poem is noticeable.

In the first strophe, labour on the rice fields is portrayed. Although the work on the rice fields is hard and strenuous, it is depicted as fulfilling:

1 Soil of golden ends.
 [...]
 5 Grain by grain,
 In joy, health, life and fragrance of being,
 In sublime self-sacrifice,
 Grain by grain evolve golden dreams.
 [...]

In this strophe, the focus is set on the hopes and dreams of the Indian indentured workers whose life is hard, but driven by the prospect of a better life. Furthermore, field work is portrayed as a source of dreams and cultural survival:

Dreams of golden strains, golden stalk, golden sheaves,
 10 Grow like many coloured soap bubbles,
 Spread from here to far,
 from hut to heaven,
 from present to posterity,
 from ancestors to descendants,
 15 from Guiana to China and India.

The repetitious structure of 'from here to there' sentences and their parallel structure (which is also emphasised visually, ll. 12-5), seems to refer to experience of journeying and displacement. Hence, in comparison to the other texts that have been discussed, the poem does not seek to denote the Indian's native connection to the land, but their ability to transport dreams, culture, and identity 'from here to there'. Hence, territory and family lineage are still

incorporated as themes in the poem, but in a slightly different way. On the one hand, the poem also conveys a strong connection and appreciation of “a prolific [Guianese] soil” (Bhattacharya, “Rice Harvest”, l. 26) that is the source of “golden dreams” (l. 8). In addition, the truthfulness and healthiness of the life of the workers on the rice plantations is linked to their close connection to the land. On the other hand, the emphasis remains with field work itself, not with Guianese soil. The rice harvest becomes an allegory for cultural continuity and survival that stretches from “Guiana to China to India” (l. 15). Guiana offers a place for “hibernating roots” (l. 22), a place in which Asian traditions can continue and “get together into an irresistible shape” (l. 24). Hence, Guiana’s “green luscious soil” (l. 41) is appreciated as a place in which old traditions can be re-rooted. This relocated rootedness also provides the source for a cultural continuation in the future: “the golden dreams stoop with heavy bearings” (l. 25) that are passed on “from ancestors to descendants” (l. 14). Thus, Guiana is a place where Asian traditions can survive in the future.

Hence, the notion of identity depicted in the poem is primordialist, but more in the cultural sense (see also Smith 2009, 9). Guiana’s ‘prolific soil’ is not appreciated for its own local specificities, but for providing a place on which the perennial traditions of Indian culture can be continued, i.e. re-rooted. Yet, Guiana is still appreciated as offering a basis for a prudent, ‘joyful’, and ‘healthy life’ based on an Indian cultural tradition.

Furthermore, the poem also has a slight anti-colonialist overtone. The Lockean link between labour on the fields, economic autonomy, and anti-colonial resistance is also created in the poem:

But then
Come the hands;
Hands of the covetous,
30 of the greedy,
 of those who thieve by law, and plunder without it.
[...]

That green luscious soil,
those life growing acres,
Lie now widowed in deadly peace,
45 And tomb-worthy coma.
Empty are the life cells,

Empty are the dreams,
The harvest is done;
While another spring broods.

Similar to “Tomorrow belongs to the people” and “The Peasants”, “Rice Harvest” criticises that the people who work the fields are not the ones who can bring in the profit. Although the rice workers are depicted as being content with a life of “sublime self-sacrifice” (l. 7) rooted in Guiana’s ‘green luscious soil’, the poem suggests that they should be the ones who benefit from their hard work. Again notions of morality and justice are infused into the portrayal of the colonisers and the field workers. Considering that the majority of the land was still owned by the descendants of British colonisers and new foreign investors, it is not hard to figure out who is meant by “those who thief by law” (l. 31). In addition, bringing in illegitimate profit is not the only accusation the poem directs towards the (neo)colonisers. The poem also suggests that they have no respect for the land that they own; their ‘covetous’ and ‘greedy’ lust for profit damages and exploits ‘the life growing acres’, literally driving the country to a ‘tomb-worthy coma’.

However, the poem also indicates that the colonisers will not succeed eventually: ‘another spring broods’. The last line in the poem can be read as both a threat to colonial rule and an affirmation of Indian culture on Guianese soil. On the one hand, ‘another spring broods’ evokes associations with revolution; on the other hand, it also suggests that the circle of life, and thus, the tradition of Indian rice farming, continues. Accordingly, Asian cultural traditions are there to endure in Guiana, despite hardship and colonial exploitation. Hence, the poem ends with a rather subversive overtone.

Although “Rice Harvest” does not consider the local specificities of Guiana's land and culture, Guiana is presented as the place where Asian culture can be continued. Hence, in the poem, Indian cultural traditions fuse into Guianese culture – and Indian culture will stay to endure. Indian culture is presented as righteous and prudent. In contrast, colonial rule is depicted as illegitimate and morally corrupt, because the colonisers collect profit that they do not deserve (see also Sternberg 2003). Hence, although the roots of Indian culture are not located in Guiana, Indian culture is presented as an antipode to the colonial rulers. Thus, adhering to the cognitive principles of Kelly’s theory of

cognitive constructs (dichotomy and choice corollary) as well as the general notion of Tajfel's and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, the poem depicts a version of Indo-Guianese culture that combines both lineage (in terms of tradition) and territory (in terms of a place in which traditions can be re-rooted).

However, despite the fact that the majority of the population had Asian and particularly Indian roots, Indo-Guianese culture played a rather marginal role in the discourse of identity in the 1950s and 1960s. Although the population voted by ethnicity, Jagan did not focus on his Indian heritage in the cultural sense. Hence, Indian culture was never really considered as prototypical for Guianese culture – it was considered as part of Guianese culture, but not as prototypical or representative. In contrast, the political discourses of the 1960s fostered a focus on African culture and history. The influence of this focus will be discussed in the analysis of the next text.

1.2.4 *The New Natives – The Africans and Slavery in Martin Carter's "Listening to the Land" (1954)*¹⁶

Martin Carter's poem "Listening to the Land" can also related to a certain kind of nativism. The poem creates an explicit connection between Guianese land and African history in Guiana:

That night when I left you on the bridge
I bent down
Kneeling on my knee
and pressed my ear to listen to the land.

5 I bent down
listening to the land
but all I heard was tongueless whispering.

On my right hand was the sea behind the wall
the sea that has no business in the forest
10 and I bent down

16 Martin Carter (7 June 1927 – 13 December 1997) was born in Georgetown. After his education at Queen's College, he joined the British Guiana Civil Service, but also started writing. He became a politically active Afro-Guyanese poet who was arrested for his affiliation with the PPP by the colonial regime in 1953. In prison, he wrote *Poems of Resistance* from British Guiana. From 1978 onwards, he taught Creative Writing at the University of Guyana (Dance 1986, 109; Robinson 2006). In 1977, he published *Poems of Succession*, and in 1980, *Poems of Affinity* (Figueredo 2006, 143-44; see also page 293). His poem "Listening to the Land" was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 6,19 in 1954.

listening to the land
but all I heard was tongueless whispering.

The old brick chimney barring out the city
the lantern posts like bottles full of fire
15 and I bent down
listening to the land
but all I heard was tongueless whispering
as if some buried slave wanted to speak again.

The poem's style and form are peculiar. The poem has strophes, but no rhyme scheme or regular metre. However, there are some lines that have tetrameter with catalectic iambic feet with one inserted anapaestic foot (l. 1) or a dactylic foot at the end (ll. 7, 12, 13); pentameter with catalectic iambic feet with an anapaestic foot at the beginning (l. 8) or an unstressed extra syllable at the end (ll. 13, 14); completely regular iambic pentameter (l. 4); and even an iambic hexameter, i.e. Alexandrine (l. 18). Thus, the poem repeatedly recites metric forms that are associated with the verse forms of early modern English and German baroque poetry. Thereby, the poet does not only show skill and knowledge. Yet, the poem also seems to deliberately break free from these conventions; the rhythm is constantly interrupted by two successive lines with (catalectic) iambic dimeter and catalectic trochaic trimeter (ll. 2-3, 5-6, 10-11, 15-16). Through these interruptions, the poem's metric scheme seems to reflect the act of listening which evokes associations with moments of complete silence during which an answer or sound of the thing one is listening to is expected. Accordingly, the challenging of European conventions and perspectives are not only challenged on the level of content, but also on the level of the form of the poem. Hence, the poem can be linked with other Caribbean poetry in the 1950s that sought to write back to the colonial centre, while establishing aesthetic and stylistic paradigms of their own (see also Childs, Weber, and Williams 2006; Döring 2008; Nowak 2007).

In the first stanza, the speaker "bent down | kneeling on [his/her] knee | and pressed [his/her] ear to listen to the land" (Carter, "Listening", ll. 2-4). The almost tantric repetition of "listening to the land" (ll. 4, 6, 11, 16), becomes an allegory for the search of a lost native identity that seems to be buried in the ground. The act of 'bending down' could be seen as an orientation downwards into the depth of history, facing the earth in a symbolic harking back to one's own roots.

However, all that the speaker heard was “tongueless whispering” (ll. 7, 12, 17) which is repeated in a similar tantric fashion. In the last line of the poem, it becomes clear who may try to speak from the ground: the land whispered “as if some buried slave wanted to speak again” (l. 18).

In first instance, the poem seems to call for a recovery of Guiana’s history. Looking critically at Guiana’s history of colonial rule and slavery is associated with giving ‘voice’ to people whose history had been denied or neglected. The fact that the slave’s voice in Carter’s poem is only a whisper that is still buried in the ground implies that there is still something that needs to be dug up and revealed. Hence, the poem can be related to a more general tendency in anti-colonial discourses of the time that called for a new critical reading of colonial history (see also Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989). Although the poem does not explicitly invoke anti-colonial social revolt, the terms “hav[ing] no business” (l. 9), “barring out” (l. 13), and “bottles full of fire” (l. 14) reinforce the connection to revolts and anti-colonial discourses.

However, the poem does not refer to all kinds of atrocities committed in the name of colonialism; the speaker identifies the whisper that wants to be heard as the voice of a slave. Hence, the history which wants to be recovered is the history of the African slaves.¹⁷ Furthermore, the poem creates a very specific link between the history of African slaves and Guiana’s soil. The speaker does not look into archives or other kinds of artefacts that could be used to reconsider Guiana’s colonial past; he/she simply bends down and ‘listens to the land’. First of all, this gives the reader the impression that the repercussions of African slavery are ubiquitous in Guiana – because you only ‘need to listen’ to perceive this history; and secondly, it also equates the African slave with ‘the land’. Correspondingly, this connection turns the descendants of the African slaves into ‘sons of the soil’ – and thus, to true children of the land who are inextricably connected to the land. Within a primordialist nationalist framework, the poem denotes the slaves as the symbol of Guianese-ness: the African slave *is* the land, and the ones who are connected to the African slaves / the land are the ones who define national identity. Although the poem is distinctly anti-colonial and calls for

17 And thus can be linked the beginning *Black Power* movements in the US or *négritude* (see also Senghor [1964] 2005; Tuhiwai Smith [1999] 2005). The influence of *négritude* can also be found in Ivan van Sertima’s “Muse Without Music” (1958a) and “Volcano” (1958b).

a redefinition of history and national identity, it implies a Guianese identity that finds its primordialist legitimacy in African slavery. Accordingly, in this poem nativism is not related to work on the fields as such or a family history of occupying the land, but it becomes specifically associated with the history of slavery which has sieved into the land. Thus, the common history that defines Guianese and potentially Guianese nationhood is the history of (Black) slavery on Guianese soil.

1.2.5 Interim Conclusion

Although Wilson Harris's "Fences upon the Earth", Brojo Bhattacharya's "Rice Harvest", and Martin Carter's "Listening to the Land" share anti-colonial tendencies, they convey different (appropriated) notions of nativism. While "Fences upon the Earth" portrays a kind of nativism which is based on a perennial connection between ethnicity, territory, and kinship, the other stories refer to a more recent part of Guiana's history. Similar to Seymour's poem "Tomorrow belongs to the people", Bhattacharya's poem "Rice Harvest" associates the right to rule with working on the land. However, it also includes a reference to cultural continuity that is not based in Guiana. Hence, although the cultural tradition that is depicted in the poem is perennial, it is not strictly related to Guiana. Yet, Guiana's ground plays an important role for the re-rooting and continuation of the Indian cultural tradition. Furthermore, considering the importance of the rice industry for Guyana, this tradition becomes relevant for British Guiana's future. The connection between land and economic benefits of the rice harvest assign cultural, economic, and political importance to the Indian population in British Guiana. Although the Indo-Guianese population is not exactly depicted as native, they are portrayed as the one on whose work and merit Guiana's future will depend. In "Listening to the Land", nativism is connected with slavery. Slavery is interpreted as the most influential common history shaping British Guiana's present. Thus, it is not necessary to have lived on the land for generations and generations, but to have suffered, toiled, and died on the land. Territory still does play a role, but in another way that is related to a specific part of Guiana's history.

The different kinds of nativism in the context of anti-colonialism can also be related to an aspect that became increasingly prominent in the 1950s. With the

discords between Jagan and Burnham, the political and social discourses were discussed in ethnic terms. The struggle for independence became a struggle for ethnic cultural hegemony – and particularly one group seemed to assert itself, namely the Afro-Guyanese. Accordingly, “Listening to the Land” is not the only poem which focuses on slavery and the history of African slaves. There are other literary texts written in the pre-independence period that explicitly emphasise the importance of African culture and history for the development of a Guianese cultural unity. “[T]he centrality of the African consciousness” (Seymour 1980, 31, 65) started to overshadow the importance of other kinds of cultural identities.

2. *Nativism and the Role of African Culture*

With the discord between Jagan and Burnham, which finally led to the division of the PPP and the founding of the PNC in 1957, the ethnic tensions in British Guiana grew more pronounced. In the 1960s, the struggle for independence turned into an ethnic competition for cultural hegemony. Notably, some aspects of this political struggle were communicated in nationalist and nativist terms. Nativism and its associates – territory, family lineage, and history – still played a central role in representations of cultural authenticity and identity. These tendencies were also palpable in the literature that was produced. After independence and with the policy of the ‘paramountcy of the party’ in the 1970s, the ethnic division between the parties and the marginalisation of non-African segments of the population became even more pronounced. Correspondingly, the importance of African culture for a new independent Guyana became a central aspect in the literature of British Guiana and early Guyana.

2.1 *Quasi-indigeneity– The Fusion of African and Amerindian Culture*

In comparison to all other ethnic groups, the indigenous Amerindians had a longer common history of occupying Guiana’s soil – thus arguably, a more ‘native’ relation to the land. However, the Amerindians occupied a rather marginal cultural and political corner, while the dominant discursive position was increasingly reserved for the Afro-Guyanese. Yet, the Afro-Guyanese could not simply be

portrayed as the new natives of Guiana on whose natural connection to the land the new independent nation could be built. Hence, with their growing political influence within the discourse on national identity, Afro-Guyanese nativism was conveyed in way other than their indigeneity. For example, by associating Afro-Guyanese and Amerindian culture, a new kind of nativism was created that retained some primordialist aspects while reinterpreting others. African culture was ‘indigenised’ by emphasising the parallels between African and Amerindian culture and by referring to fusions of African and Amerindian cultural elements. The following analyses show how this connection was created in literature and what it implied.

2.1.1 *Common Myths – The Fusion of Amerindian and African Folklore in Three Essays by Wilson Harris, Roy Heath, and Jan Carew*

Local mythology played an important part in reinforcing the association of Afro-Guyanese culture with nativism. According to Anthony Smith, sharing myths is a constitutive factor of a common national culture (Smith 2002, 65). Glissant also emphasises the importance of local myths for the creation of an autonomous Caribbean culture (Glissant [1981] 1989, 182). Hence, within a nationalist ideological framework, sharing common myths is associated with cultural authenticity and asserting one’s claim on the native land as one’s own— and thus, the right to sovereignty. This is reflected by three essays written in the 1970s: Wilson Harris’s “History, Fable and Myth in The Caribbean and Guianas” (1970), Roy Heath’s “The Function of the Myth” (1973), and Jan Carew’s “The Fusion of African and Amerindian Folk Myths” (1977).¹⁸ Although these texts were written

18 Jan Carew (24 September 1925 – 6 December 2012) was born in rural British Guiana to Afro-Guyanese parents. Carew’s work as poet, playwright, short story writer and novelist has been internationally acclaimed. Next to his poetry, he was a renowned novelist; among his most important novels is *Black Midas* (1958). Similar to Seymour and Carter, Carew initially supported the PPP. In 1962, he shortly held the position as Director of Culture in British Guiana under Cheddi Jagan. However, due to internal discords, Carew distanced himself from the PPP. Subsequently, Carew moved to Jamaica in 1962. From 1966 onwards, he lived in several countries, he also lived in Canada, the USA, Russia and (again) Guyana, but also Spain, Ghana, Mexico. He held several positions and lectures at renowned universities, including Princeton and Rutgers (Balderstone and Gonzales 2004, 108; Dance 1986, 97). Politically and intellectually, he sided with the Black Power movement (Dance 1986, 97). In 1964, he published *Moscow is not my Mecca*, a critical novel about racism in Russia. From the 1970s onwards, Carew was Professor for African American Studies at Northwestern University (Balderstone and Gonzales 2004, 108; Figueredo 2006, 134; Kwayana 2003).

in the 1970s, they reflect a distinct notion of nativism and cultural authenticity that was already present in the 1960s in British Guiana. Notably, all three of these writers had African roots, and for all of them, their African descent played an important role in their work. In addition, all of them were also acclaimed writers of their time; thus, their opinion was of interest for the political and literary public.¹⁹ Accordingly, the portrayal of African culture in their texts simultaneously reflects and perpetuates the influence of ethnic politics. Although all three essays can be considered as cultural studies, the analyses also convey a specific political agenda. All three essays have in common that they emphasise the cultural importance of African and Amerindian culture, while highlighting the cultural supremacy of the Africans and downplaying the cultural influence of the other cultural groups.

In his essay “The Function of the Myth” (1973), Roy Heath analyses the cultural significance of a common Afro-Amerindian folklore. For Heath, myths play an important role for “the life-force of our nation”, because “culture is the means by which people identify themselves” (Heath 1973, 86, 91). Hence, his notion can be related to a cultural primordialism. However, not all ethnic groups are represented equally in Guyanese folklore. The “social and spiritual values” that are important for the “Guyanese as a whole” are the ones that can be traced back to a shared Afro-Guyanese and Amerindian past (91). While the importance of African and Amerindian culture is emphasised, the impact of Indian culture is minimised: “Guyanese lore-figures are almost exclusively the creation of the Afro-Guyanese or the Amerindian” (86). Moreover, Heath describes a tendency for negative depictions of the Indo-Guyanese. While the Afro-Guyanese are portrayed as the creators of Guyanese folklore, the Indians are the ones who are presented within folklore as “an anxiety figure of the African slave” (86). Interestingly, however, he does not perceive these discriminatory tendencies as an issue. Instead, he praises Afro-Amerindian folklore for its role in “rebuild[ing] a shattered tradition” in Guyana (91), and he also identifies an anti-colonial, subversive element in Guyanese myths (87). Furthermore, he emphasises that despite the fact that Guyanese folklore was mainly shaped by Afro-Amerindian

19 Of course, this does not imply that their notions and opinions reflected the attitudes and opinions of most people in Guyana (see also Misir 2010).

influences, they have become a cultural commonality. The myths have also “been adopted [...] by the East Indian Guyanese” (91) which suggests that the Indo-Guyanese have simply accepted the cultural hegemony of Afro-Amerindian traditions.

For Wilson Harris, myths play an important part in shaping Guyana’s future, for the very reason that they do *not* render a historically accurate presentation of the past. Myths re-invent the past, and therefore, they have a *symbolic meaning* for those who shape present and future. Hence, they have a socio-cultural function “consolidating national or local political and economic [...]interest[s]” (Harris [1970] 2008, 35). According to Harris, the fusion of African and Amerindian myths was the “renascence of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of culture” (12). On this cultural basis, a new Guyanese culture could be built. Although, for Harris, Guyanese culture is a creole or syncretised one, he also conveys that, in Guyana and the wider Caribbean, the most important cultural influences can be traced back to *African* history and culture. In relation to myths, he relates cultural authenticity mainly to African cultural elements, and Guyanese folklore is portrayed as being built upon African mythology (Harris [1970] 2008, 12). In contrast, the “Amerindian features [only] enhance [...]African] fable and legend” to form a common Guyanese folklore (Harris [1970] 2008, 13).

In addition, a refusal to submit to the supremacy of African culture is depicted being regressive, selfish, and seclusive. In relation to Guyana, Harris writes:

Dr. Jagan’s Marxist party in Guyana – radical and far-thinking as it once was – eventually became dominated by the self interest of an Indian peasantry who built a wall in the face of that very ‘old heritage of Negro slavery’ (35).

The Indo-Guyanese are depicted as excluding themselves from a common Guyanese culture by ‘building a wall’ against African cultural heritage. In the face of the (alleged) importance of African culture for a common Guyanese culture, a deliberate refusal to integrate under a common African denominator equals cultural suicide.

Furthermore, Harris also conveys that the importance of African culture is not limited to Guyana. For Harris, the *limbo* dance and *Anancy*, the trickster spider, are the most important common Caribbean cultural elements – which are both associated with Afro-Caribbean / Guyanese culture (11). According to Harris, these cultural elements are not only symbols of the *Middle Passage* and African cultural survival, but also representative of an “inner universality of Caribbean man” (11). Correspondingly, Harris suggests that African roots present the most important part of what constitutes Caribbean subjectivity. The African historical and cultural legacy is presented as the common denominator under which all other cultural elements in the Caribbean can be fused.

A similar notion of Guyanese culture is conveyed in Jan Carew’s “The Fusion of African and Amerindian Folk Myths” (1977). In his essay, Carew describes the “mytho-poetic traditions of [...] the African and the Amerindian [...as] the two parent cultures [...] from which the Guyanese folk myth derived” (Carew 1977, 9). As Harris and Heath, Carew presents “[t]he fusion of Afro-Amerindian folk myths, as a matter of enormous cultural significance in the New World” (21). According to Carew, the Africans were not only able to preserve their own cultural heritage, but they also helped to retain other cultural elements in the Caribbean. According to Carew, the African slaves were the ones who created a common Caribbean culture:

The slave from Africa and his descendants assimilated elements of European culture rapidly enough to ensure not only his own survival in the New World but also that of the Amerindians and, later, of the minorities of colour like East Indians, Chinese, Afro-Portuguese from the Azores and others like the Indonesians in Surinam as well (Carew 1977, 12).

Hence, the supremacy of African culture for a new Guyanese – and Caribbean – culture is vindicated by the Africans’ role in preserving *culture* as such in the Caribbean region. East Indian influences on Guyanese culture are once more marginalised. Despite the fact that the Indo-Guyanese constituted the majority in Guyana, they are listed among other ‘minorities of colour’.

The texts present Afro-Guyanese culture as the mythological basis of a common Guyanese culture. These three texts justify an African cultural hegemony

through three main aspects: nativism, cultural preservation, and cultural dominance. Firstly, Afro-Guyanese culture is associated with nativism by having incorporated Amerindian culture. Although Amerindians share a longer history with Guyanese soil, their impact on Guyanese culture is depicted as one among two major influences – if not as less important. Carew even suggests that Amerindian cultural heritage could only be preserved through “the African [...who] was able to give to the Amerindian enough of the colonizer’s language to ensure his survival” (Carew 1977, 18). Hence, by preserving and incorporating Amerindian culture, it could be claimed that African culture also incorporated the Amerindian’s claim on nativity and indigeneity. Furthermore, the Africans are depicted as the ones who did not only preserve their own and Amerindian culture, but also all other cultures. Thus, the cultural hegemony of the Afro-Guyanese is vindicated by suggesting that they also preserved other cultural elements. Simultaneously, a marginal role is ascribed to all other cultures which submerge under a common Afro-Guyanese denominator. Their marginality is emphasised either by presenting them as cultural threats that endanger or oppose Afro-Amerindian nativity (such as the Europeans and East Indians; see Heath 1973, 86), or by depicting them as unable to survive on their own (such as the Amerindians; see Carew 1977, 18). Considering the connection between myths and cultural authenticity, national identity, and the legitimacy for self-governance (Glissant [1981] 1989, 182; Smith 2002, 65), the African folkloric hegemony also had a political significance.

2.1.2 *Sons of the Sun – Common Afro-Amerindian Cultural Archetypes in Arthur J. Seymour’s “Sun is a Shapely Fire” (1952)*²⁰

To reinforce the illusion of connectedness between African and Amerindian culture, similarities and parallels between these two cultures were also projected on a much older past. In some texts, a connection between African and Amerindian sun cults was created. Carew writes, “[t]he indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Africans [...] shared at a psychic level a respect for the sun”

20 Seymour’s poem “Sun is a shapely Fire” was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 4,14 in 1954 and republished in *Kyk-Over-Al* 7,22 in 1958.

(Carew 1977, 15). Hence, Carew seems to aim at a specific primordialist notion of identity and culture. The illusion of a common past is created by ascribing common values and symbols to both cultures' ancestry. However, again the focus is directed towards African culture: Carew interprets the sun as "an *African archetype* that finally linked man to all things in the universe" (Carew 1977, 17; my emphasis). Thus, African culture is portrayed as a prototype of culture as such. In his cultural analysis, Carew also mentions a poem written in 1952 by Arthur J. Seymour, "Sun is a Shapely Fire". Carew considers the poem to "echo the Akan belief that [the sun is] the original life cell" (Carew 1977, 16); thus, he makes an explicit connection between the Guyanese poem and West-African cultural traditions.

The rather long poem comprises ten strophes that are arranged in three cantos (four, four, and two strophes). The strophes vary in length (three, four, five, eight, one, two, three, five, nine and three lines). The poem follows a rather conventional rhyme scheme. Most parts of the poem are written in blank verse with a five-foot pattern; either, (catalectic) iambic pentameter (e.g. ll. 8-10, 22) or a (catalectic) mix of dactylic and iambic pentameter (e.g. ll. 1, 5-7, 24-26). In addition, there are some lines that stand out due to their shortness (e.g. ll. 12, 23, 41-43) – mostly to emphasise their content. In comparison to Martin Carter's poem "Listening to the Land", the subversiveness of the content is not really reflected by the form of the poem. Although a modernist influence is noticeable, the poem does not breach with conventional European poetics.

Although the poem does not completely break with conventional European rhyme scheme, its focus is set on African culture. However, the poem does not simply reflect African cultural heritage, it also draws parallels between African and Amerindian culture:

1 Sun is a shapely fire turning in air
[...]

I have the sun today deep in my bones.
5 Sun's in my blood, light heaps beneath my skin.
Sun is a badge of power pouring in
A darkening star that rains its glory down.

The trees and I are cousins. Those tall trees

That tier their branches in the hollow sky
 10 And high up, hold small swaying hands of leaves
 Up to divinity, their name for the sun,
 And sometimes mine. We're cousins.

[...]

21 These regions wear sharp shadows from deep suns.

The sun gives back her earth its ancient right
 The gift of violence.

Life here is ringed with half of the sun's wheel
 25 And limbs and passion grow in leaps of power
 Suddenly flowing up to touch the arc.
 [...]

41 Sun is a shapely fire
 Turning in air
 Sun is in my blood.

According to Carew, the poem expresses a deep appreciation for the sun's "power" (Seymour, "Sun", l. 6) and "glory" (l. 7), and the speaker can be interpreted to have African cultural roots: "Sun is in my blood" (Carew 1977, 16; Seymour, "Sun", ll. 5, 43). However, there are also references which connect the poem to Guiana and the Amerindians; the "green leaves" (Seymour, "Sun", l. 15) and the "tall trees" (l. 8) evoke associations with Guiana's rain forests. Furthermore, the "swaying hands" (l. 10), which are held up to praise their "divinity, their name for sun" (l. 11), can be related to worship of the sun that has been important in Amerindian culture. However, although the poem suggests that there is a strong connection between Amerindian and Afro-Guianese culture ("The trees and I are cousins", l. 8), it also suggest that there is some kind of hierarchy between them. While the (allegedly Afro-Guianese) speaker has sun in his bones and his blood (ll. 4-5), his cousins merely worship the sun (l. 11). Accordingly, cultural power and importance is distributed unequally between these two groups. The Africans are depicted as the children of the sun because they have 'sun in their blood'. The Amerindians are merely their cousins, i.e. they are not direct offspring of the sun. Thus, although there are cultural parallels between the descendants of Amerindian and African culture, it is suggested that the Africans are more authentic and more powerful because they have the sun's

power in their blood, while the Amerindians are less ‘related’ to the sun, but still recognising its power.

Emphasising the similarities between African and Amerindian sun cults suggests that the Africans are quasi-natives²¹ in Guiana in terms of cultural values and beliefs. Simultaneously, African cultural elements are portrayed as more important and more powerful than the Amerindian ones. Portraying Africans as children of the sun, presents the African sun cults as more original, more prototypical of sun worshipping cultures in comparison to its Amerindian ‘cousins’. Hence, the Africans depicted as the ‘real cultural deal’, while the Amerindians are second-degree epigones whose culture should be valued due to its relationship to the original African sun cultures. However, this association is still an important one to make. Emphasising the similarities between African and Amerindian cultural roots, while prioritising African culture for being more ‘archetypical’, assigns a quasi-indigenous nativity to Africans on Guianese soil.

This line of argumentation can also be related to in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Although the poem focuses on a fused and shared cultural heritage between the Afro-Guianese and Amerindians, the Afro-Guianese are depicted as more prototypical of sun-cults as such – which also evokes associations with a greater authenticity. Hence, although the Amerindians could be seen as more native (in the sense of having a longer common history with the land), Afro-Guianese culture is depicted as more prototypical of the general cultural in the region, because their culture is ‘older’ and ‘more original’.

2.2 *A Common History of Resistance – Slavery, Anti-colonial Resistance, and Guiana’s Future*

A ‘natural’ connection to the land in the sense of quasi-indigenous status was not the only way in which nativist notions of national identity were communicated in literature in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. As mentioned in the theory chapter of this study, Vera Kutzinski claimed that indigeneity was reinvented in terms of an African “local cultural resistance” in the Anglophone Caribbean (Kutzinski 2001, 13). Hence, nativism and the legitimacy for sovereignty were not only

21 Due to their perennial tradition of worshipping the sun; hence, the notion of cultural identity portrayed in the poem can be related to primordialism.

expressed through specific connection to the land, but also with (African) anti-colonial resistance.

2.2.1 *From Slave Revolt to Independence – The Political Legacy of African Slaves in Arthur J. Seymour’s “First of August” (1958b)²² and Martin Carter’s “Death of a Slave” (1952)²³*

Colonialism was often perceived as an obstructive element in the Caribbean, hindering cultural development and political autonomy. As one of the most atrocious practices of the colonisers, slavery is particularly associated with cultural paralysis. In Martin Carter’s “Death of a Slave”, slavery is even depicted as a ‘shroud’ that covers Guiana:

Above green cane arrow
is blue sky –
beneath green arrow
is brown earth –
5 dark is the shroud of slavery
over the river
over the forest
over the field.

[...]

In total, “Death of a slave” comprises ten strophes (eight, six, three, four, four, four, five, nine, six and three lines). Similar to “Listening to the land”, parts of “Death of a slave” have a certain regular metre. The first four lines have dimetric (catalectic) iambic and trochaic feet (with a dactyl in line one) which creates a rugged, rushed rhythm. In lines five to eight, the sequence of one dactyl followed by one (catalectic) trochee (and in line five followed by another dactyl) breaks the ruggedness of the first lines and creates comparatively rushed, flowing rhythm. The anaphora in lines six to eight reinforces this rhythm. The same metric sequence is repeated two times (ll. 12-14 [with a slight alteration], 40-43). Although the frequency of lines with tri-, tetra-, and pentametric feet increases in the rest of the poem (e.g. ll. 17, 21, 22-25, 33-34), the metre does not become

²² Seymour’s poem “First of August” was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 7, 22 in 1958.

²³ Carter’s poem “Death of a Slave” was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 4, 14 in 1952 and republished in *Kyk-Over-Al* 7, 22 in 1958.

more regular and the rhythm remains rather rugged. The metric irregularities and the ruggedness of the rhythm are mainly created by sentences in the poem that have incomplete or slightly faulty syntax (e.g. ll. 9-10, 19-21, 22-25). The ruggedness and faulty syntax could be motivated by two aspects: firstly, they could be interpreted as a deliberate emphasis on the absolutely devastating conditions of slavery and the impossibility to express these atrocities in language; secondly, considering that the African slaves used local versions of (creolised) English, the syntax and diction may be related to an attempt to depict an 'authentic Afro-Guianese voice'. This challenge of European conventions in relation to metre, syntax, and diction can be related to the content of the poem which engages critically with colonial history.

In the poem, the association between slavery and death is not only created in the obvious way, i.e. in relation to the atrocious practices of slavery that cost the lives of thousands of slaves, but also in a cultural sense. On the one hand, the death of the slave in the poem is depicted as an individual story that stands for the experience of many. The use of vernacular language makes the story seem personal; the simple reference to the individual that is described as 'the slave' makes the story generally applicable to others. On the other hand, the inhibiting effect of slavery on the development of culture is depicted. From a nationalist perspective, placing a shroud over one's land could be interpreted as the cultural death of a whole nation. Importantly, this association also makes clear that the ones who were responsible for slavery should not be in charge of Guiana's future. However, the poem provides a suggestion of who might be suitable to take over the cultural responsibility in the future:

[...]

cane field is green dark green
 green with life of its own
 heart of slave is red deep red
 25 red with life of its own.

[...]

in the dark floor
 55 in the cold dark earth
 time plants the seeds of anger.

By emphasising that the slave's heart is "red with life of its own" (Carter, "Death", l. 25), the poem does not only reject slavery, but also evokes associations with political and cultural independence. In the last strophe, the poem also refers to revolution. The statement, "time plants the seeds of anger" (l. 56), provides a justification of revolts. It conveys that in the face of the atrocities of slavery, anger and revolt are the obvious reactions. This could not only refer to the slave revolts in British Guiana, but could also indicate that anti-colonial political struggles are necessary in the face of a history of colonial injustice. Furthermore, a connection is made between slaves, land, and the right for autonomy. The parallel between Guianese soil and slaves that is created in the poem suggests that both the slaves and Guiana have the right and capacity for a "life of its own" (ll. 23, 25). Hence, the association between land, slave revolts, and 'a life of one's own' provides a new legitimacy in relation to who should be allowed to rule over Guianese territory. While the corner-stones of primordialist notions of nativism, i.e. kinship, history and land, are retained in the narrative, they are appropriated to denote a specific kind of historical connection with the land which justifies contemporary anti-colonial resistance and the struggle for independence.

Arthur J. Seymour's poem "First of August" conveys a similar notion of nativism in which land, history, and resistance are intertwined:

Gather into the mind
 Over a hundred years of a people
 Wearing a natural livery in the sun
 And budding up in generations and dying
 5 Upon a strip of South American coastland.

See a prostate people
 Straighten its knees and stand erect
 And stare dark eyes against the sun.

Watch hidden power dome the brow
 10 And lend a depth of vision to the eyes.

Gather into the mind
 Over a hundred years of a people
 Toiling against prejudice
 Growing within an alien framework
 15 Cramped, but stretching its limbs
 And staring against the sun.

[...]

Although the poem has a similar topic, its form is a bit more conventional. The poem comprises eleven strophes which are organised in three sections or cantos (five, three, two, seven | five, one, four, three, three, two | and five lines). The first and the last strophe are the same. The metre is a bit more regular than Carter's poem; most lines are tetra- or pentametric (apart from lines 1, 6, 11, 13-14, 16-17, 23, 36 which are trimetric). There are even several lines with iambic pentameter (e.g. ll. 10, 18, 24, 27). Syntax and diction adhere to standard English. Although some European poetic conventions are (somewhat) retained (e.g. the verse form and metre), the poem also deliberately deviates from them. This breaking of conventions can also be related to the content of the poem.

The name of Seymour's poem is a reference to the commemoration of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 which is celebrated in Guyana on the first of August. Referring to a public national holiday, Seymour reinforces the connection between Guiana's 'national history' and the history of the slaves. The poem gives the reader the impression that there is a long history, i.e. "over hundred years of a people" (Seymour, "August", l. 12), of Africans living on a "strip of South American coastland", i.e. Guiana (l. 5). Furthermore, by calling to "gather into the mind" (l. 1) the history of the African slaves, the poem also suggests that this history is worth remembering. The poem also implies that the Afro-Guianese will gain more power in the future. Several allegories are related to growth and power. By making references to sexual potency ("a prostate people", l. 6; "stand erect", l. 7) and creating a sense of foreboding ("stare dark eyes against the sun", l. 8; "lend a depth of vision to the eyes", l. 10), the poem gives the impression that the time has come for the descendants of African slaves to gain power and shape their own future. Hence, the poem makes a connection between the cultural legacy of African slaves, the continuity of their history in Guianese soil, and the future of Guiana. Thus, the poem creates a narrative structure vindicating the Afro-Guianese claim on power and influence for the future of Guiana.

Interestingly, the formal aspects as well as the content of both poems can be related to Gilroy's thoughts on slavery and tradition which he elaborated in *The Black Atlantic* (1993, 189). Rejecting an interpretation of slavery as a symbol of "[b]lack victimage" (Gilroy 1993, 189), both poems embrace slavery as a part of Black history. Notably, these poems are not simply anti-slavery poems, but they

offer specific perspective on historical events that gives voice to Black history. Therefore, thematically, the poems tie in with the critical examination of slavery in the works of authors such as Fred D’Aguir, Grace Nichols, Caryl Phillips and Derek Walcott.²⁴ Moreover, in both poems, slavery is re-interpreted as a source of power for political resistance. In both poems, slavery does not lead to debilitating feelings of powerlessness, but it induces powerful emotions: in both poems, slavery evokes “anger” (Carter, “Death”, l. 56; Seymour, “August”, l. 30) which creates associations with power and revenge. In that sense, both poems indicate that the time will come when the slaves (or their descendants) will take vengeance and restore justice (Seymour, “August”, l. 16-17). Thus, in these two poems, slavery bears the promise of retaliation. In the context of the anti-colonial, nationalist discourse in British Guiana, this promise of power and retaliation seems to be fulfilled in the call for political and territorial sovereignty. Importantly, the reference to the history of slavery is locally specific: both poems refer to the local history of slavery which “plants the seeds of anger [...] in the cold dark earth” (Carter, “Death”, ll. 55-6) of “a strip of South American coastland” (Seymour, “August”, l. 5), i.e. British Guiana. Hence, the kind of counter-history that is created in the poems is not necessarily a transnational one (as suggested by Gilroy 1993, 218) – but slavery is used as a symbol for a common historical experience which is instrumentalised for nationalist purposes.²⁵ Hence, the two poems can also be related to Frantz Fanon’s demand for recognition of a national culture of the “colonized race[s]” which requires a challenging of their forefather’s alleged silence and passivity (Fanon [1961] 1969, 206). Thus, the relationship between a common history of slavery, common soil, and power / anger evokes associations with nativism rather than transnationalism.

24 E.g. Fred D’Aguir’s *Mama Dot* (1985) and *Feeding the Ghosts* (1998); Grace Nichols’s *i is a long memoried woman* (1983), Caryl Phillips’s *Crossing the River* (1993) and Derek Walcott’s “The Sea Is History” ([1979] 1992). Notably, most of these texts were written more than thirty years after Seymour and Carter’s poems, and the authors belong to a different generation of writers.

25 A similar connection between slavery, Guianese history, and Guianese soil is presented in N.E. Cameron’s “Van Hoogenheim” (1954).

2.2.2 *The Amerindians' Passivity in McDonald Dash's "Greenheart Men" (1972)*²⁶

In the early 1970s, nativism was still a theme in Guyanese literature. It was further appropriated to fit Afro-Guyanese cultural history to legitimise the claim for cultural and political hegemony. The cultural importance of the Afro-Guyanese was expressed in nativist terms by making a connection between ground, slavery, and anti-colonial resistance (Kutzinski 2001, 13). However, the native status of other groups was re-evaluated in less favourable terms. As an example, I will discuss Dash's poem "Greenheart Men" in which the Amerindians are associated with backwardness and passivity:

They do not see
With their glassy rag-doll eyes
The bright new penny on the pavement
Even though it glints
5 Under the sun of change.

[...]

25 There is no symphony
In the rattling of their bones
But these skeletons move among us
Hoping to cadge
From our tired bodies
30 The sight for their rag-doll eyes
And the brains for their greenheart heads

But there is nothing, nothing
For greenheart men
Who wear the crest
35 And carry the markings
Of the cannibal
Let them sleep on

In the Dash's poem, the modernist influence on poetic form is noticeable, although there is not violent breach with former poetic conventions. The poem comprises seven strophes which are written in free verse. Hence, in relation to

26 McDonald Dash was a Guyanese journalist, editor, poet, playwright and producer (*Kyk-Over-Al* 40, 2). His poem "Greenheart Men" was published in *New Writing in the Caribbean* in 1972.

form the poem ties in with other poetic conventions that emerged in the Caribbean during that time (see also Nowak 2007).

The term “greenheart men” immediately evokes associations with Guyana; *greenheart* is not only a local tree, but also a symbol for Guyana (Dash, “Greenheart”, l. 33). Hence, the poem seems to refer to Guyanese people. However, there are several indications that suggest that “greenheart men” specifically refers to the Amerindians. The most obvious connection is created in the last strophe: the ‘greenheart men’ “wear the crest | And carry the markings | Of the cannibal” (ll. 34-6). The term ‘cannibal’ was introduced by the former colonisers to refer to the indigenous population of the Caribbean (Fernández Retamar [1974] 2005). However, the use of the term cannibal should not only be considered as a simple reference; it also carries a certain allegoric weight. The term is unambiguously derogatory, associating the Amerindians with anthropophagy which is a symbol for barbarity and lack of civilisation (Fernández Retamar [1974] 2005). Hence, the mere use of the term in the poem links the Amerindians with a lack of culture and, thus, backwardness. This association is also conveyed in the rest of the poem. Almost every allegory associates them with passivity, dullness, or a lack of ambition: their “rag-doll eyes [...] do not see” (Dash, “Greenheart”, l. 2, 14), their “incarcerated shadows [...] are] dark and flat | In the dust of indecision” (ll. 15-7), and they seem impossibly passive “[u]nder the sun of change” (l. 5). In addition, the poem strongly conveys that their time has passed: the poem evokes images that portray the greenheart men as zombies, “skeletons who move among us” with (l. 27). However, in the poem, the zombies do not evoke fear, but anger: they are depicted as ‘scroungers’ who try to “cadge” and benefit from the merit of others (ll. 28-31). Furthermore, the passivity of the greenheart men evokes association of blindness and darkness: “they do not see” (ll. 1, 14), they “sleep” (l. 37), and all they produce are “shadows” (l. 14, 21). The link between the Amerindians and darkness, backwardness, and passivity is contrasted with allegories that associate light and novelty with change: a “bright new penny [...] glints [...] under the sun of change” (l. 3-5) and “beams of the new light | Bring out the hidden colours” (l. 9-10).

Hence, the allegorical language in the poem indicates that there is political and social change happening in Guyana, but that the Amerindians are not

part of it: the “sight” and the “brains”, which are necessary for change, belong to someone else (l. 30-31). Hence, although they are clearly portrayed as the natives of the land whose ‘cannibal’ ancestors lived under the ‘greenheart’ trees of Guyana’s soil, the Amerindians status as the perennial natives is associated with backwardness and passivity. The poem conveys that they are not the ones who fought for independence and social change, but that they simply waited for others to do the change for them. Moreover, the poem also suggests that the Amerindians lost their right to contribute to Guyana’s future due to their passivity: “there is nothing, nothing” for them (ll. 32-3). Accordingly, the poem does not only deprive the Amerindians of a place in Guyana’s contemporary society, it also suggests who should be responsible for Guyana’s future instead. Contrasting the people who have brought change and independence to Guyana, i.e. the PNC, against the Amerindians’ passivity also indirectly transfers the right to shape Guyana’s future to the Afro-Guyanese.

In a certain way, the poem seems to be influenced by notions of cultural and political activism of Stokely Carmichael, a strong proponent of the *Black Power* movement (Appiah and Gates 2004, 524, 745).²⁷ Carmichael argued that *Black Power* was only for people of African descent and that other ethnicities should form their own political and emancipatory movements (Westmaas 2009, 113). Furthermore, depicting the Amerindians as passive free-riders who wait for others to liberate ‘their country’ also emphasises the role of Afro-Guyanese political activists and their role in the national discourse.

2.3 *Afro-Guyanese Culture as Common Local Culture*

Another way to appropriate nativity in terms of Afro-Guyanese culture can be related to portrayals of contemporary local culture. Considering that nativism often refers to shared history that is expressed in “a single public culture” (Smith 1991, 14), a common contemporary culture can be interpreted as proof of such a shared history. Notably, there are several texts that convey that Guyana’s contemporary culture is dominated by African elements.

²⁷ These influences are found in other poems of this time period, such as in Kwame Apata’s “Name Change” (1972a) and “Pan Man” (1972b), Ivan Van Sertima’s “The Black Prince” (1972), and R. Morris’s “Black Benediction” (1972).

2.3.1 *The Pervasiveness of African Culture in Celeste Dolphin's "Trouble Music" (1949)*²⁸

Written in 1949, Dolphin's short story "Trouble Music" is a very early example for an appreciation of African roots in the literature of British Guiana. The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator with a focalisation on Mrs. Darwin, an anthropologist visiting British Guiana with her husband George (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). Together with two hoteliers from British Guiana, "Mr. Elliot Harvest Browne" and "Skerrett", Mrs. Darwin and her husband are in a car travelling through "the East Coast countryside" of British Guiana (Dolphin, "Music", 45). Mr. Browne, "the owner of the Elliot Harvest Browne chain of British Guiana Hotels", is described as a rather unpleasant, yet successful business man with a rather discriminatory and aggressive attitude (46-47). Skerrett is "merely the manager of the Hotel Kasbah" that Browne owns (47). In comparison to the men, who had been "discuss[ing...] the future" of Guiana, Mrs. Darwin "had been rather silent" because she had preferred to focus on the countryside outside the car. She is described as a "critical observ[er]" with an eye for details and "quick imagination" (52). In the meantime, the men talk about Guiana's nature, culture, and politics. Notably, Mr. Browne shows little appreciation for Guiana: the Kaieteur Falls, described by Mr. Darwin as "the most superb sight [he] has seen" (47), "leaves [him] a little cold"; he cannot understand why anyone would want to write poetry about it (46-47); he shows little respect for the Amerindians and, in his opinion, "the sooner [Guiana] got rid of those Indians the better" (49); and he explicitly expresses contempt for the Africans: "I am so proud that I have pure European blood in me and that I have nothing in common with the work-shy [...] Africans" (50). He emphasises how hard he had worked to become "the richest man in British Guiana" and that he "couldn't have done that if [he] had any African or Amerindian blood in [him]" (50). Although Skerrett and Mr. Darwin do not share Mr. Browne's opinion, they are careful not to contradict their manager or host respectively (49). Although they voice their appreciation of Guiana's landscape and people (47, 49), their objections remain polite. A stronger

28 Celeste Dolphin was a Guyanese writer, editor of *Kaie*, worked for Ministry of Culture and Education under Burnham (Seymour 1980, 76). Her short story "Trouble Music" was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 2,8 in 1949.

criticism of Mr. Browne's opinions is indirectly stated through the story's focalisation on Mrs. Darwin's thoughts. The analytical Mrs. Darwin sees an ulterior motive in Mr. Browne's contempt for Guiana and Africans; she believes that he "was uneasy about his antecedents and was wanting to convince himself" (50). She remembers that Skerrett had let slip something about Mr. Browne changing his "baptismal certificate, something to do with colour or nationality" (50). Hence, Mr. Browne's statements are contested by linking them with a kind of psychological reactance or suppression. Thus, Mr. Brown seems to reject any kind of association, *because* he has some African blood in him.

In contrast to Mr. Browne, Mrs. Darwin shows a deep appreciation of culture – and in particular, African culture. As the core story line, into which the men's conversation is merely inserted, Mrs. Darwin contemplates her childhood in Africa and the impact her experiences had on her life. Evoked by "distant drum beats [that] came pulsing through the darkling Sunday afternoon", she remembers her fascination with the "monotonous compelling insistence of African drums beating out rhythm" (47) which led her to develop a deep love for music. However, the drums had incited a deeper curiosity for "what the various races had to contribute to the world's happiness" which eventually resulted in her becoming an anthropologist. However, Mrs. Darwin seems to be more than an anthropologist. The brilliance of her work on indigenous dances is not so much related to her "formal training", but to her "innate sympathy with which she could recreate the story behind the dance from the very rhythm" (48). This sympathy is portrayed to stem from a deep appreciation of African culture and her understanding that "a continent like Africa would yield possessions other than material ones that the rest of the world might be glad to share" (48). For her, these immaterial riches lie in the drum beats that "held the slumbering sinuousness of Africa" (46). Therefore, it is Mrs. Darwin who insists to follow the drums because if there are drums, there could be a ceremony, and "if there is", she would "like very much to see it" (50). They all agree to have a look and see what is happening. They find a "lit cottage where the drums were beating" and "little groups of men, women, boys and girls stood outside the house" being absorbed by the music (52). Mrs. Darwin is excited, but Mr. Browne again shows little appreciation for this cultural event: "take these dances. What's the point anyway?

A senseless out-of-date back-to-Africa pretence” (51). However, eventually, the story ends with a twist. The drum beats, which Mrs. Darwin identifies as an “Ibu rhythm [...] search[ing] out the blood of the tribe to which a descendant belongs” (52), have an astonishing effect on Mr. Browne: he cannot resist the rhythm – he “was out in the hard earth circle [...] stamping the earth with the others, in a curious dance that they all seemed to know” (53).

Although the story can be read as a praise of the culture of the African diaspora, it also conveys a specific notion of a local Guianese culture. In general, the story makes a statement about the importance to create a unified Guianese culture: the second anthropologist in the story, Mr. Darwin, praises Guiana for its “most interesting situation” because there are “six people living together without any great friction”, and “British Guiana is to be congratulated on how well she is proceeding with a wonderful experiment” (49). Hence, it is suggested that a common unified Guiana is something positive and remarkable, also from an ‘anthropological perspective’. Moreover, the story also implies which kinds of cultural elements should be used as common values. Considering Mr. Browne, the pseudo-European, and his lack of appreciation for the local landscape and culture of Guiana, the story conveys that European values are more or less anti-Guianese, and therefore, unsuitable as common values. In turn, the praise of African culture that dominates the story also seems to suggest that African culture should play a significant role in shaping a common Guianese culture. African culture is not only praised in the memories of Mrs. Darwin; the local culture is depicted as a direct continuation of the culture that Mrs. Darwin remembers from her childhood:

[The drum beats] seemed sleek and powerful, as if somehow the word African were coupled with the words instinctive emotional passion, as if a people were pouring their escape into their music, into music, providing a basic sound pattern to move the world’s emotions (46).

The drums that can be heard in British Guiana are not only an “escape” of a people preserving their own cultural heritage, but they present something more essentially African, a “sound pattern to move the world’s emotions” (46). Furthermore, the music is described to have a “life of its own [...] as if a nation of people were speaking” (53). Thus, the African cultural elements are not, as Mr. Browne suggests, a “senseless out-of-date back-to-Africa pretence” (51), but

genuine expression of one's inherent cultural identity. Hence, the notion of culture conveyed by the story evokes associations with nationalism and nativity by emphasising blood, lineage, and common cultural tradition. Guiana is depicted as the place in which African traditions are re-rooted and in which lineage and common history can be continued. In that sense, African cultural elements become a local culture, because they live on in the people of Guiana. As such, the story suggests, the impact and importance of African culture for Guianese culture needs to be recognised. Furthermore, the story also implies that one cannot escape from the power of this cultural influence. Even people like Mr. Browne who would like to dissociate with his African roots in favour of his European ones must acknowledge the importance of African culture as an expression of his own cultural roots.

2.3.2 *Local Language – Florence Caviglioli's "Lulu an de Camoodie" (1959)*²⁹

In the foreword to Caviglioli's short story "Lulu and de Camoodie", Seymour states that the "story differs sharply from the others in the collection" because "[i]t is a Creolese story" (Seymour 1984, 79). *Creolese* refers to the language as well as to the culture of the Afro-Guianese population.³⁰ Furthermore, Seymour emphasises that the story is not the making of a single author, but "many minds have taken part in the shaping and fashioning" of the story – Caviglioli, however, "wrote it down for the first time" (79). In fact, he describes the story as a collective cultural good: "as a community and folk tale, it has passed from tongue to ear, to inventive tongue to ready ear in a stream of generations" (79). Hence, the story is not only a part of the collective cultural heritage; it is also portrayed as a proof for the existence of a common Afro-Guianese culture that has lasted for generations.

In terms of structure and language, the story is a pedagogical fable told by a heterodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f) in a colloquial, vernacular style in terms of structure and language. The story revolves around

29 No information about the author available. Caviglioli's short story "Lulu an de Camoodie" was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 9,26 in 1959 and then republished in *Kyk-Over-Al* 33/34 in 1984.

30 See also Westmaas's "On Writing Creolese" ([1948] 1986).

Lulu, a young “gurl” who lives in the “faress”³¹ with her “muddah”, “faada”, and their pet parrot Lora (Caviglioli, “Lulu”, 79). Being her father’s only and beloved daughter, Lulu is terribly spoilt, and her father even treats her mother unfairly just to get Lulu what she wants (79). Consequently, Lulu never listens to her mother, treats her unkindly, and lies to her (80). Therefore, Lora, the parrot, takes side with Lulu’s mother to help her. One day, when the father is out working and the woods, and Lulu’s mother needs to walk to the nearest town to run some errands, Lulu stays at home because she does not feel like walking to town. As an excuse, she tells her mother that her feet hurt (80). At first her mother does not want to leave her at home alone, but being in a hurry, she finally agrees. However, she warns Lulu to lock the door and stay indoors, “or else [she] might fine [herself] in trouble, mo dan [she] able wid, [she] might get kill” (80). They make up a secret song that her mother will sing when she will come back and would like to re-enter the house. Lulu’s mother also asks Lora to watch over Lulu. However, when a wicked Camoodie, i.e. an anaconda, who overheard the conversation knocks on the door and sings the secret song, Lulu opens the door and is eaten by the snake: “de Camoodie bite off she head, and trow it undah de chair, den e bite aff she navel ann spit it out undah de table” before swallowing “de ress a she baddy” (83). However, the story ends well – after all, it has a pedagogical message. When Lulu’s mother returns, she “bring out ah axe, an she lif it high up in de air an bash in de Camoodie head” (84). Lora helps her to find the other missing pieces of Lulu, and, finally, the girl comes back to life after her body has been restored with glue and stitches (84). In the end, “Lulu tell she muddah she sarrry fuh all de bad tings she use to do anall de trouble she cause [...] an pramise nevah to be wicked again” (84). Lulu even becomes friends with Lora, “an de live happy everafter” (84).

In addition to the pedagogical message that “Lulu and de Camoodie” conveys, the story also has a different function. Considering that a ‘Creolese’ story made it into print media is remarkable for Guyana in the 1950s. Kamau Brathwaite introduced the notion of “nation language” and the importance of acknowledging local (Afro-Caribbean) creole languages as ‘national’ Caribbean languages far later in 1979 (Brathwaite [1979] 1993). Therefore, a whole story

31 ‘Forest’.

written in ‘Creolese’ was rather unusual in the 1950s. Considering Benedict Anderson’s claim that “[p]rint language is what invents nationalism, not a particular language per se” (Anderson [1983] 2006, 122), the languages that make it into printed media have a distinct discursive impact. Although “Lulu and de Camoodie” is one of the few stories that were published in ‘Creolese’ in *Kykoveral*, it is noteworthy that a ‘Creolese’ story was published at all. However, the short story was not the only publication concerned with the local Afro-Guyanese creole: D. A. Westmaas wrote a comment “On Writing Creolese” (1948) in which he refers to a *Black Talk*, a booklet about Guiana’s “local working-man’s vocabulary” (Westmaas [1948] 1986, 128). In comparison, there are no such stories or comments referring to any other local creole, e.g. the vernacular language of the Indo-Guyanese. Hence, the publication of “Lulu and de Camoodie” also says something about which ethnic group’s language is considered as note-worthy and culturally important. Thus, again the focus was directed towards African cultural elements, while other cultural groups were neglected.

2.4 *Interim Conclusion*

As has been shown in the previous analyses, nativism stilled played a role in vindicating cultural hegemony. In the three essays and “Sun is a Shapely Fire”, a quasi-indigeneity is created by emphasising the parallels and common features of African and Amerindian culture. However, in terms of cultural importance, Afro-Guyanese culture is portrayed as more important. In “First of August” and “Death of a Slave”, slavery is presented as the source of anti-colonial resistance and a new kind of nativism. By making an association between slavery, African cultural survival, and Guianese ground, slavery becomes the common history on which a common national culture and identity is based. In turn, in “Greenheart Men” the Amerindians’ are linked to passivity. Hence, nativism was used in a positive way only in relation to the Afro-Guyanese population. Nativism was used to convey an ethnocentric chauvinistic kind of association to the land – one that mainly vindicated Afro-Guyanese cultural hegemony in Guiana. A similar aspect can be found in “Trouble Music” and “Lulu and de Camoodie”. The two short stories

convey the importance of African roots for contemporary Guianese culture.³² Accordingly, all of these texts create the impression that African culture is the most important cultural heritage and influence on British Guiana / Guyana's contemporary culture, and the descendants of African slaves are portrayed as the new natives of British Guiana / Guyana. Hence, employing nativist notions of culture and identity, resistance, authenticity, and hegemony are linked to the Afro-Guyanese population.

Looking at the kinds of identity that are presented, it can be argued that, in some of these texts, different (and opposing) concepts of identity are merged in one literary representation. For example, on the one hand, the three essays and "Sun is a Shapely Fire" convey a notion of a creolised identity that represents a fusion of elements (Glissant [1981] 1989, 170). Carew's, Heath's, and Harris's essays refer to a unifying Guyanese-ness that unites different cultural characteristics (e.g. Carew 1977, 12, 17; Harris [1970] 2008, 12; Heath 1973, 87). Accordingly, these texts create a new kind of identity that discarded the European nationalist notion of cultural and ethnic singularity (e.g. Harris [1970] 2008, 12). Nevertheless, nativism still played a role in justifying authenticity and legitimacy for self-governance. Authenticity and a legitimisation for self-governance were still communicated through an 'inextricable connection' to the land through history, myths, and lineage, i.e. by referring to a 'natural' and 'historical' connection to a 'normative territory' that reveals itself in common (Afro-Amerindian) myths (Carew 1977; Harris [1970] 2008; Heath 1973), socio-historical and cultural legacies (Dolphin [1948] 1986; Seymour [1952] 1958), and common language (Caviglioli [1959] 1984). Hence, the kind of cultural identity that is depicted can be better understood in terms of Knörr's concept of creoleness which defines creolisation as "a finite process that is completed when a new group identity has been constituted, which makes reference to heritage and ethnicity" (Knörr 2008, 5). Unfortunately, this new creole culture was still ethnocentric and chauvinistic. In this case, the new creole identity received a distinctive Afro-Guyanese label in the same sense that the poet and historian Edward Kamau Brathwaite wrote on the history and development of 'Creole' (i.e. Afro-

32 A similar tendency to only depict Afro-Guyanese culture is also found in other stories, e.g. in Martin Carter's "Out, Out the Fire" (1958) and Roy Heath's "Miss Marbel's Funeral" (1972).

Caribbean) society in Jamaica (Brathwaite [1979] 1993).³³ Hence, although it has been suggested that European nativism is unsuitable in Caribbean contexts (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1993), it needs to be acknowledged that nativism was used as an ideological framework to communicate authenticity and legitimacy.

Therefore, it also needs to be emphasised that not all cultural elements were depicted as equally important and authentic. Afro-Guyanese culture was not only simply described as one among many, but it was presented as a sort of umbrella-culture which incorporated the other (more marginal) elements of Guyanese culture (e.g. Carew 1977, 9, 18). Afro-Guyanese culture was portrayed as the common denominator which ensured the survival of other cultural elements (e.g. Carew 1977, 18). Correspondingly, the association between authenticity and nativism with Afro-Guyanese culture neglected the cultural influence of other cultural elements. Notably, depicting the Indo-Guyanese as a marginal group was problematic considering that the majority of the population in Guiana were of Indian descent.

In the face of the history of cultural tensions between the different groups in British Guiana / Guyana, the depiction of Afro-Guyanese culture as representative for Guyanese culture as a whole can be related to political as well as psychological mechanisms. Due to *apan jhatt*, the political parties and the political discourses were strongly divided by ethnicity. Hence, the political competition for power received a distinct ethnic overtone, and the struggle for national independence was also presented as a struggle for ethnic hegemony. These socio-political developments can also be related to some general psychological mechanisms. According to *realistic conflict theory*, any kind of competition can produce inter-group conflict and facilitate stereotypic thinking (Sherif 1966; Duckitt 1994; Taylor and Moghaddam 1994). Due to the history of ethnic conflicts in Guyana, the Indo-Guyanese population was probably depicted as being more different from the Afro-Guyanese than they actually were (see also Misir 2010). Hence, the portrayal of an alleged hegemony of an Afro-Guyanese culture needs to be evaluated in the light of these historical and discursive

33 Which is also was the sense in which e.g. Jean Rhys defined herself and her character Antoinette Mason in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Caribbean Creole (Rhys 1966).

specificities. Notably, the hegemony of Afro-Guyanese culture can be interpreted in the light of in-group projection and the discursive role of ‘prototypicality’ (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). The association between nativism and the Afro-Guyanese can be seen as a way to communicate that Afro-Guyanese culture is prototypical of Guyanese culture as a whole. Hence, nativism and the link between land, lineage, and history also evoke associations with a ‘true’, ‘authentic’, ‘prototypically native’ culture. The necessity of a common Guyanese culture was paramount in the cultural political discourses of the time, while simultaneously the demand for cultural unity was undermined by the ethnic diversity in the country. Hence, the right to stand for Guyanese culture as a whole can be seen as a debate about representativeness or ‘prototypicality’. With the Afro-Guyanese being presented as prototypical for Guyanese culture as a whole, other groups, such as the Indo-Guyanese, were marginalised due to in-group projection and as a consequences of stereotypical thinking (see also Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Furthermore, stereotypical thinking and ethnic dissent was facilitated by other cognitive mechanisms. The relationship between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese cultural elements were again organised according to Kelly’s principles of the dichotomy, organisational, and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 46-106). Although Guyanese culture was seen as to be composed of several similar and dissimilar cultural elements (organisational corollary), Afro-Guyanese culture was depicted as the most important one (choice corollary) because of its unique relation to Guyana’s land (field work) and history (slavery) – that other cultural elements allegedly lacked (dichotomy corollary).

This focus on Afro-Guyanese culture resulted in a marginalisation of literary texts not written by Afro-Guyanese authors. The lack of literary texts written by Indo-Guyanese authors can be considered as a proof of their marginalisation in politics. Nevertheless, Indo-Guyanese culture certainly was present in Guyana in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, even if the official historical records of the time may suggest otherwise. However, the repercussion of the paramount position of the PNC in post-independence politics and their impact upon the publication of literature need to be taken into account – and (as has been elaborated above) the Afro-Guyanese government cared very much indeed about canonisation processes that edited out the contributions from the Indo-Guyanese

section of society (see also Misir 2010). Hence, the scarcity of literary documents and the depiction of the Indo-Guyanese as marginal should be related to the specific political circumstances of the time.

As for the Afro-Guyanese, the depiction of Afro-Guyanese as prototypical of Guyanese culture had several positive psychological consequences as in-group favouritism and out-group projection are related to self-esteem needs (Aberson, Healy, and Romero 2000; Fein et al. 2003; Rubin and Hewstone 1998). Considering that people generally try to maintain a positive self-esteem, the marginalisation of other cultural groups may have served the Afro-Guyanese as a means to create and maintain a positive self-esteem for their group. Hence, once this notion of Afro-Guyanese hegemony was set in place, it seems understandable that it was maintained and perpetuated.

In sum, it can be claimed that the presentation of Afro-Guyanese culture in nativist terms had several consequences. On a discursive level, Afro-Guyanese cultural dominance was vindicated by a seemingly ‘natural’ connection between Afro-Guyanese culture, lineage, history and Guyanese territory. Simultaneously, other groups, such as the Indo-Guyanese, were ‘written out of’ or omitted in the nativist narrative that vindicated cultural importance and hegemony. On a psychological level, the discursive relationships between the groups can be related to *realistic conflict theory* and *in-group projection* as well as the cognitive mechanism associated with them. Moreover, the resulting favourable depiction of Afro-Guyanese people can also be considered to function as a means to create and maintain a positive self-esteem for this group.

3. *West-Indianism*

Parallel to the appropriated nationalism and nativism that can be found in the literature between the 1940s and 1980s in British Guiana, there ran another, more academic current of ideological ideas which brought forth notions of British Guiana (and later Guyana) as a part of a common West Indian cultural whole.³⁴ Emphasising common cultural, historical, and political aspects of the Anglophone

34 These tendencies are also noticeable in e.g. Jan Carew’s “Ten Years” (1972), Arthur J. Seymour’s “Autobio” (1972).

Caribbean, this kind of ‘West-Indianism’ could be seen as a precursor of Glissant’s notion of Caribbeanness ([1981] 1989). Influenced by other transnational political movements, such as the *Black Power* movement (Appiah and Gates 2004, 523-5), the idea of a common ‘West Indian culture’ was seen as an anti-colonial cultural alternative that would be more representative of the reality of the people in the Caribbean.³⁵ However, the national paradigm of culture was difficult to overcome – therefore, the notion of a West Indian cultural whole does not necessary oppose nationalist criteria of identity, but appropriates them to match them with the cultural reality of Caribbean cultures and territories.

3.1 *Game Change – Beyond the National Paradigm in Denis Williams’s essay “Guiana Today” (1949)*³⁶

One of the first authors who explicitly portrayed the connection between British Guiana and a West Indian cultural whole is Denis Williams. In his essay on Guiana published in *Kykoveral* 2,9, he claims that “there is no Guianese people” (Williams, “Guiana”, 131). Similar to Naipaul ([1962] 2002) and Glissant ([1981] 1989) who would make similar claims about Caribbean culture in the decades that followed, Williams maintains that there is no authentic, genuine Guianese national culture worth speaking of; and instead of a unity of Guianese people, there is “only an accumulation of persons” with no history, no land, no culture worth mentioning.³⁷ He argues that the Guianese are “strangers in a land” that they call their own, but to which they are “in no way at all adapted to” (131); they “eat unintelligently for [their] climate” and their “dress is ludicrous” (131); “Guiana looks outwards” when looking for cultural role models; thus, the cultural heroes are foreigners: “the American Negro, the Indian in India, the Chinese in China,

35 With this respect, it can also be related to Gilroy’s notion of the Black Atlantic as a “recent history of Blacks [...] which involves processes of political organisation that are explicitly transnational and international” (Gilroy 1993, 29).

36 Denis Williams (1 February 1923 – 1998) was born in Georgetown. He was an Afro-Guyanese novelist, cultural scholar, and painter. He went to London in 1946 to study painting. He started his career as a painter and lecturer at the Camberwell School of Art in London. In 1957, he moved to Sudan, where he wrote his first novel, *Other Leopards* (1963), and five years later to Nigeria. Between 1968 and 1974, he lived in Guyana, where he worked on further novels, and also engaged scholarly work, particularly archaeology and arts history. In the 1970s, he worked for the Ministry of Education and the Walter Roth Museum in Georgetown (Dance 1986, 483-6; Figueredo 2006, 831). His essay, “Guiana Today” was first published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 2,9 in 1949.

37 Thus, antedating Naipaul’s infamous statement in his novel *The Middle Passage*: “nothing was created in the West Indies” (Naipaul [1962] 2002, 20).

[...] the European in the world” (132); Guiana’s history was decided by someone else (131-2) – in sum, Guiana’s culture is merely an “irritating string of invalid habits” that will never pass as a the culture of “civilized peoples” (131-2). Due to Guiana’s dependence on “alien standards” of “‘civilized’ [European] countries” their cultural and “emotional cohesion is only superficial” (131). Thus, according to Williams, Guianese people do not have a cultural identity of their own; they are merely “[i]mages in the mud of the distant alien”, shadows of their various cultural ancestries (131). Furthermore, he also sees little hope for change; the resulting “[i]ncoherence, apishness, sentimentality, uncreativity” (131) inherent to Guianese culture forecloses the possibility of a “Guianese spirit as such” (133) – a “collective local response to anything at all is simply unimaginable” (131). Accordingly, Williams also considers the “want of native values” as futile (131), because there is no possibility to achieve anything that would be comparable to European national culture: the “[Guianese people] can never change [their] spots, never build Georgian town halls or Renaissance churches” (132).

Williams seems to draw a very negative picture of Guiana. Interestingly, however, Williams’s derogatory depiction of Guianese culture seems to have an ulterior motive. He denies Guianese people any common characteristic that could be related to the hallmarks of nationality, i.e. common origin, culture, territory, language, history and myths (see also Smith 1986; 1991; 2009): in British Guiana there is no unity, no common ethnic origins, but “a lot of persons and a lot of races” (Williams, “Guiana”, 131); their culture is insignificant and “ludicrous” (131); the territory the Guianese live on is not truly theirs (131); their history was shaped by Europeans, the truly “civilized people[.]” (132); they do not value their local languages, but acknowledge the importance of foreign “unfamiliar accents” which could help their speaker to “do well abroad” (131); and their myths and heroes are not local but dispersed around the globe (132). Hence, he denies anything that could be remotely considered as national cultural achievements; even specific forms of dance, dress, and food are “regional and invalid” as representations of a national culture (132).

However, Williams’s denial of the existence of a common Guianese national culture has an ulterior motive. He does not reject any connection between Guianese culture and national hallmarks simply for the sake of denigrating British

Guiana and its inhabitants. In fact, his claims can be seen as subtle subversions of European definitions of national culture. In a way, the lack of a singular, homogenous national culture is not a drawback, but an asset. Williams conveys that the monolithic European notion of national culture is a thing of the past which “died toward the end of the 19th century” (133). He argues that the “mid-twentieth century has already questioned the idea of air-tight national pigeon-holing of peoples” and that European nationalist cultures will become even less relevant in the future (Williams, “Guiana”, 133). The future belongs to non-national kinds of culture because “nothing now happens anywhere which is not the concern of the whole world” (133). Thus, adhering to nationalist notions of culture is a futile endeavour as such, not only in British Guiana. Therefore, Williams deconstructs the preoccupation with national culture, history and cultural achievement in favour of “creating a way of life human and universal” (133). He even seems to deliberately avoid the term ‘culture’. Instead of speaking of a common Guianese culture, he acknowledges that “there is a Guianese pattern”, but one that defies national borders because it is “part of the whole which is an assured West Indian pattern” (132). Therefore, when denying the existence of a Guianese people, Williams blazes a trail for an ambiguous, non-national notion of culture that is not bound to a specific colony or national territory, but which is transnational and regional: in short, which is *West Indian*. Accordingly, when he emphasises that the “calypso [...] is not of [Guianese] soil”, he does so because he would like to draw attention to the calypso as a regional, West Indian cultural element: a “unifier of all West Indian people” (133). Hence, the lack of a national culture connects Guiana to a greater West Indian whole. The “incoherent shiftings” of Guianese culture are not a sign of cultural inadequacy, but a “common denominator with all the rest of Columbus’ world” (133) – the West Indies, the Americas, the ‘new world’.³⁸ And according to Williams, it is this new world to which the future belongs because it bears the “clay for the sculpture which will be Tomorrow’s Man [...] with a different and complex yesterday, seeking other values” (133). Hence, toward the end of his essay, Williams’s initial claim that “there is no Guianese people” is turned into a comment with a certain twist that

38 Antedating Gilroy’s idea of the Black Atlantic as a counter-history or counter-modernity (e.g. Gilroy 1993, 31, 197).

conveys that there does not need to be a Guianese people in the nationalist, European sense – and that “a Guianese pattern” is sufficient as a starting point towards new kinds of cultures (132).

Despite the fact that Williams wrote his essay as early as 1949, his notion of Guianese culture is conspicuously creole, transnational and cosmopolitan. Although he also shares some aspects of Naipaul’s portrait of Caribbean people as ‘Mimic Men’ which conveys the notion that the imitation of European cultural national standards are “ludicrous” (131), for Williams, the impossibility to apply European national standards to Caribbean cultures does not imply some kind of cultural lack or insufficiency. The opposite is the case. The cultural incoherence, the common cultural patterns shared with other West Indian countries, as well as universal concerns for human forms of life that surpass the territorial, cultural, and linguistic borders of the nation are signs of a new kind of cultural authenticity – an original West Indian culture. Hence, Williams pleads for a cosmopolitan notion of culture, similar to Appiah’s cosmopolitanism, which opens up new possibilities, new cultural and emotional affiliations “that stretch beyond [...] the ties of kith and kin” (Appiah 2006, xv), surpassing national territory and language. Furthermore, his notion of West Indian culture echoes Gilroy’s notion of a transnational, international Black Atlantic that represents a counter-modernity which has been omitted from the official European account of modernity (Gilroy 1993, 1-40). Accordingly, the inability to produce cultural hallmarks similar to European nationalist standards is not a sign of cultural inferiority or inadequacy but provides room for new ways of identity and culture. Hence, Williams may be considered as ahead of his times, developing a notion of identity that is subversive in the sense that it defies European hallmarks of identity – such as race, kin, ethnicity, a common history and language.

Nevertheless, Williams does not fully discard the possibility of identification – in the broadest sense. Identity based on (self)categorisation which involves cognitive mechanisms. Therefore, it can be argued that even Williams’s notion of Guianese cultural identity is shaped according to Kelly’s principles of the dichotomy, organisational, and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 46-106). By making clear what Guianese culture is not or cannot adhere to, i.e. European national cultural standards, he opens up a space in which Guianese cultural

identity can be located: outside European norms (dichotomy and choice corollary), but inside a West Indian cultural whole (organisational corollary). From a social identity perspective (Tajfel and Turner 1986), Williams creates a positively connoted in-group (because it is the West Indian in-group to which belongs the future), through setting it apart from the colonial out-group (which is clearly less desirable, because its standards are outdated and will be eradicated by time).³⁹ Nevertheless, by retaining a position in which Guianese identity can be located, i.e. 'not-European', Williams creates conceptual space in which self-esteem and affiliation can be secured: "Guianese man is a microcosm of American man, capable of fashioning the universal, [...he] is all the races of the earth. [...] His home is the world" (133). The individual gains importance because the individual is a reflection of the global whole; hence, even the individual is 'capable of fashioning the universal'. The (self-)importance of the individual is engendered through its affiliation to a greater whole. The lack of specific hallmarks that sanctioned the significance of 'old' kinds of culture are missing; and as such, the un-specificity and level of abstractness of the cultural whole to which the Guianese man belongs makes it harder for identities to be derogated or excluded (which can also be related to the linguistic intergroup bias (Thompson et al. 2000; Maass et al. 1989). Thus, although Williams's notion of a Guianese cultural 'pattern', which is reflected in and reflects a West Indian whole, does not fully defy the psychological and cognitive principles related to identity, it shows how different kinds of identity can be created. Hence, in a certain way, Williams's cosmopolitan, transnational notion of identity can be seen as an alternative concept of identity which retains positive psychological effect of identity related to self-esteem and affiliation, while overcoming old European hallmarks of national identity.

However, Williams's cosmopolitan notion of an identity that refuses to be evaluated according to European criteria of nationalist identity is more of an exception than a norm. The prevalent tendency found in cultural essays on West Indian identity in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s is not so much related to finding completely open and new ways of imagining identity. Most of the notions of a

39 Notably, similar to Fanon, Williams's notion West Indian culture remains antithetical to European culture (see also Fanon [1961] 1969, 207).

West Indian cultural whole can be associated with the struggle for cultural hegemony. In a way, conceptualising a West Indian way of life in terms of Afro-Caribbean culture, and then presenting it as an authentic identity of one's own was simply another way to ascertain the cultural hegemony of African roots.

3.2 *Is There a West Indian Culture? – One Question, Several Definitions, and Even More Answers*

From the 1940s onwards, there were several articles, critical comments, and essays published in *Kykoveral* that debated the existence, impact, and future of a 'West Indian Way of Life'. In the following analyses, I will try to provide a short overview of the different notions and socio-political implications that an orientation towards a West Indian socio-political entity entailed.

3.2.1 *Finding Criteria – Defining Culture with Arthur Waites's "Is there a West Indian Culture" (1949)*⁴⁰

Already in the beginning of his essay, "Is there a West Indian Culture", Arthur Waites apologises for his question; firstly, to the "West Indians [who] may feel [... a] 'superior' attack upon the one process that must one day bind them together as a nation"; secondly, to the "researchers [... who] described it before the question was raised" (Waites, "West Indian Culture", 4; emphasis in original). However, he warns to put West Indian culture "in the same category as [cultures] described by Malinowsky, Benedict, Mead and others" (4). In their terms, he argues, the only people "who can be legitimately regarded as [West Indians] are the Amerindians" (4). Hence, from the beginning of his essay, Waites associates 'culture' with a primordialist notion of indigeneity and nativism. Furthermore, he also creates a link between indigeneity, nativism, and the right to have an independent nation, as West Indian-ness is what will 'bind' West Indian people 'together as a nation'. Thus, the question of 'Is there a West Indian culture' is answered by evaluating West Indian culture according to nationalist, nativist criteria that define 'culture' as "unconscious canons of choice" expressed in common language, common culture, common history (4).

40 No author information found. Arthur Waites's "Is there a West Indian Culture?" was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 2,9 in 1949.

Notably, as has been observed by others, European nationalist notions of (national) culture are hardly applicable to Caribbean contexts. Consequently, Waites questions the existence of a West Indian “pattern of culture” (4). Instead of being united by a common culture based in one shared language, history, and territory, “the peoples in the Caribbean have inherited a large amount of miscellaneous material from a variety of culture” (4). Therefore, he wonders “where to begin in [the] search for cultural factors in the West Indies” (4). Initially, his answer is rather unsurprising considering the time and context in which his essay was written: Waites maintains that for many the essence of West Indian culture is to be found in African roots. However, he is indeed surprisingly critical of this focus on African cultural elements. Although he acknowledges the cultural influence of the Africans and praises the various studies “logging Africanisms” in the West Indies (4), he criticises that

[t]he commonest error [which is evident in the works of some eminent writers] is a tendency to neglect cultural factors of groups other than those of West Indians of African descent (10).

Accordingly, he already identifies the tendency to marginalise and eclipse the social, cultural, and psychic realities experienced by Indo-Caribbean people. He also argues that “[t]here is [...] little justification in spot-lighting the African ancestry” for West Indian people, because “most contemporary West Indians have been less influenced by African tribal mores” than by “cultural norms [...] based upon British tradition” (5). However, he also finds an explanation for the fervent search for cultural hallmarks that can define West Indian culture:

more and more West Indians are recognising the possibility of independent nationhood [...] and therefore,] in their eagerness to develop a West Indian culture, they tend to either overstress [...] some] culture-traits as they have so far produced or attempt to create a culture pattern (6).

He considers the tendency to over-emphasise African cultural roots in the West Indies as a way to communicate cultural autonomy – which can be equated with the right for political independence, i.e. the right for an own nation. However, he warns of the consequences of trying to create a West Indian culture on the basis of

the culture of one group or ethnicity. Although he understands the motives behind a focus on African culture, he argues that one “must clearly differentiate between the cultural trends of racial and class groupings [...] and retain from regarding them as a national culture” (10). He emphasises that other cultural influences, particularly those of the East Indians, are equally important in some parts of the Caribbean: “East Indians are far from being rightly relegated to mere footnotes. The East Indian is no appendage to African-dominated culture in the West Indies” (11). In his opinion, for a common West Indian national culture-pattern, there need to be cultural elements that “are [...] found in **all** groups” (10; emphasis in original) – and thus, a common West Indian culture cannot be subjected to an African cultural denominator.

Furthermore, he also warns to forcefully create a national culture. For Waites, a deliberately created culture “is a false and un-natural culture” and can never match a historically grown national culture which is “created for a whole society [as] a recognisably unique pattern of behaviour and thought” (6). The great “danger” that he observes in the “West Indies is that of a planned culture”, i.e. of a culture that does not originate from the people, but from the West Indian “intellectual, political, artistic, moral and religious” elites (11). And in his opinion, these are hardly representative because they are a “minute group of the whole society of the West Indies” (12). Although he acknowledges that a cultural link may exist between the various academic, intellectual, and economic West Indian elites, he does not consider them as representative. He laments that the cultural efforts of these groups cannot “be regarded as national” (12). Hence, unless their elitist ideas are adopted and lived by the West Indians, their notion of a common West Indian culture can hardly incite the “forming [of] a **national configuration**” (12; emphasis in original). In Waites’s opinion, a truly national culture can only “rise[.] spontaneously from the people” (9). Therefore, it cannot be imposed upon the West Indians by their elites.

However, according to Waites, the cultural situation is not without hope. Waites argues that it is important to recognise that West Indian culture is currently

a foetal culture [...] which is in process of development, not yet detached from Colonial patterns of culture, yet revealing sufficiently unique

integrations to claim a probable separate differentiation of behaviour and thought patterns from those to which it was formerly subjected (9).

Accordingly, Waites suggests that West Indian culture is in the process of evolving from a colonial culture, i.e. a culture subjected to the norms of a “dominant foreign culture” (9), to an authentic national culture. With the passing of time – and if the elite does not force an artificial West Indian culture upon them – a truly national culture will develop in the West Indies.

Interestingly, Waites’s whole analysis is based on a very nationalist, primordialist notion of culture. Hence, from a primordialist perspective, it makes sense to argue against the active creation of a culture because such an endeavour would be ‘un-natural’, i.e. against the natural co-evolution of culture and ethnicities. From a post-structuralist, socio-constructivist perspective prevalent in postcolonial studies today, this notion is, of course, outdated. Nevertheless, it is interesting how West Indian culture was a transnational phenomenon (an aspect which Waites also recognises; see 4) which was also subjected to nationalist and primordialist criteria. This discrepancy between the hybrid characteristics of ‘West Indian culture’ and the criteria according to which they were evaluated is representative for the cultural discourses in British Guiana in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴¹ In addition, Waites portrays several other important issues dominating the contemporary cultural and political discourses of identity: his own notion of culture demonstrated the difficulty of evaluating and defining culture in terms other than national and nativist criteria; his analyses of other texts confirm the hegemony of African roots in defining West Indian culture; and his criticism of the West Indian elite laments the gap between ‘the people’ and the intellectual elite who defined West Indian culture in their own terms. Notably these issues would be present in literary texts and cultural discourses for the next decades. In the following analyses, I will show how other texts exemplify or refute Waites’s evaluation of the status quo of West Indian culture.

3.2.2 *Is there a West Indian Way of Life? – Yes, No, Maybe*

When, for *Kykoveral* 20 in 1955, Seymour had asked for comments on the question “Is there a West Indian Way of Life?”, several (more or less) important

41 As is demonstrated by the focus on African roots in e.g. *négritude* (Senghor [1964] 2005).

contemporary literary and cultural figures were prompted to answer. Among them were Martin Carter, P.H. Daly, Edgar Mittelholzer, E. Pilgrim, Ruby Samlallsingh and Frank Williams.

Unsurprisingly, the first comment, written by Frank Williams, gives a rather unambiguous answer: “I have long taken it for granted that there is a West Indian way of life” (Williams 1955, 189).⁴² Surprisingly, however, Williams did not come to this conclusion in the West Indies, but abroad. During his five years of voluntary exile in the U.K., he came “into almost daily contact with the entire region” (189). Only then, he realised how similar his lifestyle and habits were to those of his fellow West Indians:

our outlook on money was the same, [...] we had the same sense of rhythm; and in all these respects, we, as a group, were certainly different from the English, Welsh, Scots, West Africans [...], though we shared varying common features with each of these groups. It was the sum total that was different (190).

According to Williams, there is something to being West Indian that sets them apart from other cultural groups, such as the English or Scottish. Hence, his notion of West Indian-ness is rather open without any ethnic references in relation to the in-group, while demarcating it strongly against other acclaimed cultures. Thus, although he does not specify what defines West Indian culture, he suggests that it is an autonomous culture that matches the authenticity of other great cultures, such as the English or Scottish.

A similar opinion is conveyed by Martin Carter’s comment. However, he is more specific than Williams in terms of the characteristics of “life in this region which gives an essential distinction, a distinction that we can call West Indian” (Carter 1955, 193). Interestingly, Carter identifies slavery as having had the most important cultural impact⁴³. According to Carter, it is the “slave-patterned experience of the West Indian colonial [which] give that almost demoniac energy and vitality” to West Indian culture, as can be observed in e.g. the “steelband with its emphatic psychological imagery; that sardonic fantasy, casual dialectical humour-prophylactic of despair” (193). However, as has been demonstrated in the

⁴² There was no entry in any available literary encyclopaedia on Frank Williams.

⁴³ A notion that is also echoed in his poems “Listening to the Land” and “Death of a Slave”(see pages 329 and 342).

previous analyses, basing cultural identity on a specific part of history that only one section of the population experienced excludes the others that did not share this history. Thus, Carter's definition of West Indian culture would exclude the East Indians as an influential cultural force. In Carter's comment, they are also excluded from access to political power. Carter sees a consequential relationship between the abolition of slavery and the right for national independence: "Only when [... the West Indian's] status as colonial is abolished[,] he will come into his own human self-possession" (194). Accordingly, for Carter, the African slaves are the ones who will eventually force the colonisers to grant the colonies independence, because independence is the logical consequence and true completion of the abolition of slavery. Hence, again, the focus is set on African cultural history and other cultural elements are neglected.

P. H. Daly directly turns the question concerning the existence of a West Indian way of life into a question about a "national way of life" (Daly 1955, 198).⁴⁴ Interestingly, in his opinion, a national way of life "belongs to the various essences of a people's nature [...] on which their distinctive characters are impressed" (198). His notion of cultural identity again echoes primordialist, nationalist notions of culture and identity (Conversi 2006, 15; Smith 2009, 8-9). Accordingly, cultural patterns which are local, "genuine[,] and good ought to be preserved" (Daly 1955, 198). He also provides suggestions concerning the kinds of cultural patterns worthy of preservation in the West Indies: next to steelband and calypso, he jokingly includes "the area's habit of rum-drinking" (198). Hence, although his comment should not be taken completely seriously, it should be noted that – again – only cultural elements that are typically associated with Afro-Caribbean culture, steelband and the calypso, are mentioned.

E. Pilgrim provides yet another answer to the question – however, again his definition of a West Indian culture only includes the Afro-Caribbean population, while excluding Indo-Caribbean people.⁴⁵ Although he acknowledges that "two main groups among the West Indies are the Afro-Europeans [...] and the East Indians", he only considers the "Afro-European group [...] as] undoubtedly

44 P. H. Daly was a historian and journalist who regularly contributed to *Kyk-Over-Al* between 1946 and 1955 (see also Figure 2 on page 519). However, there was no entry in any available literary encyclopaedia on P.H. Daly.

45 There was no entry in any available literary encyclopaedia on E. Pilgrim.

developing a ‘Way of Life’ which is distinctive, and peculiar to itself” (202). Similar to Daly, he considers calypso and steelband as two cultural elements which are distinctively local, and thus, West Indian. Calypso and steelband “embody the African rhythmic form modified by close and continual contact with the musical inheritance [...] from Europe” (202). Hence, in his opinion, West Indian culture is the result of the contact between African and European culture. In stark contrast to this Afro-European culture, there is the culture of the East Indian group who “has its own ‘Way of Life’” (202). In comparison to the calypso and the steelband, Indian music “seems so un-musical, so toneless and monotonous [to Afro-European ears]” (202), and therefore, it stands somewhat apart from the local, West Indian culture of the Afro-Europeans. He also considers this cultural division as unlikely to change. Although he also notes that the East Indian way of life is being modified “by constant contact with the large Afro-European group”, he emphasises that a change of Indian culture “is being strongly and consciously resisted by Indian-minded Indians” (202). Hence, in a way, he blames the East Indians that there is no encompassing West Indian culture, but a division between the local and contemporary “Afro-European ‘Way of Life’” and the conservative “East Indian ‘Way of Life’” that is “parcel of a cultural inheritance dating from the remote past” (202-3). Accordingly, he suggests that there is a potential for the development of a common West Indian culture, but only if the East Indians do not foreclose themselves to the influences of Afro-European culture.

Ruby Samlallsingh’s⁴⁶ and Edgar Mittelholzer’s⁴⁷ answers are very different from the previous ones. Both have a hard time identifying a West Indian cultural identity. Samlallsingh emphasises that there is a “great variety of people

46 Unfortunately, there was no entry in any available literary encyclopaedia on Ruby Samlallsingh.

47 Edgar Mittelholzer (16 December 1909 – 1965), born in New Amsterdam, was a Guyanese writer of mixed origin. He started his career early, but with mediocre success in the beginning. His first novel *Creole Chips* (1937), he tried to sell from door to door. His breakthrough came with *Corentyne Thunder* (1941). In 1941, Mittelholzer moved to Trinidad, and in 1947, he left for England where he pursued his writing career. In his work, Mittelholzer explored ethnic tensions and the psychological dimension of repercussions of colonisation. His perspective on his various ethnic backgrounds was strongly biased by his admiration for his Germanic heritage. He also wrote short stories. In the 1960s, however, the reception of his work turned more and more negative. Personal issues increased his level of distress, and his psychological condition deteriorated. In 1965, he committed suicide by setting himself on fire (Dance 1986, 327-40; Figueredo 2006, 539-40).

representing many countries and many ways of life” in the West Indies (Samlallsingh 1955, 196). For Samlallsingh, these cultures have little in common, but they all “carry on the culture of their country of origin, with minor adaptations to suit the climate or geographical conditions” (196). Mittelholzer, however, considers the West Indian way of life to be very much influenced by European culture. He claims that “[t]he African slaves, and the Indians were an eclipsed people; the culture of the Europeans carried the day” (Mittelholzer 1955, 200). Instead of carrying on their own genuine cultural heritage, Mittelholzer argues, the Africans and Indians “could not help being influenced” (201). Hence, he is also very pessimistic about cultural characteristics that have been praised by others as genuinely West Indian: “the occasional parody of some ritual dance or [African] ‘ceremony’ [cannot be considered as] free of European influence” (201). Thus, according to Samlallsingh and Mittelholzer, there does not seem to be a West Indian culture, either because the cultural diversity is too high or because West Indian culture can be seen as a derivate of European culture.

Taken these answers together, it can be argued that the issues that Waites mentioned eight years earlier, i.e. the focus on African culture and the neglect of Indian culture, are also present in the answers to the question “Is there a West Indian Way of Life”. Carter, Daly, and Pilgrim draw an explicit connection between African culture and contemporary West Indian culture. Carter and Daly even take African cultural heritage as a vindication for national independence.

However, that this notion of West Indian culture is merely a matter of perspective becomes clear when taking the other comments into account. Frank Williams does not make any ethnic references in his definition of West Indian culture, but emphasises regional similarities. Samlallsingh and Mittelholzer do not perceive West Indian culture as a distinct cultural entity at all. Samlallsingh praises the great cultural variety in the West Indies; while Mittelholzer considers West Indian culture to be an extension to European culture.

Considering the writers behind each comment, it is noteworthy that P. H. Daly became an important cultural figure with a specific cultural agenda. Daly, a renowned historian, would bring forth the idea that the co-operative republic “was handed down” to the (Afro-)Guyanese by Cuffy and the other slaves that revolted during the “February Revolution”, i.e. the slave revolts in 1763 (Daly 1970, 86).

In that sense, Daly was close to the ideological cultural policies of the Burnham regime. In contrast, it is interesting to note that the two most critical comments are written by Samlallsingh, an Indo-Guyanese, and Mittelholzer who was perceived very critically for his Euro-centric opinions on West Indian culture by some cultural agents in British Guiana. For example, in his literary history, Seymour describes Mittelholzer as “a defiant personality, identifying so much with the European side of his ancestry and denying the African ancestry” (Seymour 1980, 60). Of course, such claims need to be seen in the context of Seymour’s own political affiliations and cultural agenda. Hence, although there were voices and opinions that did not confirm Afro-Guyanese hegemony in West Indian culture, they were received critically by important cultural figures such as Seymour and Daly.

3.3 *The 1970s: Kaie and Burnham’s notion of West Indian Culture*

While there was at least some variety found in the contributions to *Kykoveral* on the matter of the existence of a ‘West Indian Way of Life’, Guyana underwent a political and cultural radicalisation in the 1970s. The connection between a political orientation towards the rest of the West Indies and the assertion of an Afro-Guyanese cultural hegemony became more pronounced in the 1970s – particularly with Burnham’s cultural policy related to the ‘paramountcy of the party’. Burnham openly propagated and emphasised the connection to other Caribbean cultures – and their common African cultural roots. Despite the shortcomings of Afro-Guyanese culture to represent Guyanese culture as a whole, the focus on African cultural elements intensified. Most cultural publications were in the hands of Burnham’s government. In particular, *Kaie* implemented Burnham’s ideas of culture and cultural policies.

3.3.1 *The Borders of Transnationalism – Authenticity and Locality in Forbes Burnham’s “Message to CARIFESTA 1976” (1976)*

Burnham himself contributed to *Kaie* with short comments and essays. In his “Message to CARIFESTA 1976” in *Kaie* 14, for example, he advertised his

policies for creating awareness for common Caribbean values.⁴⁸ Superficially, his notion of identity seems explicitly transnational “en-compass[ing] the whole Caribbean and not merely the English-speaking countries” (Burnham 1976, 3). His focus seemed to be directed on the common cultural elements shared by all people in the Caribbean. Therefore, in his opinion, *CARIFESTA* was an important cultural institution facilitating “the process of cultural self-discovery and self-respect [which are] both necessary prerequisites for the realisation of our Caribbean identity” (3). Thus, he presented *CARIFESTA* as an indispensable cultural platform for the “identification of national and regional cultural ideals [that constitute] the very essence of [their] collective way of life” (3). Accordingly, his notion of identity seemed to be explicitly transnational focusing on common Caribbean values that surpass national, ethnic, and linguistic borders.

At the same time, there are several peculiar aspects in the notion of Caribbean identity that he conveys. On the one hand, his notion of Caribbean identity is transnational and, thus, not restricted to national borders; on the other hand, he still speaks of ‘national cultural ideals’. Furthermore, while praising *CARIFESTA* for expressing the authenticity and essence of Caribbean culture and identity, he simultaneously acknowledges that Caribbean culture is comprised of various changing cultural elements (3). Combining these seemingly contradictory notions of identity, Burnham speaks of a “unique [...] mixture” characterising the cultural identity of the people living in the Caribbean (3).

In relation to postcolonial theories, Burnham’s concept of identity can be related to Knörr’s notion of creole identity that embraces the historical fact that creole cultures have developed from various cultural backgrounds and the psychological desire to have an identity that is unambiguously identifiable and unique (Knörr 2008, 5). From a psychological perspective, Burnham’s notion of identity can be related to creating and maintaining a positive self esteem (Fein et

48 Forbes Burnham (20 February 1923 – 6 August 1985), born in Kitty. He was an Afro-Guyanese politician, co-founder of the People’s Progressive Party (PPP), and the founder of the People’s National Congress (PNC). In 1964, he became Premier of British Guiana in 1964, Prime Minister of Guyana in 1966, and President of Guyana in 1980. He led an ethnocentric, dictatorship-like rule over Guyana, controlling the media, restricting the private sector, and ruining Guyana economically. He was accused of rigging several of the elections that he won and of being involved in Walter Rodney’s death in 1980. He died of heart failure in 1985 and was succeeded by Hugh Desmond Hoyte as Prime Minister (Brennan 2008; see also pages 271f).

al. 2003). Caribbean identity is evaluated positively – but, interestingly, in nationalist terms: authenticity, cultural essences, and national symbols are highlighted (see also Smith 1991). By associating Caribbean identity with authenticity and uniqueness, Burnham's concept retains aspects of the nationalist notions of identity that predicate authenticity on a rootedness in a specific place. However, authenticity is no longer bound to national, but regional borders – his notion of identity surpasses national territorial and cultural singularity. Yet, by using the term 'authentic' to describe Caribbean identity puts it on an equal level with 'the great European' cultures. Hence, while the meaning of authenticity is redefined in Caribbean terms, it is still used as a criterion that determines the positive value of Caribbean identity. Thus, this positive evaluation of Caribbean culture as an authentic culture also provides a basis for the creation and maintenance of a positive self-esteem.

3.3.2 *The Supremacy of African Roots – Ethnocentrism and Chauvinism in Arthur J. Seymour's "We must hear our brothers speak" (1973) and "Cultural Policy in Guyana" (1977) and P. H. Daly's "CARIFESTA, People's Culture and the Power Units" (1979)*

The notion of cultural identity that was advocated in *Kaie* did not include everyone equally. This becomes clear when considering the contributions of two influential cultural agents, Arthur Seymour and P.H. Daly. Similarly to Burnham's text, their notion of cultural identity emphasises the creole nature and the authenticity of Caribbean identity – and also the importance of African cultural elements. In his contribution to *Kaie* 11 in 1973, "We must hear our brothers speak", Seymour acknowledges that the different nations and territories in the Caribbean "develop their authentic voices" by overcoming "the former domination of the Euro-centred traditions" and focusing on the "strength of the values of the Afro-centred past" (Seymour 1973, 5). The same accounts for Guyana: for Seymour, Guyana's only possibility to "forg[e an] authentic voice" is to "resurrect[...] the image of the African slave, but invested with a power and dignity not known before" (5). He does not waste any words to say something about the other cultural groups. Considering the Indo-Guyanese still constituted

the majority of the population in Guyana, this neglect can only be interpreted as discriminatory.

The same aspects are expressed in Arthur Seymour's UNESCO report on "Cultural Policy in Guyana" (1977). Basically, the report presents Burnham's cultural policies. Seymour emphasises the importance of "[t]he Prime Minister" and his governmental policies that "make the people fully aware of [their common national] elements and create images of value, self-respect, and self-worth to replace the images they had previously accepted" (Seymour 1977, 11). He recognises Burnham's awareness of "the importance of the cultural revolution as an indispensable basis for the economic and political revolutions" (13). The role of Burnham's cultural policies for the development of a national identity is stressed over and over again: "Guyanese people are now finding their identity, and defining national values" (12), "art forms are being adopted by national pride" (13), and "a national soul is born and is developing in Guyana" (13). However, again, when talking about a national culture, Seymour has an Afro-centric culture in mind. For Seymour, the cultural values of the Afro-Guyanese and the traditions of the "free villages" formed by freed African slaves, are the basis on which a common Guyanese culture was built:

the[...] [African] values were closely related to the sense of identity of the common folk and formed a strong undercurrent, sometimes at war with European and Christian values, but assimilating and being assimilated into a creolization of culture (11).

Notably, although Seymour acknowledges the development of a creolised culture in Guyana, he emphasises the salience of African culture within the different intermingling elements. In contrast, he is less appreciative of the influences of the "East Indians [who] came with their religion and customs", but who are now becoming "Guyanese people" adopting Guyanese "national values" (12) – which is a peculiar statement, considering that a national culture in the traditional sense did not exist in Guyana. Considering his earlier statements about national and African values, it becomes clear which 'national values', i.e. those of the Afro-Guyanese, the Indo-Guyanese supposedly adopt.

The focus on African culture is also palpable in P. H. Daly's "CARIFESTA, People's Culture and the Power Units" in *Kaie* 16. In this cultural comment, he

even links the cultural developments of Guyana to those in Africa. In his opinion, “[t]he identity of the people’s culture is being symmetrically and proportionately developed” on both sides of the Atlantic (Daly 1979, 34).⁴⁹ Therefore, Guyana was also “culturally and emotionally prepared” to send their cultural ambassadors to “Festac – the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture which was held in Lagos in January 1975” (32). Again, no mentioning of any connection between other ethnic groups and their cultures of origin. Thus, there is little variety in the notions and opinions on Guyanese culture in the 1970s – at least not in the dominant political and cultural discourses. The official organs mainly conveyed a notion of identity that portray Guyanese cultural identity as a part of greater creolised Caribbean cultural whole which was bound together by their common African roots.⁵⁰ However, this may be mainly related to the fact that Burnham’s regime controlled almost all cultural organs in Guyana.

3.4 *Interim Conclusion*

In the 1940s and 1950s, there was still some variety concerning the different notions and opinions on a common West Indian culture and Guiana’s role in a Caribbean whole. The notion of British Guiana as a part of a West Indian way of life or a West Indian cultural identity was strongly present in the essays and cultural comments published in *Kykoveral* in the 1940s and 1950s. However, not everyone interpreted the term ‘West Indian way of life’ in the same way. Denis Williams, for example, considers a West Indian cultural whole to be reflected in a Guianese cultural ‘pattern’ (Williams, “Guiana”, 132). Hence, he defies the national paradigm of culture and defines Guianese culture in conspicuously transnational terms. His ideas of culture even show some cosmopolitan aspects. However, his notion of identity is the only one that tries to conceptualise identity other than in native terms. In fact most other texts merely appropriate nationalist criteria to fit the creolised cultures of the Caribbean.

For example, Arthur Waites’s text is an example of the difficulty of evaluating and defining culture in terms other than national and nativist criteria,

49 This notion of a transnational common African culture antedates Gilroy’s concept that he elaborated in *The Black Atlantic* (1993).

50 A similar notion is found in Brathwaite’s notion of a (Afro-)Caribbean “nation language” (Brathwaite [1979] 1993, 260).

such as indigeneity and a historically grown culture (Waites, “West Indian Life”). However, Waites already identifies another issue that dominated the cultural comments and essay in Guyana: the hegemony of African roots in defining West Indian culture. These tendencies are palpable in the contributions of P.H. Daly, Martin Carter, and E. Pilgrim to *Kykoveral* 20 in 1955. Apart from Williams, Mittelholzer, and Samlallsingh, all express an explicit focus on African roots in their notion of a West Indian way of life. However, they do not only emphasise the importance of African culture, they also exclude or derogate Indo-Guyanese culture. Carter and Daly even take African cultural heritage as a vindication for Guyanese national independence; hence, denying the Indo-Guyanese their share in the struggle for independence.

In sum, many texts about West Indian culture and identity defined and evaluated this potentially new kind of culture in nationalist terms. Authenticity, indigeneity, kinship and a historically grown, common, native culture still played an important role. Furthermore, many texts already showed ethnocentric and chauvinistic tendencies favouring Afro-Guyanese cultural elements while marginalising those of other groups. Although these biases were already detected and criticised in the 1940s and 1950s (e.g. in Arthur Waites’s text), the discourses on West Indian and Guyanese culture became even more ethnocentric.

The tendency to marginalise Indo-Caribbean culture only intensified after independence under Burnham’s policy of the paramountcy of the party in the 1970s. Although the idea of a creolised West Indian cultural identity took form, African culture was still considered the dominant and common cultural denominator to which all other cultural elements would assimilate. Burnham, Seymour, and Daly portray a creolised cultural identity that draws its power and authenticity from its African cultural roots. Hence, in contrast Khan’s notion of creolisation as “free floating events” (Khan 2007, 665) that are capable of accommodating the different cultural heritages of various people, the notion of a West Indian way of life bears proof of ethnocentrism and chauvinism.

The concept of identity that is portrayed by Burnham, Daly, and Seymour can be related to Knörr’s notion of creole identity as a new culture that is also unambiguously identifiable and unique (Knörr 2008, 5).

From a psychological perspective, the discursive strategies with which their notion of identity was conveyed explicitly addressed people's need for a positive self-esteem. The new, common West Indian cultural identity is presented as a rehabilitation of suppressed local values, and as such, it supposedly restores "self-respect, and self-worth to replace the [detrimental foreign self-]images they had previously accepted" (Seymour 1977, 11). Hence, Burnham creates a positive self-esteem with his notion of West Indian identity. However, Caribbean identity is still evaluated in nationalist terms: authenticity, cultural essences, and national ideals (see also Fanon [1961] 1969). However, the nationalist criteria were also appropriated to Caribbean cultural contexts. By portraying Caribbean cultural identity as equally authentic as 'the great European' cultures, the texts convey that Caribbean culture 'plays in the same league' as European culture. Hence, depicting Caribbean culture as authentic evokes associations with worthiness and cultural importance – which are important factors determining the self-esteem of the respective groups members.

Furthermore, by focusing on the importance of African cultural roots, this positive rehabilitation of Caribbean culture is specifically related to the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Guyanese group. Hence, this group also benefits the most from the rehabilitation of Caribbean and Guyanese culture and its positive effects on self-esteem. The access to this favourable position is foreclosed for all but descendants of African slaves. By using discursive means to deny the importance of other ethnic groups, the Afro-Guyanese could maintain their sense of self-importance. The main discursive tool to secure this sense of self-esteem and importance can be related to the psychological phenomenon of in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999). Although the notion of a West Indian cultural whole can be interpreted as a common super-ordinate group that bears the potential for an un-discriminatory common identity (Brewer and Pierce 2005), the potential is not realised. Instead of a vaguely defined common in-group identity, West Indian culture is defined as solely based on African culture roots. By defining the West Indian cultural prototype in their own terms, i.e. by projecting their own cultural values on West Indian identity as a whole, the Afro-Guyanese secure their own favourable position.

Eventually, however, it needs to be emphasised that the kinds of national and transnational cultural identity that were discussed in these texts represent the ideas of a small West Indian intellectual elite (see also Waites, “West Indian Life”, 12). Thus, West Indian identity as presented in the texts above should not be considered as representative of an identity of ‘the people’. Therefore, one should keep in mind that discourses on national or creole kinds of identity are always somewhat detached from the social, cultural, and psychic reality of the people.

4. *From the Margins – Indo-Guyanese Perspectives*

The previous texts give the impression that the descendants of the Indian indentured workers did not play a particularly significant role in the literary and cultural discourses in Guyana in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s – neither before, nor after independence. In comparison to the abundance of literary texts by Afro-Guyanese / Guyanese writers, the amount of texts written by Indo-Guyanese / Guyanese authors appears comparatively meagre (Poynting 1971). However, although there was eventually only a “small group of Indo-Guyanese writers” (Seymour 1980, 52), their texts are still interesting from an analytical discursive perspective. Although nationalist notions of identity were not a salient aspect in their literature, other forms of identity, nationalism, and the current political situation were presented from a perspective that did not conform to the prevalent focus on Afro-Guyanese culture.

4.1 *The Influence of Cheddi Jagan – The Story of Neglect?*

Despite a promising start in the 1940s, Cheddi Jagan’s⁵¹ influence on the political climate in British Guyana was eclipsed by his discords with Burnham and the ethnically driven political tensions that followed. In comparison to Burnham, Jagan’s fight for independence, his notions on racial equality, and his cultural

51 Cheddi Jagan (22 March 1918 – 6 March 1997), born in Port Mourant. He was an Indo-Guyanese politician, co-founder of the People’s Progressive Party (PPP). He held several governmental positions from 1947 onwards, including Minister of Trade and Industry and Premier of British Guiana (1961-1964). From 1964 onwards, he remained the leader of the opposition during the Burnham regime. He was re-elected as President of Guyana in 1992 (Decker 1998; see also page 271).

policies did not have a major influence on the literary discourse in British Guiana / Guyana. Furthermore, the cultural identity of the Indians was rarely the topic of the literary comments and criticism in *Kykoveral*. In contrast to Burnham, whose policy is explicitly mentioned as a cultural facilitator, Jagan's notion of culture and identity hardly played a role. This is certainly related to the fact that *Kaie* was the organ of a governmental institution, but even in *Kykoveral*, there is little emphasis on Jagan's cultural policies.

It is also interesting to note that, initially, Jagan's and Burnham's *cultural* agendas were not very different – although their *political* agendas drifted more and more apart. Similar to Burnham, Jagan also promoted cultural and political “freedom and national dignity for British Guiana”, and his main concern was to “end[...] colonialism” (Jagan 1958, 8A-8B). He also emphasised the importance of building and maintaining cultural, political, and economic affiliations to other Caribbean states (Jagan 1966a, 1972a, 1972b), and he explicitly demanded a greater cultural “West Indian Unity” (Jagan 1967b). But in comparison to Burnham, his focus was not limited to the Caribbean. Jagan wanted greater solidarity between colonised people and other countries that suffered under suppression and Western imperialism (Jagan 1972a, 1972b).⁵² In his work and speeches, he regularly expressed concern for other colonised countries around the globe, and he also visited conferences, such as the “Conference of Solidarity with the Struggles of African & Arab Peoples” (Jagan 1978). He also explicitly supported anti-racist black movements in the US (Jagan 1966d, 1972a), and he openly demonstrated his solidarity with “fighters for freedom” across the world (Jagan 1972a). For example, in a speech for Angela Davis, a black human rights activist, he praised her fight for the rights of the “US blacks” (Jagan 1972a). Although Jagan showed respect for the struggles of specific ethnicities, he favoured approaches which surpassed ethnic boundaries. In his speech for Angela Davis, for example, he emphasised her focus on a “black-white unity” and claimed that “[her] cause is [Guyana's] cause” (Jagan 1972a). Hence, overall, Jagan's work and policies were not particularly ethnocentric or chauvinistic: his notion of culture did not convey a specific ethnocentric agenda that would claim

52 Which is related to his stronger Marxist-Leninist tendencies, and the proposition that the united working-class does not need a country (see also Avineri 1991).

Indo-Guyanese hegemony. This may be related to his commitment to Marxist-Leninist communism which he saw as the only way to fight Western imperialism.

However, Jagan also did not much to mitigate the ethnic tensions in Guyana. After the division of the PPP in 1957, Jagan and Burnham were never able to overcome their differences. Hence, despite many similarities, Jagan was an ardent critic of Burnham's political regime. When the coalition between the PNC and the UF achieved independence, Jagan wrote "Independence Yes! Celebrations No!" in which he criticised that Guyanese people would not really be free under the regime of the PNC and the UF (Jagan 1966b). In the years to come, he kept on criticising the PNC – often in a very scathing and personal manner (Jagan 1966c, 1966e, 1967a, 1972b). He also criticised the PNC's paramountcy of the party which, in his opinion, basically established a political one-party system in Guyana (Jagan 1975). Although his critical voice should be acknowledged for calling attention to the government's corruption and the marginalisation of the Indo-Caribbean working class (Appiah and Gates 2004, 336), Jagan's own political position and his relationship to Burnham did not really contribute to a de-escalation of the ethnic tensions in Guyana (see also Misir 2010).

However, Jagan was not alone. His opinions on the PNC are also reflected in the writing of other Indo-Caribbean intellectuals, such as Kumar Mahabir. Mahabir writes, "when the PNC captured the government in 1968, it proceeded to convert the state into an instrument of its own middle class interest acting ostensibly on behalf of its own communal constituencies" (Mahabir 1996, 284). He laments that despite the fact that the majority of the people in Guyana were from Indian descent, they were marginalised and from policy making by "[t]he black arms of the state" (Mahabir 1996, 290). He accuses "the post-Independence African-dominated state policy" and the Afro-Guyanese of defining "Guyanese nationalism [...] in black terms" (Mahabir 1996, 286, 289). In addition, he also criticises that the "Africans in the Caribbean have tried to paint the ethnic label of 'black' on Indians" without any concern for their cultural specificities (Mahabir 1996, 288). Echoing one of the problems that Arthur Waites associated with the notion of a common West Indian culture (Waites, "West Indian Life", 12), he also accuses 'West-Indianism' to be chauvinistic and ethnocentric, favouring Afro-Caribbean culture (Mahabir 1996, 297). Although one should be

careful to uncritically accept this perspective on Guyanese cultural discourses, Jagan should not be seen as a political extremist whose opinions on the PNC were singular and unjustified. After all, Burnham's regime used certain political strategies which are usually related to dictatorships. His policy of the 'paramountcy of the party', infringements on the freedom of the press and academia, and violent political repression as well as corruption endangered the democracy in Guyana (Westmaas 2009, 119).

Hence, although Jagan's and also Mahabir's depictions of the relationship between the Afro-centric PNC and Indo-Guyanese PPP seem to be tainted by the history of ethnic struggles in the region, it should be emphasised that the Indo-Guyanese *did* have a marginalised political and cultural position Guyana after independence. Further historical research could elucidate the relationship between the cultural policies of the PNC, the general political climate in Guyana, and other sociological factors that contributed to the under-representation of Indo-Guyanese writers in the 1960s and 1970s. However, there still are texts written by Indo-Guyanese writers, and their analyses may provide a more complex understanding of the discourse on national and cultural identity in Guyana.

4.2 *Kheesaz*⁵³ of the Rice Fields – Presenting India's Past and Present in Guyana

An important aspect in texts written by Indo-Guyanese authors is their depiction of the history and culture of Indo-Guyanese people. As the texts by Afro-Guyanese writers have shown, the portrayal of the past played an important role in the national discourses of Guyanese cultural identity. While some focus on emphasising the presence of an Indo-Guyanese culture, others are more critical. Furthermore, there are different opinions on the interpretation of the role of Indian history for an Indo-Guyanese future. In the following analysis, important topics and themes will be presented that influence the notion of Indo-Guyanese cultural identity.

53 "Stories" (see Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", 29).

4.2.1 *Indian Songs in Exile – Indo-Guyanese Culture in C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla's "The Weeding Gang" (1934)*

First published in 1934, one of the earliest poems that took the life of Indian indentured labourers as its theme was C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla's "The Weeding Gang".⁵⁴ However, it also remained one of the only poems that portrayed the life of the Indo-Guyanese. Its reappearance in *Kykoveral* 6,19 is proof of its extraordinary position, particularly in the context of the lack of other Indo-Guyanese poets published in this special issue.

In comparison to all other poems in this study, "The Weeding Gang" has a rather conventional European poetic form. The poem consists of three sestets that all have a similar metre and rhyme scheme. Each sestet consists of a rhyme couplet followed by an envelope rhyme (aabccd eefggf hhijji). The rhyme couplet as well as the two middle rhymes within the envelope rhyme are feminine rhymes. The first and the last rhyme of the envelope rhyme are masculine rhymes. The first line is written in an iambic trimeter with an additional un-accentuated syllable in the end; the second line can be read as a trochaic tetrameter; and the third line is written in iambic pentameter⁵⁵. This metric scheme is repeated twice in all three sestets. Its rather conventional, harmonious poetic form and the content of the poem evoke associations with neo-classical pastoral poetry or idylls.

The poem depicts a group of Indo-Guyanese women who are on their way to work on the rice fields:

I know the girls are coming,
For I hear the gentle humming
Of choruses they're singing on their way;
I hear their saucepans jingling,
5 And their cutlasses a-tingling,
Which as their music instruments they play.

They fill the silence after,
With their peals and merry laughter
Which float upon the pinion of the air;

54 C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla was an Indo-Guyanese poet, editor, and publisher. He has edited and published *An Anthology of Local Indian Verse* as early as 1934 (Searwar, Benjamin, and McDonald 1998, 171, 173, 181-3). In this anthology, "The Weeding Gang" was first published; in addition, it was re-published in *Kyk-Over-Al* 6,19 in 1954.

55 Apart from line fifteen which begins with an anapaestic foot.

- 10 And also ease their walking
 With some idle silly talking,
 With kheesaz⁵⁶ and boojhowals⁵⁷ very queer.
- Then once again their singing
 They resume, until the ringing
- 15 Of their voices mingles with the whistling breeze;
 I love to see their faces
 With their smiles and subtle graces,
 And I love to hear their charming melodies.

The poem evokes rather romantic, idyllic images of the women who work on the rice fields. Although the poem describes the women's way to work, the allegories in the poem are strikingly musical. The "saucepans [are] jingling" (Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", l. 4) and the "cutlasses [are] a-tingling" (l. 5) like "music instruments" (l. 6). Their "singing" (l. 13) and "merry laughter" (l. 8), as well as their exchange of "kheesaz" and "boojhowals" (l. 12), give the reader the impression that the "girls" (l. 1) are on their way to a party or even a wedding.⁵⁸ The associations with festivities and dancing are reinforced by the use of the words "ringing" (l. 14), "tingling" (l. 5), and "jingling" (l. 4) which are associated with the ringing of bells, and the women's singing is described as "peals" (l. 8). The connotation to the sound of bells evokes images of classical Indian dances for which women often wear *Ghungroos*, i.e. musical anklets that consist of small bells being strung together (Hesse 2007, 8). However, despite the merriness of the group, the women's behaviour is still described as very decent and full of "subtle graces" (Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", l. 17). In fact, they are depicted in a way that fits the image of Indian notions of modesty (Tarlo 1996): their "humming" is "gentle" (Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", l. 2), their "laughter [floats]" (ll. 8-9), and their "smiles" (l. 17) as well as their "melodies" are "charming" (l. 17). Hence, the women in the poem are very traditionally 'East Indian'. Accordingly, the poem seems to suggest that traditional Indian values are still held high in the Indo-Guianese communities and that cultural elements, such as traditional dancing and songs, are still perpetuated.

Notwithstanding the associations with festivities, dancing, and music, the women are on their work to the fields. The link to Guiana's sugar or rice fields is

56 "Stories"; translated by the author (Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", 29).

57 "Riddles"; translated by the author (Ramcharitar-Lalla, "Gang", 29).

58 Also due to the orthographic similarity between 'weeding' and 'wedding'.

made by the “cutlasses” (l. 5) that they are carrying, i.e. a tool which is used to cut cane or rice. In addition, the “whistling breeze” (l. 15) evokes associations with the sea and Guiana. However, there are very few explicit references to British Guiana in the poem. The text focuses not so much on the specificity of Indo-Guyanese people, but on the fact that Indian traditions are kept alive in another place. Thus, similar to Brojo Bhattacharya’s poem “Rice Harvest” (1961), there is little ‘Guaneseness’ in the way that the women behave. The poem conveys that Indian culture has been re-rooted in British Guiana and that these traditions help the Indo-Guyanese to “ease their wa[y]” (l. 10) and to cope with the difficulties and hardships in their new life. Accordingly, although the poem portrays a specific kind of cultural identity, it is the identity of an Indian diaspora living in exile, i.e. in a land that is not theirs. Thus, the kind of cultural identity that is described does not seem to be a native one.

4.2.2 *No More Indian Music – The Lack of an Indo-Guyanese Identity in Shana Yardan’s “Earth is Brown” (1972)*⁵⁹

Shana Yardan’s poem “Earth is Brown” stands in stark contrast to Ramcharitar-Lalla’s “The Weeding Gang”. While Ramcharitar-Lalla’s poem had an unmistakable relation to conventional European poetic forms, the influence of modernist poetry is noticeable in Yardan’s poem. The poem is written in six verse paragraphs without any discernible metre or rhyme scheme. The breach with traditional conventions is also reflected by the content of the poem.

A very disillusioned vision of Indian culture in Guyana is depicted in Yardan’s poem. In comparison to Ramcharitar-Lalla’s “The Wedding Gang”, the poem does not convey that Indian cultural roots are flourishing in Guyanese soil. In fact, the poem gives the reader the impression that Indo-Guyanese culture has faded:

59 Shana Yardan (1943 – 1989), in Mahaicony Village, Demerara. She was an Indo-Guyanese poet. She studied at the University of Guyana. Some of her poems appeared in *Kaie* from 1973 onwards. Due to the neglect of female writers in the publication of *CARIFESTA* ‘72, she published an anthology of poems by female Guyanese writers, *Guyana Drums*, together with Sybil Douglas, Sheila King, Evadne D’Oliveira. Her own collection of poems, *This Listening of Eyes*, was published by the History and Arts Council in 1976. She died of cancer in 1989 (Herdeck, Lubin, and Laniak-Herdeck 1979, 229; LE 2014a; Persaud 2007). Her poem “Earth is Brown” was included in the anthology *New Writing in the Caribbean* which was published by A.J. Seymour after *CARIFESTA* ‘72.

Earth is brown and rice is green,
 And air is cold on the face of the soul

Oh grandfather, my grandfather,
 your dhoti is become a shroud
 5 your straight hair a curse
 in this land where
 rice no longer fills the belly
 or empty placelessness
 of your soul.

10 For you cannot remember India.
 The passage of time
 has too long been trampled over
 to bear your wistful recollections,
 and you only know the name
 15 of the ship that they brought you on
 because your daadi told it to you

[...]

The poem strikes a very sour note. While Ramcharitar-Lalla's poem emphasised positive aspects of Indian culture such as dancing and singing, Yardan's poem associates traditional Indo-Guyanese culture with death and economic decline. Already in the beginning, the out-datedness of traditional values is evoked by addressing an Indian "grandfather" (Yardan, "Brown", l. 3). The ancestor is not honoured, but his cultural heritage is depicted as maladaptive for a life in Guyana: his "dhoti [has] become a shroud" (l. 4) and his "straight hair a curse" (l. 5). The poem addresses an issue within the post-colonial discourse in Guyana that also Kumar Mahabir refers to: while it makes sense for people of African descent to distance themselves from unattainable "European values of beauty, in that 'good hair' means straight hair, 'good nose' means straight nose, and 'good complexion' means light complexion", the total devaluation of these characteristics also had negative consequences (Mahabir 1996, 288). Many Indians who "naturally bear these phenotypical features" understood the advocacy a total rejection of these bodily characteristic as a rejection of their ethnicity (Mahabir 1996, 288). Hence, the poem refers to this aspect and describes the grandfather's genetic heritage as a curse in a society which associates 'straight hair' with the biased standards of the

colonisers – who had just ‘recently’ been evicted from their un-rightful positions of power.

Furthermore, Indo-Guyanese culture is depicted as the copy of a copy of a culture. The “wistful recollections” (Yardan, “Brown”, l. 13) of India are an illusion, because even the grandfather only knows them from the tales and anecdotes of his “daadi” (l. 16). The Indian values that he keeps up are not even truly his own, but only exist in his imagination. Therefore, the grandfather’s culture seems to be trapped in an “empty placelessness” (l. 8) that neither truly belongs to India nor Guyana. Thus, Indo-Guyanese culture seems ‘empty’ because it lacks a ‘place’ in which it is rooted.

Moreover, there is little hope for Indian culture to be revived:

30 Oh grandfather, my grandfather,
 your dhoti is become a shroud.
 Rice beds no longer call your sons.
 They are clerks in the city of streets
 Where life is a weekly paypacket
 35 purchasing identity Tiger Bay,
 seeking a tomorrow in today’s unreality.

This paragraph conveys that the former Indo-Guyanese way of life has dramatically changed. As the work on the rice and sugar fields has become an outdated job that does not even “fill[...] the belly” anymore (l. 7), many young Indo-Guyanese men and women have sought other jobs: they have become “clerks in the city” (l. 33) for a “weekly paypacket” (l. 34). In addition, the poem describes another issue. The younger generation did not only leave the rural areas for more urban ones, but many of them migrated for good to another country – and many ended up at the docks of “Tiger Bay” (l. 35), a local name for the area around Cardiff in Wales. The irony of migrating to a place that references one of India’s most prominent and powerful wildlife, while actually being located in the former colonisers’ country is almost sarcastic. The fact that the immigrants have to “purchase[...] identity” (l. 35) somewhere else only reinforces the impression that there actually is no ‘authentic’ Indo-Guyanese identity. Thus, the grandfather’s traditions are only copies of real traditions, and the descendants do not even bother to stay in Guyana, but seek a better life elsewhere. This notion is even intensified in the last stanza:

You are too old now to doubt
 that Hannuman hears you.
 Yet outside your logie⁶⁰
 40 the fluttering cane
 flaps like a plaintive tabla
 in the wind.
 And when the spaces inside you
 can no longer be filled
 45 by the rank beds of rice,
 and the lowing morning
 cannot stir you to rise
 from your ghoola,
 The music in your heart
 50 will sound a rustling sound
 and the bamboos to Hannuman
 will be a sitar in the wind.

The whole last paragraph suggests that there is no future for a traditional Indian way of life in Guyana. Every allegory revolves around decay. The “fluttering cane” (l. 40) evoke associations with crop shortfall; the worshipping of Indian gods, like “Hannuman” (l. 38), is “doubt[ed]” (l. 37); and the rice can even no longer fill the emotional “spaces inside” (l. 43). The poem seems to convey that when the old generation dies, so will the Indian traditions in Guyana. At the end, the contrast between Ramcharitar-Lalla’s and Yardan’s poem could not be bigger: while in the “girls” in “The Weeding Gang” sing and their voices float (Ramcharitar-Lalla, “Gang”, ll. 1, 8-9), the “music in [the grandfather’s] heart | will sound a rustling sound” until it will finally “be a sitar in the wind” (Yardan, “Brown”, l. 50-2).

According to “Earth is Brown”, there is no local Indo-Guyanese identity worth speaking of. Although the poem conveys that there are Indian traditions which have been kept alive by the older generations, these traditions are portrayed as unauthentic because they are based on the recollections of recollections (ll. 10-3). Interestingly, this devaluation is predicated on a nativist notion of identity which links ‘authenticity’ to a ‘place’. Thus, the displacement of Indian culture and the resulting ‘placelessness’ associated with Indo-Guyanese culture conveys that there is no authentic Indo-Guyanese identity (l. 8). This is also reflected in the

60 ‘barrack’.

paragraph on the migrants in *Tiger Bay*. The fact that the migrants have to purchase identity indicates that they did not have one in the first place (l. 35).

Although Yardan's poem can also be considered as a very critical self-reflection of Indo-Guyanese culture, one should hesitate to generalise the notion of Indo-Guyanese identity that it conveys. Although "Earth is Brown" was written almost forty years after "The Weeding Gang", this time difference does not imply that Indian culture had vanished from the cultural scene in Guyana. It should be noted that Yardan's poem was published in Seymour's "New Writing in the Caribbean" which resulted from *CARIFESTA '72* (1972). Considering the Afro-centred cultural policy of the PNC that dominated the 1970s, the fact that Yardan's poem was published in this anthology may be related to the critical perspective on Indo-Guyanese culture that it conveys. It is difficult to make a statement about the structural reasons behind its publication, but it should also be noted that most Indo-Guyanese texts that were published in the 1970s were printed by the authors themselves (Poynting 1971; 1985).

4.2.3 *The Right to Be Free – Towards a New Indo-Guyanese Identity in Sheik Sadeek's Short Story "Sugar Canes" (1972)*⁶¹

One of the most productive self-publishers, Sheik Sadeek, printed *Windswept and other Stories* (1969), a short story collection, *Dreams and Reflection: A Collection of Poems* (1969), *Savannah's Edge: A Guyanese Play on Life among the Amerindians* (1968), and *He: A Guyanese Play* (1967) privately at a press in Kitty (Poynting 1971). However, some of his work also appeared in *Kykoveral* and with other publishing houses (Poynting 1985; Sadeek [1952] 1986; 1972). For example, an excerpt of Sadeek's novel *Song of the Sugarcanes* (1975)⁶² was also published as a short story, "Sugar Canes" in Seymour's *New Writing in the Caribbean* (1972).

61 Sheik Sadeek was a prolific Indo-Guyanese writer, editor, and publisher. He (self-)published several collections of short stories and poems, e.g. *Windswept and Other Stories* (1969), *Dreams and Reflections* (1969), *Across the Green Fields and Five Other Stories* (1974). He also (self-)published novels and plays, e.g. *He: A Guyanese Play* (1967), *Savannah's Edge: A Guyanese Play on Life among the Amerindians* (1968), *Bundarie Boy* (1974), and *Song of the Sugarcanes* (1975). He also worked for the National History and Arts Council in Guyana. Sadeek's work has been nationally acclaimed (McDowell 1975). A section of his novel *Song of the Sugarcanes* was first published as a short story, "Sugar Canes", in Seymour's *New Writing in the Caribbean* in 1972.

62 Which he also first published himself (Poynting 1985).

In the following analysis, I will elaborate what kind of new Indo-Guyanese identity is depicted in Sadeek's "Sugar Canes". The story revolves around Lillawattie, a ten year old Indo-Guyanese girl and her first experiences with work on a rice plantation. The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator with a focalisation on Lillawattie (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f). The story is located at a "plantation in Guyana" with "lush land" that could not "have boasted a finer setting" (Sadeek, "Sugar", 246). At this plantation Lillawattie grew up "play[ing] with the other filthy, screaming, creeping, tottering infants, [...] while her parents toiled from before sunrise to long after sunset" (246). When she turned ten "she joined the other unfortunate children and went to work" on the rice plantation (246). Before her first day, she is more than excited about the idea to start working. She imagines "[w]hat a fine time they would have on the fields", "what she would do with the money", and "how many things she would buy" (246-7). Full of anticipation, she starts her first day: "everything seemed dreamy" (248). However, her dreams are shattered quickly. The work on the plantation is anything but pleasant for her and the other children: "[p]anting in the heat, and with burning and itching insect stings and bites they kept on and on – collecting and droughing" (247). In addition to the hard work, the children are verbally and physically abused by "Stone", the Afro-Guyanese foreseer with his "ever threatening whip" and his curses: "you sick lame good-for-nothing niggers and coolie bastards", Stone calls them (248). By midday, Lillawattie is already too exhausted to eat her lunch; and at the end of her first day she "stagger[s] home, [drunk with fatigue]" (248). Her whole first week continues in the same manner: "[c]urses and threats and work! Work and threats and curses" (249). However, the greatest shock awaits Lillawattie at the end of the week. Although she receives the "ten big shiny pennies" for her work, she finds out that she will not be able to buy anything. Her mother takes "eight of the pennies and told her to put up one [...] – 'You must learn to save, Lillawattie'", her mother reminds her, also mentioning that "year after next you will be married" (249). With only one penny left to spend, Lillawattie's "dreams were shattered": she cannot buy anything she wanted. But it is too late to escape; "there was no stopping", her family would make sure that she continued (249). Nevertheless, Lillawattie plans her revolt: "They can only make me work only as long as I am small [...]. This is my

country. I have the right to be free and nothing can stop me to be free as [...] the birds on the beach” (249).

Similar to the publication of Yordan’s poem in the same anthology, the reason why some of Sadeek’s texts were published, while many others were not (see also Figueredo 2006, 360), may be related to the content of the stories. It may also be important to note that *CARIFESTA* ‘72 had a specific cultural agenda: its goal was to create a sense of West Indian unity by focusing on the common cultural currents in the Caribbean, while acknowledging the political independence and ethnic diversity within the region (Seymour 1972). Hence, the ulterior motive behind *CARIFESTA* was to “include [the] brothers and sisters of the Spanish, French, and Dutch segments” into the development of a common “point of recognition of our identity” (Seymour 1972, 13, 14). Therefore, the display of diversity in the collection of literature was part of the agenda. However, again, not all cultural aspects are considered as equally important. In his foreword to *New Writing in the Caribbean* Seymour writes:

The unconscious purpose of Carifesta was to indicate that we were brothers and sisters [...], especially in the values of our play and leisure time activities. What seemed to emerge at this stage was a strong African base as an undoubted legacy of slavery and the plantation culture with sub-dominant but developing Asian cultural-religious strains (13).

In the face of the explicit cultural agenda behind the publication, it seems almost comical that Seymour speaks of an ‘unconscious purpose’. Thus, the inclusion of Indo-Guyanese voices makes perfectly sense from this perspective, as long as they were not too critical of the ‘African base’. Particularly those texts that indicated a change within Indo-Guyanese culture towards a common Guyanese national culture seemed valuable to include. Therefore, Sadeek’s critical perspective on Indo-Guyanese culture fitted well into the concept.

Although there are many aspects of Indo-Guyanese culture mentioned in the story, and also mentioned in an appreciative way, the story indicates that there will be a change in Indo-Guyanese culture. The description of the work at the plantations and Lillawattie’s disenchantment with the way her parents live suggests that the new generation may not want to lead their lives in the same way as their parents. Although it is not mentioned how Lillawattie will earn her money

in the future, the reader is given the impression that any change will be a change for the better. For now, Lillawattie is exploited by both the plantation owners and her family – who keeps her money and keeps her from receiving a proper education. Lillawattie has to toil on the fields “like [a] grown up[.]”, but she is deprived of the right to decide what will be done with the money that she earned (247). Furthermore, the prospect of being married at the age of twelve does also not seem to be very appealing, neither to Lillawattie, nor to the reader. Hence, the short story suggests that a change within Indo-Guyanese culture is necessary – and with Lillawattie, Indo-Guyanese identity is already transforming. Lillawattie would like to take her future in her own hands: “[t]his is my country”, she claims. With her exclamation, she does not only take responsibility for her own future, but also for the future of her country – and both “have the right to be free” (249).

However, the right to be free does not only seem to be related to the Indo-Guyanese plantation workers. The story conveys that old cultural and ethnic structures need to be overcome in favour of a common, free Guyana. Although the main character is an Indo-Guyanese girl, she shares her fate with other ethnicities (246, 248). When in the end, she exclaims, “[t]his is my country” and demands freedom, her statement seems not only to be true for her, but for the others that are in a similar situation (249). Hence, to a certain extent, the short story seems to call on *all* of those who are deprived of their rights to shape a new future, regardless of their ethnic affiliations.

Nevertheless, through its focus on a female Indo-Guyanese character, the story particularly demands the Indo-Guyanese community to change and emancipate themselves from the exploitive plantation system. Hence, the story suggests a paradigm shift, away from preserving an Indian cultural heritage towards claiming responsibility for Guyanese land and culture – what this actually means for the Indo-Guyanese community is left open in the story.⁶³ However, the

63 Although the kind of change that Lillawattie will go through is left open in the short story, it is specified in the novel *Song of the Sugarcanes* (1975). In that longer rendering, Lillawattie will free herself from her Indian cultural heritage that is depicted as restrictive and outdated. However, Poynting (1985) is not sure if her change is actually a change for the better: for him Lillawattie “is not a new Guyanese or a new woman, but a mimic English woman who uneasily and implausibly combines a crude tomboyishness and an extravagantly coquettish femininity” (Poynting 1985, 508). Hence, in the end, Sadeek’s portrayal of the transformation from an old to a new Indo-Guyanese identity eventually turns out to be a bit disappointing, because Indo-Guyanese culture does not evolve its own values but adopts those of the former

story seems to fit into the anti-colonial, West Indian discourse of identity prevalent in the 1970s in Guyana. By focusing on an (obscure) common and emancipated future, it expresses the general idea that Guyana needs to emancipate itself from old power structures to start into a new future.

4.2.4 *The Right to be Heard – Indo-Guyanese History in Mahadai Das's Poem "They Came in Ships" (1977)*⁶⁴

There are other texts that convey a different perspective on Indo-Guyanese culture and history. Mahadai Das's "They Came in Ships" provides a complex perspective on Indo-Guyanese history and cultural heritage. Neither does it share Ramcharitar-Lalla's romantic perspective on Indo-Guyanese culture, nor does it adopt Yordan's disillusioned attitude. Das's poem can be seen as an exploration of Indian indentured labour in Guyana and its socio-political repercussions.

The poem is written in verse paragraphs. The modernist influence on the poem is noticeable. The breach with European poetic conventions seems deliberate and reflects the content of the poem which presents a candid account of the British indentured system and its impact on Guyana's history.

The poem starts with the colonisation of India by the British. Colonisation is portrayed as putting the whole of India into "chains | from Chota Nagpur to the Ganges Plain" (Das, "Ships", ll. 3-4). Hence, evoking associations with slavery, it is made clear that the Indians became "[h]uman victims of Her Majesty's victory" (l. 9). The mentioning of the names of the ships, "the Whitby, the Hesperus, [and the ...] Fatel Rozack" (ll. 5-7) render the colonial indentured system as a concrete and palpable part of Caribbean history:

colonisers.

64 Mahadai Das (1954 – 2003) was born in Eccles, Guyana. She was a "passionate and politically committed" Indo-Guyanese poet (Figueredo 2006, 214). After her primary education at Bishops High School in Georgetown, she studied at the University of Guyana. In 1972, she joined Singh's *Messenger Group*. However, she left Guyana and continued her studies in the US at Columbia University and New York University. In 1977, she published a collection of poems, *I Want to be a Poetess of My People* and a history of East Indians in the Caribbean. In 1982 and 1998, more collections of poetry followed. Her last work, *A Leaf in Her Ears: Selected Poems* (2005) was published after her death in 2003 (Figueredo 2006, 214-5). Her poem "They Came in Ships" was first published in 1977 in *I Want to be a Poetess of My People*, and republished in several anthologies on (Indo-)Caribbean literature, including *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996).

They came in ships.

From across the seas, they came.
Britain, colonising India, transporting her chains
from Chota Nagpur to the Ganges Plain.

- 5 Westwards came the Whitby,
the Hesperus,
the Island-bound *Fatel Rozack*.⁶⁵

Wooden missions of imperial design.
Human victims of her Majesty's victory.

- 10 They came in fleets.
They came in droves
like cattle
brown like cattle.
eyes limpid, like cattle.

- 15 Some came with dreams of milk-and-honey riches,
fleeing famine and death:
dancing girls,
Rajput soldiers, determined, tall,
escaping penalty of pride.
20 Stolen wives, afraid and despondent
crossing black waters,
Brahmin, Chammar, alike,⁶⁶
hearts brimful of hope.
[...]

Notably, the vastness of the indentured labour system is conveyed: the Indians came “in fleets, [...] in droves” (ll. 10-1). However, it is also immediately made clear that they were not respected by the colonisers as valuable workers, but seen as commodities or productive livestock: they are treated “like cattle” (l. 13). The repetition of the word *cattle* reinforces this image (ll. 11, 12, 13).

Notably, although all of them were treated in the same manner, the poem emphasises the diversity within the group. There was a variety of different people with different reasons for taking the journey, leaving their home and the holy river Ganges behind, “crossing black waters” (l. 21) over to the Caribbean. People from different castes and religions, they came all “alike” (l. 22): “Brahmin [and] Chammar” (l. 22), the poor “fleeing [from] famine and death” (l. 16), “Rajput soldiers” (l. 20) evading punishment, “dancing girls” (l. 17) and “stolen wives” (l.

65 *Fatel Rozack*, *Whitby*, and *Hesperus* were names of ships that brought the indentured labourers from India to the Caribbean (Bragard 2008, 72).

66 Reference to different castes (Bragard 2008, 73).

20) escaping from restrictive gender structures, seeking a new life. Although the poem does not convey that they were brought to the Caribbean under the same circumstances as the African slaves – because the Indians came with “hearts brimful of hope” (l. 27) – it emphasises the horrendous conditions they met upon their arrival. Their “dreams of milk-and-honey riches” (l. 15) were crushed by the reality of the plantation system. Hence, the poem makes clear that the reasons and conditions under which the Indians came to Guyana were complex – but excruciating and debilitating. The poem also emphasises that despite the fact that the Indians were contract workers and not slaves, their position within the colonial system was not much better than the one of the African slaves. In stark contrast to what they had hoped for, they mainly found death and hardship. Describing the situation in British Guiana, the poem draws a rather dark image of the reality that awaited the Indians in Guiana:

I saw them dying at streetcorners, alone, hungry
 25 for a crumb of British bread,
 And a healing hand's mighty touch.

I recall my grandfather's haunting gaze;
 my eye sweeps over history
 to my children, unborn
 30 I recall the piracy of innocence,
 Light snuffed like a candle in their eyes.

I alone today am alive.
 I remember logies, barrackrooms, ranges,
 Nigga-yards. My grandmother worked in the field.
 35 Honourable mention.

Creole gang, child labour.
 Second prize.
 I recall Lallabhagie,⁶⁷ Leonora's⁶⁸ strong children,
 And Enmore,⁶⁹ bitter, determined.

67 One of the 'Enmore martyrs' who was shot in the back by the police during a relatively peaceful strike against the devastating conditions and policies at the plantations in 1948 at a plantation in Enmore (Bragard 2008, 73).

68 Name of a plantation on Guyana's West coast (Bragard 2008, 73).

69 Village in Guyana; location of the police shootings of five peaceful Indo-Guyanese protestors (Bragard 2008, 73).

40 Remember one-third quota,⁷⁰ coolie woman.
 Was your blood spilled so that I might reject my history?
 Forget tears among the paddy leaves.⁷¹

[...]

Life on the plantations was incredibly hard; their lodges were “barrack[s]” (l. 33), women and men had to toil on the fields (l. 34). Many ended up “dying at streetcorners, alone, hungry” (l. 24), robbed of their “innocence” (l. 30). “Child labour” (l. 36) was common. Although the recognition of the history of women is important and necessary, the “[h]onourable mention” (l. 35) of the grandmother seems almost sarcastic, as the honourable recognition cannot make up for the loss and hardship that the poem describes. Children, women, men, they all seem worn out. The “grandfather’s haunting gaze” (l. 27) and the “light snuffed like a candle in [people’s] eyes” (l. 31) draw a very dark picture of their psychological constitution of the indentured labourers. Through listing details related to the psychological and social reality of the indentured workers, such as the reference to the horrendous living conditions at the “Nigga-yards” (l. 34), the poem contributes to rendering the history of the Indo-Guyanese more visible and palpable.

In addition, the poem also acknowledges the Indo-Guyanese share in the struggle for more rights and emancipation. Through references to emancipatory endeavours by people of various ethnic backgrounds, the poems creates a picture of Guyana’s history in which all ethnic groups contributed to Guyana’s struggle for freedom and justice:

At the horizon’s edge, I hear
 I hear voices crying in the wind. Cuffy⁷² shouting:
 45 ‘Remember 1763!’ – John Smith⁷³ If I am
 a man of God, let me join with suffering.
 Akkarra⁷⁴ – ‘I too had a vision’.

70 Quota of women introduce on plantations for immediate labour acquisition (Bragard 2008, 73).

71 Reference to rice harvest. Rice cultivation was introduced by the Indian indentured workers in Guyana (Bragard 2008, 73).

72 Afro-Guyanese hero; leader of the Berbice slave rebellion in 1763 (see also page 275).

73 Clergy man sentenced to death for not reporting a slave rebellion (Bragard 2008, 74).

74 Cuffy’s co-leader in the Berbice slave rebellion in 1763 (Bragard 2008, 74).

Des Voeux cried,⁷⁵
 'I wrote the Queen a letter,
 50 for the whimpering coolies in logies
 would not let me rest.'
 The cry of coolies echoed round the land.
 They came, in droves, at this office door
 Beseeching him to ease their yoke.

55 Crosby struck in rage against planters,⁷⁶
 In vain. Stripped of rights, he heard
 the cry of coolies continue.

Commissioners came,
 capital spectacles in British frames
 60 consulting managers about costs of immigration.
 The commissioners left, fifty-dollar bounty remained.
 Dreams of a cow and endless calves,
 And endless reality in chains.

Although the poem also ends on a very negative note, it emphasises how important it is to remember the past to shape the future. Hence, although the Indo-Guyanese have lived in an “endless reality in chains” (l. 63), being deprived of their rights and due compensation for their work (ll. 58-61), the poem seems to suggest that it is still important to demand a recognition of their past and rights. It reminds the current generation to remember that people fought for the rights of victims of the colonisers: among others the poem mentions John Smith, an abolitionist priest who was held responsible for not reporting the 1763 slave revolts and who was sentenced to death (l. 45); Cuffy and Akkarra, the leaders of the Berbice slave revolts in 1763 (ll. 44, 47); Lallabhagie, one of the plantation workers who was shot during the escalation of the Enmore strikes in 1948 (l. 38); and Des Voeux, a magistrate of British Guiana between 1863 and 1869 (l. 48) who wrote a letter of concern to the Queen because of the excruciating condition of the Indian indentured labourers (Bragard 2008, 73-4). Hence, the poem suggests that the Indo-Guyanese claimed their rights in a similar way as the descendants of African slaves.

Notably, the poem also repeatedly emphasises the history and accomplishments of Indian women: “coolie woman. | Was your blood spilled so

75 British Magistrate who publicly denounced the conditions of the coolies at the plantations (Bragard 2008, 74).

76 Activist who fought for the rights of the Indians in Guyana (Bragard 2008, 74).

that I might reject my history?" (ll. 40-1). By demanding a recognition of the lives and work of Indo-Guyanese women, the poem also brings forth a more complex notion of history and achievement which includes groups within (Indo-)Guyanese culture whose history has been traditionally marginalised and neglected. Thus, the poem also challenges the prevalent Western notion of history that still largely focused on the achievements of white men.⁷⁷

Accordingly, the poem contributes to the recognition of history of Indo-Caribbean. It also conveys that their suffering and hardship, but also their history of claiming their own rights is in no way inferior or less important than the anti-colonial, emancipatory movements of the Afro-Caribbeans. Although the cultural identity that is portrayed in the poem seems to be a rather battered one, it offers a site for identification through history and achievement. By taking a different perspective on history, not only in terms of ethnicity, but also in relation to gender, the poem provides a sense of historical presence and importance. While an affirmative Indo-Guyanese cultural identity is not central in the poem, it still conveys a very specific perspective on Guyanese history, a kind of Indo-Guyanese consciousness that claims its right to be heard. Thus, the poem can be related to Martina Carter's and Khal Torabully's notion of coolitude and the necessity to render the history and achievements of people of Indian descent in the Caribbean more visible (Carter and Torabully 2002).

4.2.5 *Coolitude avant la lettre – Re-evaluating Guyanese Indian History in Rajkumari Singh's Essay "I am a Coolie" (1973)*

Taking a different perspective on Indo-Guyanese history is also a central aspect in Rajkumari Singh's essay "I am a Coolie".⁷⁸ Printed and published by the author

⁷⁷ Hence, the poem is also interesting in relation to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's proposition of the double colonization of women as being subjected to the colonial as well as patriarchal discrimination (Spivak 1988).

⁷⁸ Rajkumari Singh (1923 – 1979) was born in Georgetown. She was an influential Indo-Guyanese dramatist, poet, short story and essay writer, political and literary activist. She started writing at an early age, and she was to become one of the first female Indo-Guyanese writers to be published. In 1960s, she published (and staged) a play and a collection of short stories, *A Garland of Stories*. In the 1960s, she was politically active within the People's Progressive Party (PPP). In 1972, she founded the *Messenger Group*, a cultural association where nationalist and leftist ideas were discussed and which attracted several influential writers, including Mahadai Das, Rooplall Monar, Guska Kissoon and Beatrice Muniyan (Peepal Tree Press 2015). In the 1970s, she worked for the Guyana National Service to contribute an amelioration of the uneasy relationship between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese

herself in 1973, the text can be seen as an important, subversive piece of work written against the grain of the African-dominated cultural political discourse. Superseding Sadeek's depiction of the Indo-Guyanese plantation workers as restrictive and outdated, Singh's text provides a positive re-evaluation of their life and culture. Hence, long before Carter's and Torabully's coining of the term coolitude, Singh re-claims the derogative term coolie and turns it into a positive term. In that sense, she adopts a similar strategy and agenda as writers and scholars involved in the *négritude* project who tried to change negative connotation of Africans and African culture by re-interpreting and appropriating derogatory terms and devaluated cultural elements (see e.g. Senghor [1964] 2005).

The essay starts with a general definition of the term 'coolie'. Singh refers to the derogatory use of the term "as a designation for all Indians, regardless of rank, professional status or social position" in Guyana and the Caribbean that "[e]ven Indo-Guyanese use [...] to denigrate each other" (Singh, "Coolie", 352). However, she argues for taking another perspective. She quotes excerpts from several historical and contemporary documents stating that the term has been traditionally used in India and other Eastern countries to refer to hired workers (351). Hence, despite the contemporary negative connotations associated with the term, the historical origin of the term suggests a more neutral meaning. She also notes that there are many intellectuals who have acknowledged this historical meaning and significance (351).

However, for Singh, it is not only enough to re-evaluate and recognise the historical meaning of the term. She calls upon his Indo-Guyanese fellows to "re-think [...] what] this word [...] means to YOU" (351). She argues that one should not only think of the word 'Coolie'⁷⁹ in terms of its original meaning, but also in relation to what it means to Indo-Guyanese people (352). To Singh, Coolie does not only mean 'worker', 'porter', or 'carrier' (351), but for her, Coolie is "the name of our hard-working, economy-building forefathers" (352) – and thus, a name that conveys ancestry, achievement, and pride. Similar to the idea behind

people (Figueredo 2006, 360, 751-2). Her poetic essay, "I am a Coolie" was first published in 1973, and republished in several anthologies on (Indo-)Caribbean literature, including *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996).

79 Written with a capital 'C' to denote the reference to a specific identity.

Martina Carter's and Khal Torabully's (2002) concept of *coolitude*, Singh demands that Indo-Guyanese people should re-claim Coolie as a culturally conscious reference to their past (352).

Singh provides several examples of what she associates with the term. Contrasting the negative stereotypes of the Coolie as a sly and docile worker of the colonisers (Arion 1998), Singh re-evaluates the Coolie as the diligent producer of nourishing foods. Their work on the cane fields "give the taste of sweetness to us all and to all sorts of people all over the world" (353). Furthermore, the Coolies are portrayed as a healthy and strong community; their food is a "delightful, simple [healthy] peasant food [that is] clean and nourishing" (353). Like Das, Singh emphasises the importance of Coolie women in the perpetuation and preservation of a common Indo-Guyanese food culture. She praises "Per-Agie [sic!]"⁸⁰, the "great-Coolie grandmother" (353), as well as other Coolie women who preserve the recipes and customs of traditional Indian cooking: they know how use a "the phookni to help the chuha-fire blaze so that your parents and mine could have a hot sadha roti and alloo chokha" (353). However, the Indo-Guyanese community is not only healthy and strong because of all the nourishing food they supposedly eat. The denotation of "your parents and mine" also gives the (Indo-Guyanese) reader the impression that there is a strong common Indo-Guyanese cultural heritage that has been kept alive by the common Coolie ancestors. The Coolies, and in particular the Coolie women, are depicted as the guards of Indo-Guyanese traditions who "keep [the people's] sacrificial fires alight" (353).

In addition, Singh also integrates a political dimension in her re-evaluation. In contrast to the stereotype of the sly Coolie who slowed down the Afro-Guyanese's struggle for independence (Arion 1998), she emphasises their role in building the Guyanese nation. She argues that the Coolie ancestors were brought to Guyana to "save [Guyana] from total economic collapse following the Slave Emancipation" (Singh, "Coolie", 352). Hence, she suggests that without the Coolies, Guyana would have been doomed and could never have had the economic basis to become an independent nation. Thus, there is an implicit criticism directed against the contemporary Afro-centred cultural policies and

80 The correct spelling may be 'Per Ajie'. Singh also wrote a poem, "Per Ajie – A Tribute to the First Immigrant Woman" ([1971] 1996), to acknowledge the presence of Indo-Guyanese women and honour their cultural significance.

politics in his text. Singh implicitly suggests that the emancipation of the slaves posed a serious threat to the economic future of the country and that the Afro-Guyanese ancestors would have left the economic basis of Guyana to rot if the Coolies had not come to “save” it (352). Accordingly, she challenges the contemporary Afro-centric discourse on national identity by conveying that, in fact, the Coolies are the (economic) backbone of Guyana, not the Afro-Guyanese.

However, Singh also strongly conveys that the Coolies were also victims who suffered under colonial rule (352). Her text seeks to “make you aware of the hardship and trials – mental and physical – that [the Coolie] grandfathers and grandmothers experienced” (352). However, although Singh evokes images of the Coolie “toilers” who “bend low” under the “intense Tropic sun-heat”, their bodies are nevertheless “emancipated bodies” (352). Moreover, she also calls for recognition of the role of the Coolie in anti-colonial resistance. She demands that the Coolies should be remembered for standing up for their rights. As an example, she refers to the Enmore Martyrs, the five Indo-Guyanese plantation workers who were shot by the (Afro-Guyanese) colonial police while on strike in 1948 against the excruciating conditions on the cane fields (Bragard 2008, 73). In contrast to the widespread stereotype that the Indian indentured workers were sly supporters of the colonial regime (Arion 1998), Singh calls for a recognition of the many Coolies who “showed resistance for their rights and died to lay paths of freedom for us” (Singh, “Coolie”, 353). Thus, echoing the symbolic position of the Maroon for Afro-Caribbean culture (Glissant [1981] 1989, 87), Singh links the Coolie to anti-colonialism and resistance. Hence, Singh tries to free the Coolies from their connotation to sly docility by emphasising historical moments of Indo-Guyanese anti-colonial resistance.

Therefore, at the end of the essay, Singh demands that the current generation should be proud and honour their ancestors’ legacy:

All this they gave to us and more. In return for our HERITAGE what a greater tribute can we pay to them than to keep alive the name by which they were called. COOLIE is a beautiful word that conjures up poignancy, tears, defeats, achievements (Singh, “Coolie”, 353).

In the end of the essay, Singh also acknowledges the Indo-Guyanese role in shaping Guyana as a nation: “Brave, courageous, daring, exciting, industrious,

thrifty, nation-building, humble folk – our COOLIE ancestors” (353). Furthermore, Singh suggests that the re-evaluated use of the word ‘coolie’ should not only be adopted in Guyana, but “in very land of the Caribbean Sea, the Indian Ocean, the seas of the East, in Africa and Europe”, everywhere a person with Indian ancestors should be able to be proud to pronounce, “I AM A COOLIE” (353).

Similar to Mahadai Das’s poem, “They Came in Ships” ([1977] 1996), Singh’s essay focuses on Indo-Guyanese history. However, she does not only focus on cultural displacement and hardship. Although she also mentions the excruciating conditions on the plantations and critical historical events, such as the strikes in Enmore in 1948, she concentrates on a positive re-evaluation of Indo-Guyanese history. The Indo-Guyanese workers are depicted as an emancipated, culturally and politically conscious group of people who do not refrain from claiming right and justice – however, they do so while also honouring their cultural and economic responsibilities. They are portrayed as industrious, hard-working people who have their own cultural values and ways of living. In his context, she also emphasises the role of Indo-Guyanese women in preserving a healthy Indian lifestyle for the community. In addition, she portrays the Indo-Guyanese as the nation-building force behind Guyana’s independence and demands that their history and importance should be acknowledged. Thus, Singh brings forth an alternative cultural, national perspective that does not accept the prevalent Afro-centrism in Guyanese cultural discourses. She challenges the contemporary Afro-Guyanese cultural hegemony by providing examples that show that Indo-Guyanese culture and history is equally important as Afro-Guyanese culture – or even more important, considering their role for Guyana’s economy. Hence, Singh’s text conveys a notion of a historically and culturally conscious Indo-Guyanese identity that is positive and proud.

Singh’s essay suggests that Indo-Guyanese culture is not a marginal sub-culture in Guyana that is sub-ordinate to an Afro-Guyanese cultural hegemony; the Indo-Guyanese Coolies are portrayed as important cultural and political agents who considerably shaped Guyana’s history and present. Singh’s notion of Indo-Guyanese identity is conspicuously self-affirmative. The Coolies are portrayed as

the prototypical workers⁸¹ of Guyana on whose merit the new independent nation could be built. The meaning of *Coolie*, as an Indo-Guyanese cultural identity, is changed from a derogatory reference to a denotation of cultural importance and merit. Indo-Guyanese cultural identity is no longer sub-ordinate to Afro-Guyanese identity, but a reference to the economic core of the country. Hence, the text creates a notion of Indo-Guyanese identity of which one can be proud. Words associated with pride are repeatedly used to describe the Coolies: they are described as a “brave, courageous, daring, exciting, industrious, thrifty, nation-building, humble folk” (353).

Singh’s text can be related to several psychological mechanisms. Overall, the text creates an affirmative notion of identity that induces a positive self-esteem (see also Fein et al. 2003). Furthermore, the identity in question is again created according to Kelly’s principles of the dichotomy, organisational, and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 46-106). Singh emphasises aspects of Indo-Guyanese identity that have been important in the discourse of Guyanese national identity: the contribution to Guyana’s cultural development, a history of anti-colonial resistance, and a relation to the land through work (organisational corollary). However, she also contrasts Indo- against Afro-Guyanese identity and describes the Indians as more important for the economic security of the country (dichotomy and choice corollary). From a social identity perspective (Tajfel and Turner 1986), Singh portrays a positively connoted in-group that is not only emancipated, courageous, and culturally conscious, but also more important than any other group for the economic foundation of the country (Singh, “Coolie”, 352). Accordingly, Singh even engages in a similar kind of in-group projection as was formerly exhibited in texts written by Afro-Guyanese writers (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Portraying the Indo-Guyanese as the prototypes of ‘nation-building folk’, the Indo-Guyanese become the core and basis of Guyanese national identity. Notably, the text creates a notion of political power and legitimacy that is based on merit, not on a perennial connection to the land.

However, although the text conveys a more positive identity for the Indo-Guyanese population, it does not invoke a common national Guyanese identity

81 Considering that coolie was originally used to refer to hired workers or porters (Singh, “Coolie”, 351).

that could accommodate all ethnic groups in Guyana. Similar to texts that were discussed earlier, Singh focuses on one ethnicity only. Hence, the perception of Afro- and Indo-Guyanese population as two separate groups is not challenged by Singh's text. Although Singh's text should be acknowledge for its focus on Indo-Guyanese culture, it does not break loose from the kind of ethnocentric, chauvinistic thinking that divides people in in-groups and out-groups. Therefore, the potentially negative and discriminatory consequences that are entailed by in-group favouritism give this positive depiction of Indo-Guyanese culture and identity a slightly sour note.

4.3 *Interim Conclusion*

There are different notions of Indo-Guyanese culture and identity portrayed in the texts discussed in this chapter. Ramcharitar-Lalla's poem "The Weeding Gang" is a very early positive account of Indo-Guyanese culture. The idyllic depiction of the Indian women's way to work denotes the existence of an Indian cultural tradition on Guyanese soil. However, there is little Guyanese-ness in the identity that is depicted, but it is a diasporic cultural identity of an Indian culture that had to re-root in a different place. This aspect is criticised by Yardan's poem "Earth is Brown". In contrast to the musical depiction of Indian culture in Ramcharitar-Lalla's poem, Yardan's poem portrays a culture that is on the verge of distinction due to its out-datedness. Unable to adapt to the socio-historical changes, the Indian way of life is described as outdated and ineffective. Furthermore, according to the poem, there is no Indian cultural identity – at least none that is fit for survival. Sadeek's short story conveys a similar notion of out-datedness in relation to Indo-Guyanese culture. Due to its firm link to the plantation system, Indo-Guyanese culture is portrayed as submissive, exploitive, and outdated. Unsurprisingly, Lillawattie, the Indo-Guyanese main character, strives for a change. A more complex notion of Indian culture is described by Das's poem "They Came with Ships". Although the poem portrays hardship and failed revolutions, it creates an Indo-Guyanese cultural consciousness that is aware of its own history in Guyana. Thus, in comparison to the former texts, it acknowledges Indo-Guyanese history without euphemism or denigration.

The most explicit notion of Indo-Guyanese identity is portrayed by Singh's essay "I am a Coolie". The text makes references to several critical incidences of Indo-Guyanese history, and also suggests how this history should be evaluated. Adopting a similar strategy and agenda that the *négritude* writers and scholars used to change negative connotation of Africans and African culture, the Coolie is turned into a symbol of Indo-Guyanese cultural survival, political resistance, and national economic merit. In addition, the texts suggests that the Indian population in Guyana is equally, if not more important than the Africans. Hence, although a positive, self-affirmative identity is created in the text, it also adheres to an evaluative structure that divides groups into positive in-groups and negative out-groups. Therefore, although the text should be acknowledged for its attempt to create a positive cultural identity for the neglected Indo-Guyanese population, this identity is potentially exclusive and discriminating. Although the text is a positive literary example of acknowledging the cultural past of a neglected group and creating a positive cultural identity, it also shows how difficult, if not impossible, it is to create a positive identity without any discriminating tendencies. However, her text seeks recognition and acceptance – and in that sense, it is important for the discursive creation of a positive Indo-Guyanese self-esteem.

5. *Literary Representations of the Ethnic Tensions in Guyana*

In the 1970s, the political and economic situation was excruciating for a substantial part of the Guyanese population, particularly for the people who worked on the sugar and rice plantations, but also for those in the bauxite industry (Westmaas 2009, 119; Wilson 2012, 76). Due to *apan jhatt* and Burnham's paramountcy of the party, these issues were mainly disputed in ethnic terms (Misir 2010; Wilson 2012, 82). Ethnic stereotypes solidified ethnic tensions and quarrels and, in turn, ethnic violence fuelled ethnic stereotypes (Cross 1972, 5; Westmaas 2009, 114).

5.1 *The Afro-Guyanese in the Eyes of the Indo-Guyanese – The Short Stories of Harry Narain*

Considering that the main channels for literary publications were in the hand of or influenced by the government, the criticism found in literature was rather docile. Exceptions are the self-published works of some Indo-Guyanese writers. Their stories do not only portray relations between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese people, they also refer to the political and socio-economic issues that are tightly engrained in the inter-ethnic tensions in Guyana. A particularly explicit perspective on the topic can be found in Harry Narain's short story collection, *Grass-Root People*.

5.1.1 *A Betrayed Friendship – Inter-racial Disappointment in Harry Narain's Short Story "The Man at the Bottom" (1981a)*⁸²

Although Harry Narain is probably one of the lesser known authors of Guyanese literature, his *Grass-Root People* is a remarkable collection of short stories. Published in 1981 at *Casa de las Américas*, it is another example of an Indo-Guyanese writer who had to publish his literature outside Guyana. Written in an Indo-Guyanese, sometimes Afro-Guyanese vernacular, the stories provide a powerful depiction of the hopes, worries, and concerns of the "grass-root people", i.e. the working-class, particularly those working in the sugar and rice industry. In "The Man at the Bottom", Narain depicts the 'friendship' between the Indo-Guyanese Mathura and the Afro-Guyanese Edgar Samuels.

The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator with a focalisation on the Indo-Guyanese Mathura (Genette [1972] 1980, 188). The story begins at the end with the Afro-Guyanese Samuels visiting his 'old friend' Mathura. However, even before Samuels steps out of his car, Mathura indicates that the reunion may not be a pleasant one – at least not for him: "Edgar Samuels, [...] wonder what he want now", Mathura thinks (Narain, "Bottom", 13). Subsequently, the story of Mathura and Samuels' friendship is told retrospectively in an analepsis.

Initially, both had worked "at Lall's General Store"; Samuels as a shop assistant, Mathura as a general help who "was not allowed in the shop except when it was closed" (14). Mathura remembers "Samuels and [he being] good

⁸² Harry Narain is an Indo-Guyanese writer born in 1950 (LE 2014b). Unfortunately, there was no further information available on this writer.

friends” (14). However, the reader soon realises that this friendship was rather lopsided from the beginning. Samuels would occasionally steal foods and money from Lall’s shop by sneaking it into Mathura’s bag and then picking it up afterwards. Mathura did not realise that the parcels that he keeps in his bag and the occasional potato that receives from Samuels in return are stolen goods. He was simply grateful for the food: “You is a good fren to me”, Mathura told Samuels (14). Therefore, he also did not feel any guilt or fear when, one day, Lall demanded to see his bag. Unaware of the parcel of stolen money, chocolates, and cheese in his bag, Mathura thought that he would receive a “gift[.] from the boss” (15). Despite Mathura’s protest of innocence, Lall fired Mathura when he discovered the parcel. Although Mathura still believed that “Samuels would verify” that the parcel belongs to him when he returned, Mathura would not “see him again for several years” (16).

When Mathura and Samuels met again, Mathura still lived a simple life selling crabs at the local market. Samuels had joined the “party” (18) and worked as an “assistant to the personnel manager” for a big rice company (17). Both seemed happy to meet again. Mathura gives Samuels some of his crabs as a gift and Samuels “cut a smile across his face” (17). However, Mathura was to be deceived by Samuels again. Samuels persuaded Mathura to ‘donate’ ten dollars to host the congress of his party in Essequibo. In return, he promised to help Mathura to get a proper job. However, after Mathura gave him the money, Samuels “seemed too busy to spare a moment when Mathura tried to stop him” (19). Eventually, Mathura found work on a fishing boat without hearing anything from Samuels again. But Samuels did return; however, not to help Mathura get a job, but to get more money from him (19). Samuels himself had become Inspector of National Insurance, and he had “gon come round fo’ [Mathura’s] contribution” for another event of his party (20). While he was there, he also collected some fish from Mathura – for free, of course.

After some years of exhausting work on the fishing boat, Mathura felt that “[i]t was time to return to land [and] send his roots into some clean healthy soil” (21). When he heard of a “new [...] scheme [...] for agricultural expansion” and that “the government was giving fifteen hectares to the landless”, he saw his chance to make a nicer living for himself and his family and decides to apply (21).

Not being able to read or write, Mathura happily accepted Samuels' help to fill in the necessary forms. However, he never received word back from the officers who were responsible. Despite bribes and his persistent questions, he had not yet seen any land after two years.

At this point of Mathura's recollection, the story began: Samuels is back again, and "since his party achieved Independence, [he] had really mounted the social ladder, [...] he had [...] virtually climbed from the bottom" (14). Although Mathura has come to doubt the sincerity of Samuels' friendship, he is still happy to see him, because he might be able to help. Therefore, when Samuels claims that he has land for Mathura, he is very happy – at first (26). His happiness turns into shock when he realises that Samuels has scammed him again. Samuels had sent the application for himself and received 200 hectares. What he offers Mathura is not a piece of his land to own, but to work the land *for him*, Samuels: "Mathura was struck as with a sledge at the back of his head. [...] He felt robbed, cheated" (26). Hence, he finally realises what kind of 'friend' Samuel is.

The story's conveys a very unambiguous picture of the relationship between two Indo- and Afro-Guyanese. Although both start at the social bottom "during the pre-coalition days", only Samuels ends up at the top (14). However, the story suggests that Samuels' success is not the result of hard work, loyalty, and ambition. According to the story, Samuels ends up at the top through deception and fraud – and at the expense of the Indo-Guyanese Mathura. He does not only use him for his own criminal schemes, he also repeatedly takes advantage of him: he asks for money although he knows how little money Mathura has, he asks for free fish and crabs, and he takes advantage of Mathura's illiteracy. Despite his naïveté, Mathura is depicted as loyal and honest.

Considering the ethnic constellation of the depicted relationship, the story is a very unambiguous allegory of the historical developments in Guyana between the 1940s to the 1970s. The story conveys that the success of the PNC and the Afro-Guyanese dominance was achieved at the costs of the Indo-Guyanese population. Furthermore, the story suggests that prosperity and political achievements of the Afro-Guyanese are based on scams and betrayal. The story portrays the current government as corrupt and open to bribes. Thus, although the Indo-Guyanese are partly held responsible because they do not see the true nature

of their ‘friendship’ with the Afro-Guyanese, the Afro-Guyanese are made responsible for the unfairness, and hardship that dominates the life of most Guyanese people. The story does not only take a stand for the difficult situation of the Indo-Guyanese population, it also openly blames the Afro-Guyanese PNC government.

Furthermore, the story conveys its political topic in a rather emotional way. The relationship between Mathura and Samuels is described as a ‘friendship’ by Mathura; although it becomes clear to the reader that Samuels may interpret this term quite freely. From the beginning onwards, when Mathura asks himself what Samuels wants *now* (13), the reader is made to doubt Samuels’ intentions. Furthermore, Mathura is not simply naïve, but his reluctance to doubt Samuels can also be related to his quality as a loyal friend. Therefore, describing the relationship between the Indians and Africans as a friendship, i.e. an emotional bond, has several functions. Samuels’ betrayal of Mathura’s friendship evokes emotions reactions and moral judgements in the reader. Thus, the reader is made to feel Mathura’s disappointment and anger by the feeling of injustice that is invoked by the narrative. The actions and policies of the Afro-Guyanese PNC, personified in Samuels, become associated with moral corruptness and lack of loyalty. Although Mathura’s loyalty appears a bit unconvincing in the face of Samuels’ repeated deceit, the story evokes empathy for Mathura. Therefore, due to this personal, emotional dimension of the portrayal of the relationship between two ethnic groups, the reader is inclined to side with Mathura. Hence, the story does not only accuse the PNC of betrayal, corruptness, and greed, it also tries to make the reader feel the emotional weight of this betrayal.

5.1.2 *Blame it on the Prime Minister – Policy and Corruption in Harry Narain’s Short Story “A Letter to the Prime Minister” (1981b)*

A similar approach is taken in Narain’s first text in his small collection of short stories. In “A Letter to the Prime Minister”, a planter in the rice industry addresses the Prime Minister directly to ask for help. Being written in form of a letter, the story is told by an autodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f) who tells his own story and misery to his “Comrade Prime Minister” (Narain, “Letter”, 7). In

addition to being written in an Indo-Guyanese vernacular, a remarkable feature of the story is that it addresses specific real-life issues of the difficulties in the rice farming industry, such as subsidised hybrid rice seeds, corruption, and the farmer's dependency on the big companies to transport and process their crops (8-9).⁸³ The rice farmer's problem is created by the new hybrid rice, "the 'N'" (8) that was introduced and subsidised by the government. Although hybrid forms of rice are more robust and bear more crops, they created serious issues for the small rice farmers. Suddenly faced with a massive amount of rice crops that needed to be harvested quickly and at the same time, the rice farmers were dependent on machinery that they needed to rent from big companies to bring in their crops.

However, the company that the rice farmer asks for help in the short story does not deliver the machinery because "they ain't got time, they ain't got operator, they ain't got parts, they ain't got mechanic" (9); to the farmer, "they say go cut with grass-knife" (9). The same accounts for the rice mills: "[t]he rich man with the lorry they ain't got time" – unless, of course, you would bribe them (9). However, there are many little links in the chain that keeps the rice production system running, and in the end there is always the "big wheels and you can't afford to grease them" all (10). Hence, the rice business is depicted as fundamentally corrupt, bringing down the small rice farmers who cannot afford the bribes and machinery.

In addition, everything has become more expensive due to a "private company reaping raise, tractor ploughing raise, wo'kman pay raise, bribe raise" (10), but the rice farmers do not get more money for their paddy. Hence, many rice farmers are faced with bankruptcy because they cannot get their paddy harvested and transported in time – they have to watch their rice rot and lie "flat pon de rice bed" (9). The farmer addresses the Prime Minister with this problem, because he considers his policies to be responsible for the issues in the rice industry: the farmers are encouraged by the government to cultivate the subsidised hybrid rice, but then, they cannot afford to harvest and transport their rice, because of the "gov'ment tariff" for transportation (10). Furthermore, despite the

83 This aspect can be related to an attempt to depict the reality of most rice farmers (social realism) on the one hand, and the potential Indo-Guyanese readers of the text on the other.

greater amount of paddy, the farmers get a lower price for their harvest, because “the gov’mment ain’t giving [...] a fair price” for it (11).

Even though ethnicity is not explicitly mentioned in the story, ethnicity does play a role in the issues that are described. Although not all people working the rice fields were Indo-Guyanese, most people were, while the government in the 1970s was firmly held in the hands of the Afro-Guyanese PNC. Hence, in the story, the Afro-Guyanese PNC government is made responsible for the hardship and misery of the Indo-Guyanese farmers. However, again, the story conveys this political issue in a rather personal and emotional way. Regardless of the fact that the rice farmer accuses the Prime Minister and his government to be responsible for the rice farmer’s misery, the letter is written in a jovial but respectful tone. The letter ends with a rather desperate plea: “Cde. P.M., I sorry I give you the picture so raw, and I hope you understand. Do, try help out. Yours Respectfully, Rice Farmer” (12). Thus, similar to the previous story, this story also seems to try to evoke empathy for the Indo-Guyanese farmers.

Furthermore, there is an interesting section in the story that can be related to a nationalist notion of identity which incorporates a nativist perspective on the rights and justice within the nation. The farmer writes: “me parents and me, all awe navel string bury here in this Guyana soil. And since I know meself we all been wo’king the land. We the true offsprig of the soil” (8). The story uses a nationalist framework to evoke feelings of empathy in the reader. By emphasising that the rice farmers are the ‘true offspring of Guyana’s soil’, the government’s lack of help or indifference for their concerns reinforces the feelings that the situation of the farmers is utterly unjust.

5.1.3 *Interim Conclusion*

By addressing ethnic and political issues on the level of individuals, Narain seeks to evoke emotional reactions in the reader. Hence, the issues are no longer presented as a matter of political attitudes and preferences, but subjected to emotional and moral evaluations. The stories specifically evoke empathy: the anger, despair, and disappointment of the main characters are comprehensible on a rational as well as on an emotional level. However, the stories are also very lopsided in their depictions of the ethnic tensions in Guyana. In fact, they can be

seen as a rather demagogic approach that presents some kind of counter-propaganda. The motivation and ambitions of Afro-Guyanese characters in the two stories above are not described with the same detail as the ones of the Indo-Guyanese. Accordingly, the stories' effect is not any different from the stereotypical depiction of the Indo-Guyanese population in the texts of Afro-Guyanese writers on a West Indian cultural whole or on Guyanese national identity.

Thus, again, the stories can be seen in the context of the psychological concept of social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986). The Afro-Guyanese out-group is blamed for the misery and hardship of the Indo-Guyanese in-group. Again, the portrayal is also organised according to Kelly's dichotomy, organisational, and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 46-106). The loyalty, honesty, and diligence of the Indo-Guyanese is emphasised by the corruptness, opportunism, and deceitfulness of the Afro-Guyanese (see also Sternberg 2003). Thus, instead of starting a literary dialogue or a negotiation of what Guyanese cultural identity actually means, these stories contributed to the perpetuation of a group-based, ethnocentric, chauvinistic discussion of the political issues in Guyana. Hence, although these stories present a different perspective contrasting the (Afro-Guyanese centred) mainstream in literary discourses of the time, they do not introduce an alternative kind of cultural or political identity that could truly break the vicious circle of stereotypes, discrimination, and marginalisation.

5.2 *Paradigm Shift – From an Ethnocentric to a Class-centred Perspective on Social Issues in Guyana*

Fortunately, there are some literary texts that offer a different perspective. As Misir (2010) has pointed out, the main source of inequality and hardship in Guyana was related to an unequal distribution of power among classes, not ethnicities.⁸⁴ Although the elections were still fraudulent and rigged by the PNC in the 1980s, and the ethnic divide still persists in the political discourses until today, more and more critical voices appeared. Not only did the perspective of some Indo-Guyanese writers change, but Afro-Guyanese authors also became increasingly critical. Although the following texts cannot be considered as

84 See also page 276.

representative of the general literary discourse (which was still dominated by the notions of culture and identity of Afro-centred PNC), there are some authors who challenged the ethnocentric notion of politics and cultural identity.

5.2.1 *More Common-sense – The Need for a Real Political Change in Rooplall Monar’s Short Story “Cookman” (1988)*⁸⁵

A different perspective on the history of the ethnic and political issues in Guyana is described by Rooplall Monar’s short story “Cookman”. Taking the perspective of the ‘man at the bottom’ again, Monar’s story portrays the futility of the politics that incited and fuelled the ethnic tensions, discrimination, and violence from the 1950s until the 1970s in Guyana. Another well-known self-publisher, Monar wrote stories taking an Indo-Guyanese perspective, but not without being critical and self-reflective.

“Cookman” revolves around Pandit, an uneducated but street-smart Indo-Guyanese man who makes a reputation for his extraordinarily good mutton curry. While his mutton curry gets him a job well out of his usual league, the political developments do not work in his favour. Eventually, he ends where he had begun, making ends meet as a wedding drummer. The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator with a focalisation on Pandit (Genette [1972] 1980, 188f).

The first part of the story mainly describes Pandit’s mutton curry and how people love to eat it. Pandit works as a cook for a local cricket team at Enmore in Guyana. His mutton curry is famous: “any local cricketer from Leonora Estate to Blairmont Estate in Guyana [knows] this chap call Pandit” (Monar, “Cookman”, 46). His curry is so delicious that even white people love it, “[i]s like reading good poetry one whiteman say” (46). His mutton curry reputation helps Pandit to get occasional jobs at weddings as a cook – which is remarkable for an illiterate Indo-Guyanese working-class man who learned to cook curry from “he baap, a darkskin Madrasi man from South India” (48). His job also gets him into contact

85 Rooplall Monar (1945 –), was born on a sugar plantation in Guyana into a family of cane cutters. He is an Indo-Guyanese novelist, poet, and short story writer. He (self-)published several volumes of poetry and short stories, including *Meanings* (1971), *Patterns* (1983), *Backdam People* (1985) and *Koker* (1987). In 1989, he published a novel, *Janjhat*. He was also part of the *Messenger Group*. In addition, he also recorded Indian and Guyanese folklore as well as oral histories from elderly Indo-Guyanese people (Figueredo 2006, 360; Peepal Tree Press 2015). His short story “Cookman” was first published in 1988.

with ‘important people’, such as “drivers, book-keeper, dispenser, and overseer” (50). However, when they start to talk in “backra man English, Pandit slipping out the company” (50), i.e. he has difficulty understanding proper English. He speaks a “mix [of] madrasi and creolese tongue” (50), and to him the white man’s English sounds “so crisp and cutting, you would believe is Dutch” (47). However, Pandit is still happy. Although the “only virtue [he] possesses is he commonsense”, he lives a considerably satisfied life, keeping his “head cool like cucumber” (50). He even can afford his own house and his children are well-fed and happy.

However, things are going to change for Pandit:

Come a time in the country now when local politics was swinging people head left to right like soldier marching. [...] P.P.P. the P.N.C. or the U.F. party [...] Colonialism, Capitalism, Communism... words rolling out they mouth like poetry. [...] And which political party commands a majority of the voters, the leader of the same party would be Prime Minister, and usher the country in independence. [...] Was 1962 before big race riots (51).

Independence, however, does not bring anything positive for Pandit: “This independence thing na look too nice [...]. Jagan and Burnham [are] bound to get burn” (51). Pandit loses his job, because all the young cricketers leave for Britain because they want to keep the benefits of a British passport: “Who want Guyanese passport? [...] Think is joke” (51). And things are getting worse: “politicians want cut each other throat” and people do not talk about anything else but Burnham and Jagan, although “coolie people and black people shoulda work together” (52). However, more and more people leave. After the departure of the captain of the cricket team, Pandit has to start “play the tassa-drum at wedding-houses” (53). However, the story ends on a hopeful note: “When one door close, another door open. [...] Use you commonsense and living get a purpose” (53).

The story draws a very negative picture of Guyana’s political history between the 1960s and 1970s. For Pandit, ‘the small man at the bottom’, the political and ethnic tensions have brought nothing but the loss of his job. The Afro-Guyanese Burnham and his Indo-Guyanese counterpart Jagan are depicted as power hungry and “swell headed”, pursuing their own agendas while running the country down (52). Instead of ethnic unity, which according to Pandit would

be the most commonsensical thing to work for, all that is created by their politics is “confusion and commotion among the country people” (52). In addition, the story addresses the waves of migration following the political and economic instability caused by the exacerbating political situation: “[w]as like a fever gripping the country. Is pure England, England in they head” (52). Hence, the story depicts the futility of the ethnically divided politics in Guyana that lead to nothing but discrimination, social injustice, waves of migration and an unstable economy that created even more social injustice. Notably, the story suggests that those who *could* leave *would* leave, regardless of their ethnicity.

Moreover, in comparison to Narain, Monar’s story does not only blame the Afro-Guyanese PNC for the difficult situation of the Indo-Guyanese working-class. Instead, the story criticises the whole ethnocentric political climate and the “war [...] between them politicians” (52) that benefitted only a power-hungry few.

Nevertheless, the story suggests that there is hope. Not all people left, and even Pandit still sees a purpose in his life. Hence, the story seems to convey that once the irrational ethnic divide between the political parties has been overcome, there might be a chance for Indo- and Afro-Guyanese people working together to build a new future for Guyana. The story also implies that this is not a particularly bold idea, but simple commonsense (52). Accordingly, the story does not only criticise the futility of the political endeavours of the past, but it also gives directions toward a new future: when the ‘nonsensical’ and outdated ethnic divide in Guyanese politics can be put aside, a new purpose and future will be developed in Guyana.

5.2.2 *Time is Over – The Out-Datedness of Ethnocentric Politics in Ian McDonald’s Short Story “Dual in the Mercy Ward” (1984)*

Ian McDonald’s “Dual in the Mercy Ward” is a humorous allegory of the ethnic tensions in Guyana.⁸⁶ Its message is clear: it is time to overcome ethnocentric

86 Ian McDonald (18 April 1933 –) was born in Trinidad, but from 1955 onwards, he lived in Guyana. He is an influential novelist and literary mentor. After graduating from *Queens Royal College* in Trinidad, he studied at Cambridge University. In Guyana, he first worked in the sugar industry, and wrote his first novel, *The Hummingbird Tree* (1969). In 1984, Arthur J. Seymour asked McDonald to help him re-launch *Kyk-Over-Al* and to join him as an editor. In

notions of culture and identity. Already the setting of the story suggests that the time of ethnocentrism is over: the story takes place in a mercy ward.

Told by a heterodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188), the story revolves around a futile competition between two old men in a mercy ward. Their names are indications of their ethnicity: “Benjie” seems to be Afro-Guyanese, while “Beepat” refers to a person of Indo-Guyanese descent (McDonald, “Mercy”, 27). However, their names are not the only allusions to their ethnicity. Basically, the story is a humorous depiction of the history of ethnic quarrels and stereotypes in Guyana. From their first day on in the ward, “[e]verything was a case of competition between Benjie and Beepat” (27). Echoing the nativist nationalist discourse in Guyana, they quarrel about who came in first into the ward. “I was here long, long before you come in making trouble”, Benjie teases Beepat, although he was “wheeled in” only hours before Beepat’s arrival (27). Despite the ludicrousness of this quarrel, it provided enough substance “for an hour or two of satisfying, acrimonious debate” (27). However, this was only the beginning: they quarrel about politics and “how the other one’s party was full of vagabonds and fools”; they fight about religion, race, and “how Indians [are] mean and sly and can’t take their liquor and how black people only like to fete and play with women” (27). No stereotype is left untouched. “They argue[.] about everything” without any reason other than their sheer belligerence (27). Whenever they accidentally agree, they have to forget about their point of agreement and “row [about something else] instead” (27).

Moreover, they do not only carry out their rivalries among each other, they also affect everyone else in the ward. “Add[ing] to the confusion” of the other inhabitants, they also try to make everyone “take sides” (27). Just for the sake of winning: they “summoned [... all, even] the lame [...], the dying[.], and the nearly dead [...] to make a choice” (27). They even have a “rivalry [...] about] who was the most popular patient in the ward [...] by] seeing who could get the most visitors” (28).

Their most ardent competition is about who will die first: “Benjie, you could say, would rather have died than pass away before Beepat. And Beepat felt

1992, he published a collection of poems, *Essequibo* (1992) (Figueredo 2006, 517). His short story, “Dual in the Mercy Ward” was published in *Kyk-Over-Al* in 1984. He also published a novel with a similar title, *Mercy Ward*, in 1988.

exactly the same way” (29). Therefore, they “ke[ep] an eager eye on each other to see what signs of wear and tear might be appearing” (29). They continuously try to show off their own strength and vitality to make the other feel inferior – but, as the narrator remarks, the story is not about to end well. When Benjie’s health condition seriously aggravates, “Beepat began to get silent” (30). No “more jokes” at the expense of the other, “no more Benjie and Beepat rowing. The time for that was over” (30). When it looks like Benjie is about to die, Beepat even lights a candle at the bedside of the old rival. Eventually, however, Beepat dies the morning after, while “Benjie lasted until noon that day” (30).

“Dual in the Mercy Ward” is a parody of the ethnic quarrels in Guyana. The story makes allusions to rigged elections and the shady political means through which the PPP and the PNC have tried to assert their power. The most prominent characteristic of the story is the ostensible futility and senselessness of the quarrels. Benjie and Beepat only argue for the sake of the argument, and when they accidentally agree, they find other things to fight about. Regardless of its parodic nature, the story’s ending has a rather sombre undertone. The story does not only depict the futility and senselessness of the ethnic quarrels in Guyana in a humorous way, it also conveys that the quarrels come at dire costs. Benjie and Beepat both lose in this competition – and pay with their lives. Hence, Benjie’s and Beepat’s death in the end is not only an allegory to convey that it is time for ethnocentric rivalry in Guyana to come to an end, it also denotes that there cannot be a winner in this competition for ethnic hegemony in Guyana. Despite their rivalry, the story conveys that the two old men are actually very similar to each other: their names, Benjie and Beepat, are very similar, they like the same things, they have led similar lives, and their styles of argumentation and fighting are equally despicable. Furthermore, they both seem to be unable to live without the other, and the demise of one is followed by the death of the other. The story seems to suggest that the endless exchange of accusations, blaming either the Afro- or Indo-Guyanese people for political, economic, or social issues are futile, because both groups have employed similar shady means to seize power. Therefore, the story also calls for ethnic reconciliation.

In this context, Benjie’s and Beepat’s almost simultaneous death can also be read as a warning. If the ethnic quarrels will not be overcome, it will be the

demise of both ethnic groups – and the demise of Guyana. Thus, the story seems to suggest that the PPP's and PNC's competition for political and cultural hegemony runs down the country. Instead of focusing on improving the political and social issues in Guyana, they assert their own selfish goals. Hence, the fact that the story takes place in a mercy ward may not only indicate that the time for ethnocentricity and chauvinistic politics are over, it may also be read as an allusion to Guyana's current political state. Similar to Benjie's and Beepat's tragicomic competition about being the most popular patient in a mercy ward, the PPP and PNC's fight for voters and political power seems ludicrous in the face of Guyana's economic and social condition. Thus, the story can be read as a call to overcome the persisting ethnocentrism and political chauvinism in Guyana to be finally able to take a more life-confirming, future oriented political path.

5.2.3 *Joining Forces – The Subversiveness of a Truly Creole Culture in Jan Carew's Short Story "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" (1985)*⁸⁷

That the ethnically divided politics in Guyana may not be representative of the lives and worries of Guyanese people is suggested by Jan Carew's short story "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek". The story does not only feature a "dougla" as its main character, it also portrays a Guyanese culture that is fundamentally hybrid (Carew, "Ti-Zek", 101). The story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator (Genette [1972] 1980, 188). The plot revolves around the theft of coconuts, but the message of the story is a more political one. While stealing coconuts from "Boodoo estate" which belongs to Narine, Ti-Zek and his friend Ram are discovered by Roberts, Narine's property guard (102). Ram is killed by Roberts, but Ti-Zek escapes. Shortly after the incident, also Roberts and Narine die; Roberts in a canoe accident, Narine in his sleep (101-9).

The story is critical of the social power hierarchies within Guyana – however, without associating power with ethnicity. The estate owner Narine is also a "dougla", i.e. of mixed Indo- and Afro-Guyanese descent, just as the thief

87 Carew's short story "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" was first published in *New England Review/ Bread Loaf Quarterly* 7,4 in 1985, and re-published in *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories* in 2001.

88 Person of a mixed Indo- and an Afro-Caribbean/Guyanese descent.

Ti-Zek. When Ti-Zek comes back to steal more coconuts to take revenge after Narine's death, he does it "for all them mute folk who life you squeeze like simitu on a vine [... by letting them] toil like slave to make oil from you' coconut" (109). Accordingly, Ti-Zek takes revenge for people who had to suffer under the plantation system regardless of their ethnicity or the ethnicity of the plantation owners.

In addition, the story incorporates all kinds of cultural heritages. The characters call upon "Jesus Christ" (103), "Mantop" (103),⁸⁹ as well as the "big chibat" (104), "Kali the destroyer" (106), and other gods of the "Hindi pantheon" (108). Interestingly, they are sometimes called upon in the same sentence (103). Hence, the characters seem to have adopted a syncretised, hybrid understanding of religion, in which everyone can call upon every god they can think of, regardless of their ethnicity. Moreover, the characters compare each other in terms of various animals, not only found in Guyana, but also in India and Africa. Notably, the character's ethnicity is not necessarily reflected in the animals they are associated with: the Indo-Guyanese Ram's head is described as "leonine" (102), the "doughlah" Ti-Zek as "a Manipuri Tiger" (103), and the (seemingly) Afro-Guyanese inspector "walked as softly as an ocelot" (106). In addition, the story also has some aspects of magic realism by referring to local spirits and myths. Roberts supposedly "can gaff with jumbies on moonlight nights" (103), and after his death, the people in the village tell stories about having seen "Ram and Roberts walking side by side, and how the two had always smiled a cunning secretive smile" (108). The incorporation of these folktales and believes conveys that there is a population of Guyanese people who all share a common but hybrid culture.

As the characters in the story are not divided by ethnicity, there seems to be mutual respect between them, even between guard and criminal: Roberts "had a proper respect for Ti-Zek" and his skills as a thief (105). The only time when ethnicity *does* matter in the story, it is politicised: "a black man [Ti-Zek] and an Indian [Ram] joining forces to rob a notable land owner? [... T]hat's politics!" the

89 An Amerindian spirit.

inspector exclaims (107).⁹⁰ Consequently, instead of noting down how the details of how it came to Ram's death, the officer says:

My job is to uphold the law, to deal with crime. So here is what the official story will be [...]: Ram was caught red-handed stealing coconuts. [...] H[e] picked up a cutlass and rushed at Ranger Telford. You shot him. With a story like that everybody comes out looking good and there's no untidiness about the affair (107).

With the inspector changing facts to create a new truth that fits the ethnic stereotypes of the time, the story takes a stand against an uncritical acceptance of the ways in which ethnic tensions are "official[ly]" depicted (107). The inspector leaves out the Afro-Indo-Guyanese Ti-Zek in the crime story to make the official account adhere to the political notion that the population is still divided along ethnic lines. Thus, the inspector's unwillingness to note down the real facts, because he considers the real story of a 'Black man and an Indian joining forces' as a political statement, also should indicate that politics in Guyana *were* still strongly divided along ethnic lines. However, the unambiguous falseness of the official account shows that the ethnocentric politics that still dominated the 1980s did not reflect what was really happening in Guyana.

Accordingly, the story is not only subversive in terms of power hierarchies, it also suggests that the ethnocentric politics in Guyana do not reflect the social realities of the Guyanese people. By portraying hybrid characters with a hybrid culture, the story undermines the notion of a Guyanese culture that is subjected to an African cultural hegemony. In the story, all cultural elements, Indian, Amerindian, and African, are all equally represented in the hybrid culture that everyone shares. Thus, instead of offering a suggestion on how to unite the ethnically diverse groups of Guyana, the story suggests that there already is a Guyanese culture shared by the people regardless of their ethnic origin.

Hence, the story conveys a notion of identity that can be related to Khan's notion of creolisation as a good way to think about culture (Khan 2007, 654). The creole culture that is depicted in Carew's story is a culture of alterity and constant change – and it is a change for the better. The story takes a strong point against the ethnic disparities in Guyana. According to the story, the ethnic divide is a

⁹⁰ Note that the Douglass Ti-Zek counts as a Black or Afro-Guyanese in political terms.

political myth, a discursive tool to assert and withhold power, that does not reflect the cultural and psychic reality of Guyanese people. In the reality of the story, the Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese people have long “join[ed] forces” (Carew, “Ti-Zek”, 107) – not only as partners in crime, but also in terms of a common culture that everyone in the story shares and understands. In addition, the main character, Ti-Zek, is a *Douglah* and, as such, is the living proof of an inter-ethnic union other than for the purpose of thievery.

Hence, the story certainly has some subversive aspects to it. Importantly, however, the story does not challenge the Afro-centric cultural policies of the PNC to replace them with an Indo-centric political ideology favouring the PPP. The story criticises that ethnocentric, chauvinistic cultural policies keep the unfair power structures in Guyana in place. The story conveys that chauvinistic, ethnocentric policies still dominate Guyana’s political discourses, despite the fact that they do not represent the reality of Guyanese people. Notably, power and exploitation are not related to ethnicity. The plantation owner, Narine, is also a *Douglah*. In the story, Indo- as well as Afro-Guyanese characters are victims and victimiser. Accordingly, Ti-Zek’s act of vengeance is not directed against (the political dominance of) a specific ethnicity, but against the unequal distribution of power, wealth, and land. The focus on the criticism is shifted from ethnicity to class and politics. By suggesting that the reality of the people is different and not divided along ethnic lines, the story advocates an “ideology of alterity” (Khan 2007, 654, 656) which undermines the ethnic policies and ‘official stories’ that keep the unfair distribution of power in place.

From a psychological perspective, the story creates a notion of a common in-group that is not defined in terms of ethnicity, but in relation to social power. In the story, the out-group are those who exploit and those who keep the unfair power-structures in place by advocating the myth of an ethnic cultural divide. Although this notion of a Guyanese cultural identity is not un-discriminatory, it challenges an ethnocentric notion of Guyanese-ness or Guyanese identity.

5.3 *Interim Conclusion*

The stories written by Monar, McDonald, and Carew offer a perspective that differs from most other texts that have been analysed in this study. Monar’s short

story “Cookman” conveys that for those parts of the population that struggle to make ends meet, i.e. those who do not have access to any position of power, the political developments in Guyana between 1960 and 1980 did not make much of a difference. They did not have much power, neither before nor after independence. Hence, in these stories, the social issues are no longer seen in dichotomous, ethnocentric terms where one ethnic group’s loss is the other’s gain, but as a struggle for power where a lucky few share all the benefits of power while the majority of the people struggle to make ends meet.

McDonald’s parodic short story “Dual in the Mercy Ward” strongly conveys that the times of ethnocentric politics in Guyana are over. The story portrays the history of the ongoing ethnic quarrels in Guyana in an ironic way: McDonald chose a mercy ward as a setting. The story’s main message is that refusing to let go of ethnocentric and chauvinistic attitudes is not only childish, but also outdated, futile, and detrimental. Furthermore, the story also suggests that true change can only be achieved by overcoming ethnic differences. One party’s demise would be followed by the demise of the other.

Similar to Monar’s text, Carew’s short story “Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek” conveys that the social issues in Guyana are not related to ethnicity, but to class and power politics. The culture in his story is a hybrid, creole kind of culture shared by all characters in the story. Discrimination and exploitation are not related to ethnicity anymore, but to class. Hence, the story rejects an ethnocentric perspective on the social issues in Guyana, and shifts the focus on structural issues that contribute to the perpetuation and maintenance of the unequal distribution of power in Guyana.

In sum, these stories call for a different paradigm under which the political, social, and economic issues should be considered. Instead of interpreting all these issues in ethnic terms, they should be seen as a result of power structures, political opportunism, and the refusal to distribute power equally. The last story even suggests that a notion of identity that is based on a fundamentally hybrid, creole perspective may help to join forces and overcome the discriminatory power hierarchies in Guyana.

6. *Summary and Final Statement*

In the political climate of Guyana in the decade before and after independence, nationalist notions of identity assumed an important role in the way that anti-colonialism, cultural autonomy, and the right for self-governance were communicated. National identity was not only a cultural matter, but eventually defined the right for an independent nation in a nativist sense. However, the most prominent feature of Guyana's cultural and national discourse is its distinct ethnocentrism and chauvinism. Although transnational notions of culture and a West Indian cultural unity were a salient topic from the 1940s onwards, the ways in which a common West Indian culture was defined rarely overcame primordialist notions of national identity that centred on nativity, indigeneity, and a historically grown culture on a specific territory.

These aspects could also be found in Guyanese literature. In the 1940s, the political significance of a national identity was acknowledged in literary texts: Wilson Harris's "Tomorrow", Roy Heath's "The Peasants", as well as Arthur J. Seymour's "Tomorrow Belongs to the People" and "Greenheart" convey a clear anti-colonial agenda, while emphasising the need for a common unified Guianese cultural whole. They portray a nativist kind of national identity that is predicated on local values and a common cultural consciousness. The texts mainly convey a notion of identity that incorporate aspects of nativism, based on a 'natural' connection to the land through birth and / or field labour.

While in the 1940s, there were still some texts that called for a unity of the six peoples in Guyana, the discourse on national identity became increasingly ethnocentric. Despite their shared anti-colonial messages, Wilson Harris's "Fences upon the Earth", Brojo Bhattacharya's "Rice Harvest", and Martin Carter's "Listening to the Land" offer different (nativist) legitimisations for cultural identity and the right for self-governance. Notably, their nativist agendas are used to vindicate a certain ethnic group's cultural and / or political dominance.

In the wake of the political developments, the discourse of Guyanese cultural identity became more and more Afro-centric – also in relation to nativism. In the three essays by Roy Heath, Wilson Harris, and Jan Carew on the fusion of African and Amerindian myths and in Arthur Seymour's "Sun is a

Shapely Fire”, a quasi-indigeneity is created by emphasising the parallels and common features of African and Amerindian culture. In Seymour’s “First of August” and Martin Carter’s “Death of a Slave”, anti-colonial resistance is used as a nativist argumentation. Celeste Dolphin “Trouble Music” and Florence Caviglioli’s “Lulu and de Camoodie” also emphasise the importance of African roots for contemporary Guianese culture. Simultaneously, other cultural influences on Guyanese identity are marginalised. The cultural heritage of the Indo-Guyanese population is not considered as representative, and in McDonald Dash’s “Greenheart Men” the Amerindians indigeneity is linked to passivity.

The same Afro-centric perspective was perpetuated in notions of a common West Indian culture. A West Indian notion of culture did not only unite Guyana and the Caribbean region as a cultural whole, it also considered African roots as the common Caribbean cultural denominator. Although Frank Williams, Edgar Mittelholzer, and Ruby Samlallsingh were less Afro-centric in their comments on the existence of a West Indian culture, P.H. Daly, Martin Carter, and E. Pilgrim explicitly emphasise the importance of African cultural roots for a common West Indian identity.

These tendencies became even more important under Burnham’s regime. The Afro-centric cultural policies of the PNC are exemplified in Forbes Burnham’s “Message to CARIFESTA 1976”, Seymour’s “We must hear our brothers speak” and “Cultural Policy in Guyana”, and P. H. Daly’s “CARIFESTA, People’s Culture and the Power Units”. Furthermore, most notions of West Indian-ness also incorporated nativist and primordialist hallmarks of culture. Although Denis Williams’s “Guiana Today” and Arthur Waites’s “Is there a West Indian Way of Life?” are more critical of the African cultural hegemony within West Indian notions of cultural authenticity, they cannot fully discard primordialist or discriminatory notions of culture based on an out-group.

Interestingly, the texts written by Indo-Guyanese authors are not very different. Some of them call for an internal cultural change, such as Shana Yardan’s “Earth is Brown” or Sheik Sadeek’s “Sugar Canes”. Others also take an ethnocentric approach as in Ramcharitar-Lalla’s poem “The Weeding Gang” or Rajkumari Singh’s “I am a Coolie”. Mahadai Das’s poem “They Came in Ships” takes into account the importance to reveal the past to change the future into

account and engages in a critical and thorough recovery of the cultural history of the Indian population in Guyana.

The literary portrayal of the ethnic tensions is particularly interesting from the marginalised Indo-Guyanese perspective. Harry Narain's short stories "The Man at the Bottom" and "A Letter to the Prime Minister" mainly convey a disappointment and disenchantment of the Indo-Guyanese in relation to the inter-ethnic relationships in Guyana. However, the dogmatic counter-propaganda of the stories does not contribute to a change in perspective, and the focus on ethnicity in the way in which the social issues in Guyana are interpreted are simply perpetuated. Hence, his stories do not break through the vicious circle of ethnic stereotypes and discrimination.

However, there are also different perspectives that focus on the structural and political dimension of the ethnic conflict. Rooplall Monar's "Cookman", Ian McDonald's "Dual in the Mercy Ward", and Jan Carew's "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" convey that the continuation of ethnic conflicts in Guyana is not only outdated and futile, but also a misrepresentation of the real source of Guyana's social and economic issues, namely the structural unequal distribution of power and the corruptness of the government. Hence, towards the 1980s, there are indications that the literary presentations of a Guyanese cultural and social identity was about to change. After all, at least Carew's short story portrays a common Guyanese culture that is fundamentally hybrid or creole – and also shared by all of 'the people' in Guyana.

In general, most of these texts feature some kind of nativist, nationalist notions of identity. Although in many of these texts nativism is appropriated to fit specific circumstances or cultural-political goals, this aspect is what makes these texts remarkable. They speak of the difficulty to vindicate their political goal for an independent nation without a nativist narrative – regardless of the fact that nativist notions of culture and identity are mostly inapplicable to the socio-historical context in Guyana.

However, apart from nationalism and nativism, there are also other theoretical aspects to be found in these texts. Many of the texts on West Indian identity advocate a hybrid notion of culture *while still* communicating authenticity in terms of national symbols and nativism. Hence, these texts exemplify how

difficult it is to think a territorially-bound identity without nationalist or nativist hallmarks. An exception is Denis Williams whose texts convey a notion of identity that is conspicuously cosmopolitan by rejecting anything related to nationalist criteria that are used to evaluate the legitimacy of a national identity. Yet, even his notion of identity is based on a *rejection* of European hallmarks of nationalism. The only story that truly portrays a notion of identity that is fundamentally hybrid and creole (in Khan's sense) is the short story written by Jan Carew.

Notably, the ways in which identity is conveyed can almost always be related to psychological principles. First of all, it can be noted that with the political dissent between Jagan and Burnham, the ethnic divide grew even wider. Hence, in line with *realistic conflict theory*, the competition for political power fostered ethnocentric and chauvinistic discourses of Guyanese cultural identity. Often, the ethnic groups were portrayed according to Kelly's principles of dichotomy, organisational, and choice corollary (Kelly 1955, 46-106): ethnic relations in texts written by Afro- as well as the Indo-Guyanese were organised in dichotomous depictions of the in-group and out-group by emphasising differences and minimising common aspects. This depiction secured the in-group's superior position and kept all other out-groups in their marginalised place. This is particularly true for some texts written by Afro-Guyanese authors. Although the Indo-Guyanese discourse on identity also had chauvinistic tendencies, these were more pronounced in texts by Afro-Guyanese writers. The positive depiction of the in-group and the derogation of the out-group also served to create and maintain a positive self-esteem for the in-group – this is true for texts written by Afro- as well as Indo-Guyanese writers. Considering that the cultural policies of the time were explicitly related to “mak[ing] the people fully aware of [their common national] elements and create images of value, self-respect, and self-worth to replace the images they had previously accepted” (Seymour 1977, 11), the psychological function of identity in terms of self-esteem may have indeed played an important role in the ways in which identity was portrayed.

In sum, the notions of national identity that was portrayed in these texts are quite diverse. However, this is what makes these texts interesting from a

psychological as well as from a post-colonial perspective. Eventually, national identity is a messy construct – but a construct with psychological relevance.

Part V:

Conclusion

Conclusion

Whose Nation Is It Anyway?

[There] is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it. It is an ambivalence that emerges from the growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the ‘origins’ of the nation as a sign of the ‘modernity’ of society, the cultural temporality of the nations inscribes a much more transitional social reality (Bhabha 1990, 1).

The two case studies revealed interesting insights into the discourses on national identity in Guyana and Suriname. There seem to be various similarities between Guyana and Suriname – however, there are also some differences between the two kinds of national discourses that developed. Answering the research questions, the following comparative summary will delineate the main points of both discourses on nationalism and identity.

1. Whose Nation(alism) Is It – Who Is Included, Who Is Excluded?

The texts under review revealed how a specific kind of identity, i.e. the national identity that these texts were supposed to express, was created, appropriated, and (re-)rooted. Yet, pertaining to the question ‘Whose nationalism is it?’, it should be noted that the notions of nationalism and identity in both bodies of literature represent the views and agendas of a small intellectual elite only. Hence, both national discourses were elitist projects that may not be representative of an ‘identity of the people’.

1.1 *Suriname*

In Suriname, the *Moetete* group played an important role in shaping and creating the discourse on national identity. With their literature, the *Moetete* group had ‘greater cultural objectives in mind’ ([my translation] Slagveer 1968, 1); they wanted to create more than aesthetically valuable literature: they intended to shape people’s awareness of their “Volksidentiteit”, their ‘Surinamese-ity’ (Kross, “Mythe”, 186). With the literary magazine *Moetete*, they sought to provide a nationalist feeding bowl ‘full of prose and poetry to the people of Suriname’ that would heighten national consciousness ([my translation] Ravales 1968, 2). Hence, if (in 1968) members of the *Moetete* group would have given an answer to the question ‘Whose nation is it?’, they may have probably answered that Suriname is the nation of one unified Surinamese ‘people’.

But who were ‘the people’? First of all, the texts of the *Moetete* group made clear whose nation it was not: there was an explicit anti-colonial tendency in Surinamese literature rejecting Dutch rule in Suriname. Accordingly, Suriname should *not* be a nation for the former colonisers.

Yet, ‘the people’ were not *any kind* of Surinamese people, but some people seemed to be more Surinamese than others. The *Moetete* writers advocated a notion of national culture that understood *Creole*¹ culture as national culture. Notably, most writers of the *Moetete* group were of African descent, and they justified their salient position in the national discourse in nativist terms. Their ethnic, i.e. African, origin was a recurring topic in their literatures, and they created a connection between Creole identity and Surinamese soil (Slagveer, “Totness”, “Ik”). The Hindustani were often depicted as sly supporters of the colonial regime (e.g. Kross, “Mythe”) or as not interested in merging into one common (Creole) Surinamese culture (e.g. Arion 1998; Ferrier, “Notities”, Kross “Mythe”). Although there were texts written by Hindustani writers, such as Shrinivāsi and Bhāi, their ethnic background was not receiving an equal amount of attention. Accordingly, when writing about ‘the people’ or a national culture,

1 Remember that in Suriname *Creole* refers to people of African descent; and as such, the term is also capitalised.

the writers mainly referred to the Creoles. Hence, in that sense, Suriname was presented as a nation of Afro-Guyanese people.

In addition, there was another major issue related the representativeness of the *Moetete* group's opinions on a national culture and identity. The *Moetete* group belonged to the Creole *elite*. Most of them had attended renowned schools in Paramaribo – many of them together, and several of them were friends (van Kempen 2002 IV, 329). The elitist upbringing of most *Moetete* group members stood in stark contrast to the fact that a large proportion of the population was still illiterate or had only received rudimentary education. Thus, their perspective on national culture and identity hardly reflected the notion of 'the people', because they belong to a small proportion of a well-educated few. This suspicion was felt by the writers as well. For example, in hindsight, Hugo Pos strongly questioned if the notions of nationalism and identity advocated by the *Moetete* group 'could indeed be connected with the feelings and notions of those people for whom they were meant in the first place' ([my translation] Hugo Pos 1995, 149; cited in van Kempen 2002 IV, 568). Hence, they were probably aware of the issues that their elitist position entailed, even if they 'did not dare to admit' that their texts may not reflect the feelings and attitudes of the people ([my translation] Hugo Pos 1995, 148; cited in van Kempen 2002 IV, 568).

Their Afro-centric elitist position was also reflected in the language of publication. Despite the fact that the everyday language of 'the people' was not Dutch, the majority of the texts, particularly prose, were written in Dutch. Thus, in terms of language and form, the *Moetete* group's texts were still largely influenced by their Dutch upbringing and education. Accordingly, the nation was 'written' in a language that was not used as a means of communication by most Surinamese people. Interestingly, despite the fact that the majority did not write their texts in *Sranantongo*, the *Moetete* group considered *Sranantongo* as the national language (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld 1975, 11) – again neglecting the fact that a considerable proportion of the population spoke *Sarnami*.

Despite these issues of representativeness, the *Moetete* group's ethnocentric notion of literature and culture had a significant impact on the discourse of national identity because many of them played an active role in publishing

newspapers and magazines (van Kempen 2002 IV, 328). Furthermore, in their function as editors, publishers, and journalists, they did not only dictate the content of what was read, but also whose texts were being published. Due to the underdeveloped book market, a substantial part of literary productions and literary-cultural criticism was published in newspapers, weeklies, and journals. Thus, as editors, their attitudes and opinions significantly influenced the media discourses. Therefore, the *Moetete* group's elitist (nativist) nationalist notions of culture and identity were disproportionally represented in literary and media discourses.

In sum, it can be said that the *Moetete* group's idea of a Surinamese nation is representative of the discourse on national identity in Suriname in the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, the presentations of Suriname in literary texts, was influenced by the nationalism of a small elite who advocated a notion of national identity and culture that heightened the importance of the Afro-Surinamese population and neglected the Indo-Surinamese Hindustani.

1.2 Guyana

In Guyana, the answer to the question 'Whose nation is it?' is related to similar issues. Due to the open dissent between the leading politicians Burnham and Jagan, ethnically divided politics and violence were salient aspects of the political national discourse. Thus, similar ethnocentric and chauvinistic tendencies developed. Furthermore, the literary climate was significantly influenced by one particular person: Arthur J. Seymour whom Jeremy Poynting designated as the "doyen of Guyanese writing" (1998). Seymour was editor of the literary magazine *Kyk-Over-Al* and also published several literary histories and anthologies. He stood in close contact with Wilson Harris, Martin Carter, Ivan Van Sertima and Wordsworth McAndrew with whom Seymour met regularly in the 1940s and 1950s to discuss literary matters (Seymour 1980, 31). With the magazine *Kykoveral*, Seymour sought to establish a platform for local literary voices and criticism. From the beginning, *Kyk* had a conspicuously nationalist orientation. Thus, literature was understood as a means to facilitate the creation of a national consciousness. A nation needs to "have roots and *Kykoveral* is one of them",

Seymour wrote in the introduction of the first issue of this influential magazine, and his nationalist literary agenda was to “build a feeling of national pride and to chronicle the achievements of the people of the country” and to unite the ‘six peoples’ of Guyana (Seymour [1945] 1995, 28; Seymour 1954, 6). Hence, in relation to the question ‘Whose nation is it?’, again, the nation was supposed to be a nation of one unified Guyanese ‘people’.

On a superficial level, this seems to be well reflected in the literature. In some texts that were discussed, ‘the people’, as an umbrella term, referred to all ethnicities in Guyana, including the different European ethnic groups, such as the British and the Portuguese (e.g. Seymour, “Greenheart”). This notion is particularly pronounced in the texts of the 1940s and 1950s. Although there were also anti-colonial tendencies found in Guyanese literature, and the criticism was often directed against colonial rule and neo-colonial exploitation as such.

However, with ethnic tensions being spurred by media reports on economic and political turmoil, the nationalist discourse became increasingly ethnocentric (see also Misir 2010). Under the auspices of Afro-Guyanese writers including Arthur J. Seymour, Roy Heath, and Martin Carter, the literary representations of Guyanese national and cultural identity turned more and more Afro-centric. Particularly Seymour advocated “the centrality of the African consciousness” for Guyanese culture, literature, and identity (Seymour 1980, 31, 65). Hence, reconsidering the question, ‘Whose nation is it’, it should be noted that, in the 1960s and 1970s, ‘the nation’ was primarily defined in Afro-Guyanese terms – in politics as well as in literature.

Again, the national discourse on identity was not only Afro-centric, but also elitist. Most of the regular contributors to *Kyk-Over-Al*, including Seymour himself, belonged to the Afro-Guyanese elite. Although the illiteracy rate was less high than in Suriname (because the British had established compulsory education as a means of cultural assimilation), there was a strong ethnic imbalance in relation to educational levels. Particularly until the middle of the 20th century, the Indo-Guyanese population was less educated because their children were needed as weeders on the sugar and rice plantations. Therefore, they did not only have less access to the renowned schools in Georgetown, they also obtained less well-

paying jobs. Thus, considering that the majority of the people belonged to the lower educated Indo-Guyanese working class, the perspective on national culture and identity that was disseminated in literature hardly reflected the national feelings of 'the people'.

Considering Seymour's salient position as editor, writer, cultural agent and civil servant, his notions of national and West Indian culture dominated the literary climate in Guyana. Although, initially, his attitudes had been more egalitarian, his perspectives on culture and literature became more and more ethnocentric, advocating Afro-Guyanese cultural hegemony. Hence, there are hardly any literary texts or cultural criticism that did not conform to the dominating Afro-centric nationalist discourse. Although Mahadai Das, Sheik Sadeek, and Rooplall Monar were also published in *Kyk-Over-Al*, the frequency of their contributions is rather low in comparison to the routinely included poems by Wilson Harris or Seymour.²

In contrast to Suriname, however, Guyanese identity was not only strictly defined in nationalist terms. Identity was also discussed in relation to a *West Indian* cultural whole (Burnham 1976, 2; Seymour 1977, 59). Burnham's political orientation was directed towards forming an economic, cultural, and political unity with other Caribbean states. Nevertheless, nationalism was not entirely discarded in favour of an alternative notion of culture. Instead, nationalism was re-interpreted to as a representation for a common West Indian cultural union. Considering that the Indo-Caribbean population constituted an ethnic minority in most other countries of the Caribbean, affiliating Guyanese national culture and identity with the Afro-centric discourse on 'West-Indianism' contributed to a further neglect of the national and cultural position of the Indo-Guyanese population.

In sum, it can be said that the discourse on nationalism in Guyana (and its literary representation) was dominated by a small (mainly) Afro-Guyanese elite. A particularly salient role was assumed by the Afro-Guyanese Arthur J. Seymour. Similar to the *Moetete* group in Suriname, they advocated a notion of national

2 See Figure 2 on page 519.

identity and culture that heightened the importance of the Afro-Guyanese population and neglected the Indo-Guyanese or other ethnic minorities.

1.3 *Comparison Between Suriname and Guyana*

In both Guyana and Suriname, literature was used for the dissemination of the discourse on national identity. Hence, literature was seen as a means to shape the nationalist consciousness. In both countries, the national discourse was presented as if it was the discourse of ‘the people’, and the nation was presented as the nation of Surinamese or Guyanese people. Thus, the legitimacy of colonial rule was rejected in favour of the ‘natives’. As will be explained in more detail in the next section, nativism was defined in Afro-centric terms. The cultural impact and identity of the Indo-Caribbean population was widely neglected – despite the fact that they constituted the majority of the population. Furthermore, in both countries, the discourse on national identity was not only Afro-centric, but also elitist. Accordingly, the nationalism in both countries can hardly be considered as representative of the attitudes and opinions of a united people.

One major difference between Guyana and Suriname were the distinctively transnational tendencies in Guyana’s politics. National identity was not only discussed in relation to Guyanese territory, but in connection to a common West Indian cultural whole. However, these ‘transnational’ tendencies in Guyana changed little about the ethnocentric definition of national culture and identity. Guyanese as well as West Indian culture was seen to be dominated by a strong Afro-Caribbean cultural hegemony. Thus, in sum, it can be claimed that in both countries, the nation was shaped by the imagery of the Afro-Caribbean elite.

2. *What Kinds of Nations Are Imagined or Re-Imagined?*

Overall, the texts that have been discussed in this study convey different notions of what a nation actually is. There are texts that suggest that the nation is something that needs to be actively formed, e.g. through national symbols and narratives, to achieve specific socio-political goals; while there are other texts that convey that the nation is the prerogative of a historically evolved group whose

members share some inalienable characteristics due to a perennial, 'natural' connection to the territory that they have historically populated. Thus, instrumentalist, nativist (primordialist), and ethnosymbolist notions on nationalism can be found in these texts.

2.1 *Suriname*

The *Moetete* authors took different approaches towards nationalism. Some texts stress that 'the nation' is a discursive project that needs to be actively undertaken. For example, in the foreword to *Moetete I*, Robin Ravales emphasises the role of a common national identity in gaining political as well as cultural sovereignty. The writers were depicted as the *avant-garde* who offered the nourishing intellectual substance for a common national consciousness which would "lead the community into freedom from enchainment" ([my translation] Ravales 1968, 2). Hence, Ravales suggests two things: a common national identity is necessary to achieve political independence, *but* it still needs to be formed. A similar perspective on nationalism is depicted by Rudi Kross's "Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe". Kross explicitly emphasises that a common 'volksidentiteit' does not yet exist; but that the writers actively help to create one (Kross, "Mythe", 185). In Doelwijt's "13 Spelen met Land", an independent literary culture is presented as a prerequisite for national independence, and everyone is invited to contribute to the creation of a new independent Suriname (Doelwijt, "Land", 29). In these texts, nationalism seems to be less related to a prerogative or birthright, but nationalism is a cultural-political project that is necessary for sovereignty. Hence, these texts can be related to an *instrumentalist* perspective on nationalism.

Other texts advocated a more *primordialist* notion of nationalism. *Nativism*, i.e. having a 'natural' connection to the land through birth and family lineage, was not only depicted as a salient aspect of identity, but nativism was also used as a vindication for political and cultural sovereignty. In de Rooy's "De Edelstenen van Oom Brink", it is made clear that the love for Suriname may be irrational – but it is also *inalienable*. The story suggests that there is a visceral, natural connection to Suriname that cannot be denied nor eradicated. Hence, the text refers to a characteristic that is essential and deeply rooted in Surinamese soil.

Accordingly, there is an inalienable bond between Suriname and its inhabitants – this bond determines Surinamese identity, and it also offers a justification for independence from foreign political forces. In other poems, too, the connection between land and people is depicted as inalienable. In Rellum's "Sranan", identity is expressed in nativist terms: Suriname and the speaker become one; the fate of Suriname becomes the fate of the speaker. In some other texts, the legitimacy and essential goodness of this natural connection between land and people is expressed through in moral terms. In Paul Marlee's "Landbouwer" and Eddy Bruma's "De Fuik", national identity, cultural authenticity, and political sovereignty are linked to the 'untainted' lives of the peasants. Hence, Surinamese-ity is not simply a birthright, but a right that can be earned through field labour and a specific way of life in harmony with Suriname's soil and nature.

However, not everyone's connection to the land was equally natural or important. In many texts, there is a noticeable link between nationalism, ethnicity, and nativism. In Thea Doelwijt's "De Nacht van de Winti", a common Surinamese culture is explicitly linked to ethnicity. Creole culture is portrayed as an authentic, potentially national, culture: 'This is our culture. When you're black, it is in you. It belongs to us' (Doelwijt, "Winti", 15). The story portrays a culture that is primordial and innate – and restricted to one ethnicity only. Hence, although Surinamese-ity remains inalienable, it becomes limited to a select ethnic group within Suriname. A similar aspect can also be related to Jozef Slagveer's poems "Totness" and "Ik". In both poems, the kind of nativism that connects Suriname and its inhabitants is related to Afro-Guyanese people only.

In addition, Jozef Slagveer's poems "Totness" and "Ik" also seem to be related to an *ethnosymbolist* notion of nationalism. In both poems, native flora and fauna are used as national symbols that convey authenticity and psychological rootedness – *but only for the Creoles*. For example, the 'triumphal arches of the coconut tree' ([my translation] Slagveer, "Totness", 53) refer to parts of the local landscape, while evoking associations with national monuments of 'real nations', such as the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris. Thus, these two poems address the necessity for national symbols for the representation of national unity.

In sum, most of these texts use some kind of inalienable characteristic as legitimacy for the nation – mostly by referring to an inalienable bond between Surinamese soil and people or by depicting an inalienable Creole culture as national culture. Hence, nationalism and nativism are not only used to rebut colonial power hierarchies and culture, they are also used to convey that some ethnicities in Suriname are more legitimately Surinamese than others.

2.2 *Guyana*

In the late 1940s, the call for an independent nation was growing strong in British Guiana. In this context, the formation of a national feeling of unity was seen as a step towards political sovereignty. Hence, initially, the nation was seen as an instrument rather than a prerogative. This instrumentalist approach to nationalism is also present in two of the short stories that were discussed. In Wilson Harris's short story "Tomorrow", Guyana, as a nation, is portrayed as a *vision to be formed* (Harris, "Tomorrow", 63). Hence, in this short story, the nation is not seen as a 'natural given' but as something that needs to be actively created. In addition, the nation is conceived as an instrument to overcome colonial dependence. A similar aspect is found in Arthur J. Seymour's "Greenheart". The short story does not only convey that the nation is an instrument serving a "mission" for political independence, it also explicitly defines the role of literature and writers in this task (Seymour, "Greenheart", 40). Writer and literature "bring[...] together the six people of British Guiana" (40), and therefore, they bring about the formation of a national consciousness and social unity. In sum, both texts convey that the nation is a political and social *instrument* and that national unity needs to be actively created through a unifying narrative.

However, there are other texts that can be related to a *primordialist* notion of the nation. Similar to Suriname, there were texts in which national belonging and the right for self-governance were presented in *nativist* terms. The inadequacy of the colonialism as a state form to represent 'the people' was predicated upon the notion that the people's true national identity calls for an independent, sovereign state. This notion can be related to nativism. In Wilson Harris's "Fences upon the Earth", nativism is used as a vindication for the right to live and use

Guyanese land. In Brojo Bhattacharya's "Rice Harvest", the 'natural connection' to the land is interpreted in terms of field labour. In Martin Carter's "Listening to the Land", slavery is expressed in nativist terms: the dead slave speaks through the land, virtually becomes the land. In other texts, such as Arthur J. Seymour's "Sun is a Shapely Fire" and Wilson Harris, Roy Heath, and Jan Carew's essays on Afro-Amerindian folklore, Afro-Guyanese culture is 'nativised', i.e. a quasi-indigeneity is created for the Afro-Guyanese by associating them with the 'truly native' culture of the Amerindians. Similar to Suriname, nativism and ethnocentrism went hand in hand. Thus, in many cases, specific aspects of nativism had some kind of ethnic reference inscribed – mostly related to the Afro-Guyanese population.

Interestingly, 'the nation' was also used as a trope to convey authenticity as well as cultural and political cohesion in Guyanese texts on West Indian identity and culture – Westmaas (2009) suggests that the authors had a "West-Indian nation" in mind (see also Waites, "West Indian Culture", 6; Westmaas 2009, 1). In most of these texts, 'the nation' was not overcome, but extended to fit an allegedly transnational West Indian cultural whole. Despite the acknowledgement of the ethnic, territorial, historical and cultural diversity within the region, the authenticity of West Indian culture was framed in nationalist terms. Ethnicity, territory, history and cultural heritage were invoked to demarcate specific West Indian cultural characteristics – to exclude and include specific groups, to establish cultural norms, and to elevate the West Indian cultural whole to the same level as other powerful nations. Furthermore, even the primordialist notion of the naturalness of national groupings was retained in some texts. Arthur Waites, for example, warns that an artificial West Indian culture constructed by the Caribbean elite "is a false and un-natural culture" and that only a naturally and historically grown culture of 'the people' can truly be called a national West Indian culture (Waites, "West Indian Culture", 6). Thus, the transnational West Indian cultural whole was still imagined in nationalist terms by incorporating nativism, nationality, and identity.

Notably, a common West Indian culture was again (mostly) defined in Afro-Caribbean terms. In the essays written by Martin Carter, P.H. Daly, and E. Pilgrim,

West Indian culture was basically subjected to an African cultural hegemony. This tendency became even more pronounced after Guyana's independence, e.g. in Seymour's "We must hear our brothers speak" (1973) and "Cultural Policy in Guyana" (1977) as well as in P.H. Daly's "CARIFESTA, People's Culture and the Power Units" (1979). Hence, although the notion of a 'West Indian nation' challenged the old colonial territorial and cultural borders, it still retained aspects usually related to primordialist hallmarks of nationalism, such as ethnicity and nativism. Although these hallmarks were appropriated or re-interpreted, they are still invoked to discriminate, exclude, and assert power.

2.3 *Comparing the Imagined Nations in Suriname and Guyana*

There are two concepts of 'the nation' portrayed in Surinamese and Guyanese texts. On the one hand, the nation is seen as a discursive instrument used for the achievement of a specific political goal. From this perspective, the nation is fictional; and for political sovereignty, it is important to actively contribute and engage in shaping the national narrative. On the other hand, the nation is portrayed as a logical consequence of the division of humankind into (ethnic) groups who live on a common historic territory. Thus, national culture and identity are somewhere rooted in national soil. From this perspective, the nation is a prerogative that serves a natural, inalienable urge for ethnic autonomy and sovereignty. In addition, some texts also explicitly refer to the need of national symbols for this common, historical bond. Hence, instrumentalist, primordialist, and ethnosymbolist notions of nationalism are found in both bodies of literature.

Furthermore, nativism was used and appropriated to fit the specific political, ethnic, and historical circumstances of Suriname and Guyana. For example, ethnicity was emphasised in nativist accounts of national culture and identity. The link between ethnicity and nativism was also used to justify cultural hegemony: in both bodies of literature, the Afro-Guyanese / Creoles were portrayed as 'more native', i.e. more representative of national culture than the other groups.

In comparison to Suriname, in Guyana, aspects of nativism were also infused into discourses of West Indian culture and identity. Hence, in Guyana, 'the nation' did not only pertain to Guyana, but the concept was extended to the

West Indian region as a whole. In this context, ‘the nation’ was mainly used as a trope to convey cultural authenticity, political sovereignty, and power. However, although the notion of a ‘West Indian nation’ appropriated European notions of nationalism and challenged old colonial territorial and cultural borders, it still retained aspects that were usually related to primordialist hallmarks of nationalism, such as ethnic and cultural singularity.

In sum, it can be claimed that even if nativism was appropriated to fit specific purposes and circumstances, these texts still hardly convey a concept of the nation that completely discards nativist justifications. Although nationalism is also portrayed as an instrument and project, this notion is mainly presented in essays and forewords. The literary texts exemplify how difficult it seems to think of nationality and the nation in terms other than nativism, ethnicity, territory and history.

3. *Which Notions of Identity Are Conveyed in the Literatures – Are There Different Epistemologies Informing the Versions of Identity?*

Overall, both bodies of literature feature essentialist as well as universalist notions of identity. On the one hand, identity is depicted as something specific, inherent, and inalienable; on the other hand, identity is understood as transient and open to change. Although there are texts that tend to stress one aspect over the other, in most texts, the notions of identity incorporate essentialist as well as universalist aspects.

3.1 *Suriname*

On the one hand, there are Surinamese texts that mostly convey an essentialist notion of identity – particularly those which employ aspects of nativism as tropes for identity and belongingness. De Rooy’s “De Edelstenen van Oom Brink”, Eugène W. Rellum’s “Sranan”, Jozef Slagveer’s “Totness” and “Ik”, Paul Marlee’s “Landbouwer” and Eddy Bruma’s “De Fuik” refer to a kind of identity that is inalienable, deeply rooted in a ‘natural’ relation between Surinamese people and Surinamese soil. The emphasis on naturalness, a natural way of living

and being, as well as on a harmonious coexistence between soil and inhabitants convey that there is an inalienable, inherent kind of identity is essential – *to being Creole*. Hence, although these identities are denoted as *creole*, they are not endlessly open to alterity and inclusion. Notably, the denotation *Creole* in Suriname refers to a specific ethnic and territorial affiliation (see also Donnell 2006, 149ff; Kutzinski 2001, 13). Hence, Creole in Suriname can be best understood in terms of Knörr's notion of creoleness as (neo-)ethnogenesis (Knörr 2008, 5). Due to its ethnic reference, Creole identity is also exclusive and discriminatory – particularly towards the Hindustani population. Correspondingly, the invocation of essences is used to demarcate positions of power and legitimacy.

On the other hand, there are texts which can be related to universalist notions of identity – particularly in texts on Hindustani identities. For example, Shrinivāsi's "Kila" conveys a creole notion of identity that seeks to embrace alterity and tolerance.³ Hence, the Hindustani notion of identity in "Kila" seems more 'creole'⁴ than the Creole identities presented in other texts. Benny Ooft's "Shantidevi" presents an alternative account of national identity that is based on a common love for one's country regardless of ethnic relations. Although Suriname remains the common ground for identification, identity is depicted as a matter of choice and fancy, regardless of lineage and ethnicity. What draws the communities together is their love and commitment to their potential nation, not an innate or inalienable identity.

Furthermore, there are some kinds of identity that can be associated with other concepts of identity, such as cosmopolitanism, the Black Atlantic, and coolitude. In Rudy van Lier "Fragmenten", an uprooted cosmopolitan identity is depicted that 'desires world'. At first sight, the self-image that is portrayed in Bhāi's "Tussen de Schelpen" evokes associations with Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* and Walcott's "The Sea is History" – but it takes an Indo-Caribbean perspective. Hence, the poem should be related to coolitude and seen as an acknowledgement of the history of the Hindustani.

3 Related to the notion of creolisation presented in Khan 2007.

4 In Khan's (2007) definition of the term.

Interestingly, several texts feature main characters that explicitly grapple with their hybrid or diasporic identities. In Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend", Shrinivāsi's "Dehati", and Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde", the main characters suffer from their uprootedness and in-between position as hybrids. In the stories on migration, leaving home is associated with emotional and financial hardship. Lichtveld's "Anansi Zakt op Schiphol" expresses an unambiguous desire that nothing will change at all after migration. Cairo's "'Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!'" and Russel's "Uit het Voorgeborchte" portray the hardship and anxieties of those who leave and the feeling of abandonment of those who stay. In Bhāi's "Yahân se Dur", the experience of migration is depicted as an excruciating loss for one's sense of self.

Overall, it can be claimed that the notions of identity vary within the Surinamese texts that were discussed. But no matter if identity is seen as essential or a socio-psychological construct, most of these texts also refer to the psychological dimension of identity and the desire for belongingness and security. Notably, they all seem to engage with some kind of rootedness – irrespective of the nature of this bond between territory and identity. Although there are some texts that portray identity as being rooted in blood or soil, there are other texts that see the relationship between territory and identity as a purely emotional one that provides psychological security. Interestingly, particularly the texts on Creole identity engage with essentialist notions of culture and ethnicity. Hence, Creole, i.e. the identity of the Afro-Surinamese, can be related to Knörr's (2008) concept of creolisation as (neo-)ethnogenesis. In Suriname, Creole is not a reference to a process of ethnic or cultural mixing, but it refers to a specific ethnic group and their supposedly innate qualities (see also 'This is our culture. When you're black, it is in you. It belongs to us', Doelwijt, "Winti", 15). Accordingly, in these texts, Creole is a reference to an allegedly stable, secure, and innate identity. In turn, *actually* creole or hybrid identities are often associated with insecurity and a loss of belongingness. The loss of a stable definition of self and other is not experienced as liberating, but as unsettling. Although Bhabha maintained that "to be unhomed is not to be homeless" (Bhabha 1994, 13), this is exactly what some of the Surinamese texts seem to suggest. Instead of gaining the possibility to go-

between cultures and identities, the characters in Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend", Shrinivāsi's "Dehati", and Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde" lose the ability to feel at home at all.

3.2 *Guyana*

In Guyana, the situation is somewhat similar. Both essentialist and universalist notions of identity are portrayed in the texts that were discussed. Similar to the Surinamese texts, essentialist depictions of identity often incorporate nativist aspects related to a 'natural' connection to the land. In Arthur J. Seymour's "Tomorrow Belongs to the People" and Roy Heath's "The Peasants", national identity is rooted in Guyanese soil through field labour. In Harris's "Fences upon the Earth", colonial rule is depicted as unnatural and illegitimate by being contrasted against the Amerindian's inalienable, perennial connection to the land. In Carter's "Listening to the Land", nativism is related to the experience of slavery. In Seymour's "Sun is a Shapely Fire", nativism is conveyed by kinship. The local sun cults are depicted as derivatives of an essentially African cultural prototype.

Moreover, other aspects of Guyanese identity are presented as essential as well – for both the Indo- and the Afro-Guyanese population. Although Guyanese identity was not only defined in nativist terms, there was often some kind of essence on which this identity was based. In Ramcharitar-Lalla's "The Weeding Gang", Singh's "I am a Coolie", and Bhattacharya's "Rice Harvest", the *Indo-Guyanese's inherent* diligence, modesty, and industriousness are used to define new norms for Guyanese identity. By contrast, in Dolphin's "Trouble Music", the rhythm and musicality of Guyanese culture are related to 'something' that the *Afro-Guyanese* have in their *blood*. Interestingly, essentialism is even found in the (ostensibly transnational) notion of a common West Indian culture and identity. For example, in their comments on West Indian culture in *Kykoveral* 20 in 1955, Daly, Carter, and Pilgrim trace back the peculiarity of West Indian culture to an African cultural essence or an 'African consciousness'. This tendency is even more pronounced in the texts by Burnham, Daly, and Seymour on West Indian culture. Due to this essentialist focus on African elements, their notion of West

Indian culture excludes and marginalises other groups. Even Waites's notion of a West Indian culture and identity retains some essentialist aspects. Although he criticises the focus on African culture in notions of a common Caribbean identity, his text conveys that a common identity needs to 'grow naturally'. The current cultural mix is (not yet) a real culture – but it will become a real cultural identity when common features have been nativised by being practiced for generations. Hence, he seems to suggest that the common culture needs to be essentialised through bio-cultural co-evolution. Hence, essentialism is not only incorporated in nationalist concepts of identity, but also in the transnational concept of West Indian identity.

Yet, universalist concepts of identity are also found in the texts of Guyanese writers. However, most do not fully discard the dichotomous structure of essentialism or (similar to Suriname) hybrid identities are evaluated negatively. Denis Williams's portrays a rather cosmopolitan notion of identity in his essay "Guiana Today" which seems to avoid any classifications of culture and identity. However, his notion of identity is also based on a dichotomy. The 'Guianese pattern' is contrasted against a traditional national notion of identity, i.e. the originality of the pattern is defined by its inability to fit into a framework of national identity. Samlallsingh and Mittelholzer also seem to convey a hybrid notion of West Indian culture and identity in their essays on West Indian culture by emphasising processes of mixing and diversity. However, for Mittelholzer, the culture of the "Europeans carried the day" (Mittelholzer 1955, 200), and thus, he sees West Indian identity as a copy of European identity. For Samlallsingh, there are "many ways of life" in the West Indies (Samlallsingh 1955, 196). Accordingly, for here the West Indies are an accumulation of several identities, but not one common identity (Samlallsingh). Hence, their notions cannot be truly related to the "teleological optimism" that Khan ascribes to creoleness (Khan 2007, 654, 656), nor to the subversiveness that Bhabha sees in hybridity (Bhabha 1994, 41). A similar issue is noticeable in the poems and stories of Indo-Guyanese writers. In Shana Yordan's "Earth is Brown", the lack of an essence within Indo-Guyanese culture is even evaluated negatively. Mahadai Das's poem "They Came in Ships" evokes associations with Carter's and Torabully's (2002) notion of coolitude

which calls for a recognition and positive re-evaluation of the Indian presence in the Caribbean. However, although the poem offers an affirmative account of the history of the Indian indentured workers, it does not offer a suggestion for a new or alternative (creole or hybrid) identity.

The only two positive alternative notions of identity can be found in Sadeek's "Sugar Canes" and in Carew's "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek". Sadeek's short story suggests that a new kind of identity is developing; an identity that may not be restricted by sex, ethnicity, or other 'essences'. Carew's "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" depicts creolisation as a major force determining the status quo as well as the future of Guyanese identity. However, truly positive depictions of a creole or hybrid identity are rare. Hence, there seems to be a reluctance to let go of essentialising tendencies in the way that identity is articulated in these texts. As will be elaborated later, this salient connection to essentialism seems to be related to cognitive and other psychological mechanism and functions.

3.3 *Comparing 'Identity' in Suriname and Guyana*

In the literatures of Guyana and Suriname, identity is portrayed in essentialist as well as in universalist terms. However, in both bodies of literature, essentialism plays a slightly more important role; even for concepts of ostensibly creole or hybrid identities, such as the West Indian concept of culture and identity in Guyana. Furthermore, creole or hybrid⁵ identities are often evaluated negatively. In the Surinamese texts, hybrid identities are related to anxiety (Doelwijt) and loss (Ferrier). In the Guyanese texts, creolised cultural identity is related to mimicry (Mittelholzer) or depicted as not 'a real' cultural identity (Waites). Nevertheless, there are also texts in which creole or hybrid identity is evaluated more positively: the texts of Benny Ooft and Shrinivāsi depict an identity that is open to change, but still affirmative, tolerant, and fruitful. In Carew's short story, the constantly hybridising social reality generates identities that have potential and power to provide a basis for identification in positive terms.

In sum, it needs to be acknowledged that identity remains elusive. It seems difficult to think about identity without categories and essences, while it also

5 Here, creole and hybrid are used interchangeably, as suggested by Khan 2007.

appears to be a challenge to ignore that identity is a construct, assembled from an episodic, incoherent, and complex experience of a self that we constantly try to understand. However, in the face of the prevalent nationalism of the time, identity is not only a matter of personal experience or fancy, but it is also related to the wider socio-historical context. Hence, although these essentialising tendencies can be related to a general cognitive bias towards perceiving people and things as ordered, discrete entities (see Kelly 1995) or to a psychological need for security, self-knowledge, and unambiguity (see also Burke, Martens, and Faucher 2010; Greenberg et al. 1990; McAdams 2001), the kind of essentialism prevalent in these texts may be associated with a more political motivation. Considering Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism", essentialist concepts of identity also offer some political advantages (Spivak ([1985] 1996, 214). An identity based on essences can be easily demarcated from other (politically opposing) identities, and hence, offer a possibility for a strong political position and agency. Hence, considering the ethnic tensions and the oppositional political positions associated with them in Suriname and Guyana, essentialism served as a means to several (psychological and political) ends.

Therefore, the results of this study need to be considered carefully. The fact that texts portraying a specific notion of identity are so readily available may also be related to possibilities of publication. Some notions of identity (particularly those which tied in with the Afro-centric orientation of Seymour and Burnham or of many members of the *Moetete* group) were probably published more often, while other-minded authors needed to resort to self-publication. Considering the salient and powerful position of Seymour and *Kyk-Over-Al* in Guyana, as well as the influence of Doelwijt, Slagveer, and Kross in Suriname, their specific notions of a common national identity may be over-represented in the discourses on identity because they had a significant influence on what was published.⁶

Moreover, Suriname and Guyana were not the only countries in the Caribbean where ethnocentric and essentialist notions of identity undermined

6 Keep in mind, however, that other-minded does not necessarily mean 'in favour of creole identities'; for example, the short stories of Harry Narain do not present a different *kind* of identity, but they present some kind of counter-propaganda that re-directs blame from the Indo-Guyanese to the Afro-Guyanese.

transnational and multi-ethnic, creole discourses. The national discourses of Guyana and Suriname reflect the inability of other Caribbean societies to meet their own expectations and demands of a truly creole definition of identity and culture.⁷ For example, the national discourse in Trinidad or Jamaica in the 1960s can be seen as equally ethnocentric – irrespective of the position that is assumed (Afro- or Indo-Caribbean) (Khan 2004; Munasinghe 2001; Robotham 2003). Notably, emancipatory endeavours of one ethnic group, such as the *Black Power* movement in the Caribbean, seemed to be related to an increase of discrimination against the other ethnic groups (Appiah and Gates 2004, 488). For example, Trinidadian *Black Power* proponents started social uproar in Trinidad in 1970 – and exacerbated ethnic tensions (Burton 1997, 219). Hence, the often recited “All o’ We is One” in Trinidad, Jamaica’s motto “Out of Many, One People”, as well as Guyana’s “One People, one Nation” remain more fictional than factual – also in other Caribbean states (Appiah and Gates 2004, 337; Buff 2001; Burton 1997).

However, these discourses should not be condemned for their inability to live up to the ambitious goals and ideals of a theoretically undiscriminating creoleness. As psychological research has suggested, categorisation and its frequent consequences, prejudice and discrimination, should be taken as a part of human cognition and experience – and as such, as somewhat inevitable if not acted upon deliberately. Nevertheless, there are possibilities to reduce or prevent the negative consequences of categorisation. Psychological research on identities has shown that individuals with dual or complex identities incorporating several social and personal identities may be less discriminatory (Brewer and Roccas 2001; Crisp and Hewstone 2001; Crisp and Hewstone 2001; Deaux 1996). Furthermore, a super-ordinate group identity, in the spirit of “all o’ we is one”, which can accommodate in-group and out-group characteristics alike has the potential to lead to less discrimination if in-group projection is prevented (Gaertner, Dovidio, and Bachman 1996; Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Thus, with Aisha Khan's notion of creoleness in mind, it may be good to keep thinking

7 In the sense of Glissant's notion of “accepted difference” and “wholeness” (Glissant [1981] 1989, 98) or Khan's “ideology of alterity” (Khan 2007, 654, 656).

about identity and cultural change in terms of creolisation and creoleness (Khan 2007, 654).

4. *Are the Processes of Creolisation and Hybridity Subjects in Literature?*

In general, it needs to be noted that national identities as they are depicted in these texts *are* creole or hybrid identities in the sense that they incorporate elements from various cultural backgrounds (see also Khan 2007; Knörr 2008; Glissant [1981] 1989). Hence, even if national identity is presented as homogenous and as definable by unambiguous characteristics, national identity in the Caribbean is always (to a certain extent) creole or hybrid (see also Bhabha 1990). However, creolisation or hybridity are rare subjects in the texts that were discussed. The texts engage more with essentialist aspects of identity than with processes of creolisation. However, there are some exceptions.

4.1 *Suriname*

In the Surinamese texts that were discussed, there is one text that particularly stands out. Shrinivāsi's "Kila" depicts a social and cultural reality that is ostensibly hybrid or creole.⁸ The narrator is grateful for the feeling belonging and rootedness that his Hindustani family and culture provide. In the story, a respect for traditional values of an Indian Hindu society is expressed; simultaneously, the kind of Hindustani culture that is depicted in the story is a creolised one. The family speaks Dutch, a Hindi (probably also Sarnami), and Sranan – and code is changed effortlessly. Furthermore, Surinamese Hindustani culture is depicted as engaging and embracing. The school children in the story all celebrate *Phagwa* (or *Holi*) together, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. In the cacophony of their boisterous play, everything creolises into one happy cultural mess (Shrinivāsi, "Kila", 69). Hence, what is described in this story can be related to Khan's notion of creolisation as an "ideology of alterity" that bears potential for inclusion and change – for the better (Khan 2007, 654).

8 Referring to Bhabha's (1994), Glissant's ([1981] 1989), and Khan's (2007) definition of the term to which alterity, in-betweenness, and opacity are central.

However, as mentioned earlier, not all the processes of hybridisation and creolisation are depicted in positive ways. In Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde" and in Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend", the process of hybridisation is described as an unsettling and up-rooting one. Although hybridisation is depicted as a normal result entailed by migration, the process has devastating psychological consequences. Instead of gaining the possibility of making oneself at home at various places, the characters lose their ability to feel at home at all or even lose 'their self' in the process. Reflecting the psychological needs for affiliation and a sense of belonging, the characters do not perceive their hybridity as subversive or liberating, but as unsettling.

Hence, when creolisation or hybridisation are depicted, these processes are evaluated ambiguously in the texts of Suriname. Although there are also positive depictions of creole culture (Shrinivāsi's "Kila"), most other texts (particularly Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde" and in Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend") portray a rather negative picture of hybridisation.

4.2 Guyana

In the Guyanese texts that were discussed, creolisation is mainly a subject in relation to the notion of a West Indian cultural whole. In his essay "Guiana Today", Denis Williams asserts that there is no Guianese culture but an "assured West Indian pattern" (Williams, "Guiana", 132). His notion of a West Indian cultural whole can be seen as a precursor of Glissant's notion of Caribbeanness ([1981] 1989). Defying narrow identities and the "pigeon-holing of peoples", Williams describes a cultural concept that can be related to Glissant's description of Creoleness which embraces opaqueness and diversity, while also offering "wholeness" (Glissant [1981] 1989, 98). Furthermore, cultural elements, such as the calypso or steelband, are not part of a single national Guyanese culture but they are creolised forms of art functioning as a "unifier of all West Indian people" (133). Hence, creolisation is presented as an original aspect of West Indian life.⁹

By contrast, the depiction of West Indian culture also contained some ethnocentric and chauvinistic tendencies. In the comments on "Is there a West

9 Although, of course, Waites describes a kind of Creoleness *avant la lettre*.

Indian Way of Life?”, Martin Carter, P.H. Daly, and E. Pilgrim emphasise the importance of Afro-Caribbean cultural elements for a common West Indian culture. Although other cultural elements are acknowledged as a part of West Indian culture, they are portrayed as less salient or less important than the African influence. This bias in favour of Afro-Caribbean culture is even more visible in Seymour’s reports on Guyana’s cultural policy. Seymour explicitly emphasises the “the centrality of the African consciousness” for West Indian and Guyanese culture (Seymour 1980, 31, 65), and he requests to reclaim the “strength of the values of the Afro-centred past” (Seymour 1973, 5). Although the focus on African culture has been criticised by other texts (e.g. Waites, “West Indian Culture”, 10), the Afro-centric perspective on a creolised West Indian culture and identity eventually persisted in many texts on West Indian culture.

Thus, although creolisation is a topic in the Guyanese texts, it incorporates chauvinistic elements in favour of African cultural elements. Again, these texts seem to exemplify the difficulties of thinking of identity in non-discriminatory terms or of creating a super-ordinate identity that fully embraces alterity (see also Khan 2007).

4.3 *Comparing the Literary Representations of Creolisation and Hybridity in Suriname and Guyana*

Although national identity in Guyana and Suriname can be seen as hybrid or creolised national identities that need to deal with cultural and ethnic heterogeneity, the processes of creolisation or hybridity were not a frequent topic in the texts that were discussed.

In comparison to Suriname (which mainly focused on defining a national identity), in Guyana, the existence of a common (creolised) West Indian culture was also debated. Hence, culture and identity were not only debated in strictly national terms, but also in relation to Guyana’s position within greater West Indian cultural whole. Thereby, they entered a stronger pan-Caribbean cultural debate on nationalism, identity, and culture. By comparison, even though Suriname also sought cultural contact to other Caribbean states, identity and culture were mainly discussed in national terms.

Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that although creolisation and hybridity are rarely the subject of individual texts, the identities that are depicted are often creole or hybrid. Hence, the lack of creolisation or hybridity as a topic could be related to the fact that the theoretical concepts (creoleness, *creolité*, or hybridity) emerged a bit later than the texts under review.¹⁰ In turn, some of these texts and notions of identity need to be considered as creole or hybrid *avant la lettre*.¹¹ Thus, this detailed study has contributed to gaining an insight into possible discursive precursors of Glissant's Caribbeanness or Bernabé's, Chamoiseau's, and Confiant's *creolité* (and their limitations) in various poetic, fictional, and essayistic texts.

5. *Are Ethnic Tensions Represented in These Literatures – How Are They Explored?*

As has become clear through the analysis of the texts under review (from various genres), their inherent concepts of identity were frequently linked with aspects of ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and belonging. As noted earlier, the experiences and perspectives of the Afro-Caribbeans were (generally) over-represented while those of the Indo-Caribbean population were omitted, distorted, or neglected.

5.1 *Suriname*

In the Surinamese texts, ethnic tensions were either directly or indirectly noticeable. For example, in Rudi Kross's "Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe", the Hindustani are openly accused to inhibit the process of achieving political independence (Kross, "Mythe", 186); and in Leo Ferrier's short story "Notities van een Vriend", their ability to form a politically effective majority is dismissed (Ferrier, "Notities", 139). Therefore, the call for a joint solution for the political as well as social issues in Suriname that is suggested in the Ferrier's story in the end

10 E.g. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant. 1990, Bhabha 1994, Glissant [1981] 1989, Khan 2007, Knörr 2008.

11 Nevertheless, creoleness and hybridity offered a theoretical framework and analytical tools for the analysis of the texts in this study.

is actually a call upon the Hindustani to support the political cause of the Creoles, i.e. the Afro-Surinamese.

A different perspective is presented in the short story of the Indo-Surinamese Jit Narain. “De Contractant” tries to debunk the myth of the Indian contract worker as a sly supporter of the old colonial regime. Hence, the text does not only emphasise the psychological and physiological hardship that the Indian contract workers had to endure, it also stresses the role of the Hindustani in (anti-colonial) revolts and riots at the sugar plantations. However, the story ends on a pessimistic note: the stigma of the stereotypes is not removed, and the political voice of the Hindustani is not heard. The story also suggests who is responsible for this neglect, and it has a certain accusing overtone. Although the story does not blame the Creoles directly, it does so *implicitly*. Considering that the voice of the Indo-Surinamese was generally neglected in the Afro-centric national discourse in Suriname at the time, the criticism is directed towards the Creoles.

The persistence of ethnic tensions and the stereotype of the Indian as an anti-nationalist conservative are exemplified in Frank Martinus Arion’s text “The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness”. Only the Indo-Caribbean population is blamed for the ongoing ethnic issues, and they are even presented as blocking ‘the road to Caribbeanness’ because they refuse to blend into the common creole, Caribbean culture (Arion 1998, 448).

Corly Verlooghen’s “Dit Wankel Huis” is the only text that takes a more critical perspective towards the ongoing ethnic issues in Suriname. The poem calls upon both Creoles and Hindustani alike to overcome ethnic animosities. The poem stresses the point that a new successful nation can only be built if ethnic tensions are overcome.

Clearly then, ethnic tensions are a recurring topic in the Surinamese texts that were discussed. However, in the face of the fact that Jit Narain’s story is one of the few canonised stories that have actually presented the perspective of a Hindustani on this topic, the representation of ethnic tensions is rather lopsided in favour of the Creoles. Furthermore, truly critical discussions of ethnic tension are also rarely found in these texts.

5.2 *Guyana*

In the Guyanese texts that were discussed, ethnic tensions were represented a bit differently. Earlier texts from the 1940s and 1950s, such as Wilson Harris's "Tomorrow" or Arthur J. Seymour's "Greenheart", seem to call upon all people of Guyana to overcome their ethnic animosities and to form a peaceful brotherly alliance.¹² However, these tendencies ebbed away rather soon. In most texts written in the following decades, ethnic tensions were not mentioned explicitly, they were expressed by a blunt Afro-Guyanese cultural chauvinism.

In the texts that were analysed, the more explicit references to ethnic tensions are found in the poems and short stories by Indo-Guyanese writers. In Shana Yardan's poem "Earth is Brown", the grandfather's "dhoti [has] become a shroud" (l. 4), his "straight hair a curse" (l. 5). The pessimistic overtone of the poem indicates the neglect and degradation of Indo-Guyanese people in Guyana's society. In Harry Narain's stories "The Man at the Bottom" and "A Letter to the Prime Minister", the desolate situation of the poor Indo-Guyanese population is depicted. In addition, the stories also offer a suitable culprit to blame. In an almost dogmatic counter-propaganda-like overtone, the power hungry Afro-Guyanese middle class and elite are given full responsibility for the misery of Indo-Guyanese working-class. Although both stories depict the life and worries two completely different Indo-Guyanese individuals, the political statement remains more or less the same: the Indo-Guyanese have been betrayed by the Afro-Guyanese.

Yet, other texts take a more critical perspective and challenge the persistence of ethnic tensions. In Rooplall Monar's short story "Cookman", the social issues in Guyana are represented in terms of class and power, not in relation to ethnicity. Through its main character Pandit, Monar's story voices disagreement with the power play of the political elite. The story suggests that

12 As mentioned earlier, the idea of 'bringing together all six peoples of Guyana' into a brotherly national unity reflected the (national) discourses in other Caribbean states. For example in Trinidad the slogan "All o' we is one" became popular in the 1950s and 1960s. However, similar to Guyana, ethnic tensions in Trinidad persisted way into the 1970s (Appiah and Gates 2004, 337; Burton 1997). That Trinidad was a long way from being the harmonious brotherly unity that its national motto suggested is exemplified in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979).

ethnic cooperation is needed to overcome Guyana's ongoing economic struggles – but that the empowerment of the working-class is even more necessary for a real change to happen. Ian McDonald's short story "Dual in the Mercy Ward" parodies the persistent ethnocentrism and chauvinism in Guyana's political discourses by metaphorically relocating the competition of the PNC and PPP into a mercy ward – and that the story will not end well for any of the two disputants is implied by this location. Hence, McDonald's story seems to suggest that it is time to overcome the ethnic tensions that have bedevilled Guyana for such a long time. Jan Carew's short story "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" even suggests that the ethnic divide in Guyana's politics has been already undermined by social and cultural developments. According to the story, ethnic tensions mainly exist in the streamlined, official accounts of those in power. Hence, in the story, the inspector needs to tamper with the report about the death of the Indo-Guyanese Ram to make it fit into the existing ethnic stereotypes: "a black man [Ti-Zek] and an Indian [Ram] joining forces to rob a notable land owner? [... T]hat's politics!", the inspector explains (Carew, "Ti-Zek", 107). Notably, in Carew's story, the main character is a *Douglah*, i.e. a person of mixed African and Indian descent, and his genetic composition suggests that ethnic tensions have not only been overcome culturally.

In sum, the representation of ethnic tensions in the Guyanese texts that were discussed offers a variety of opinions and perspectives. Carew's text "Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek" even adopts some sort of meta-discursive perspective by illustrating the gap between what happened and what was reported to have happened. Hence, although ethnic tensions and discrimination certainly existed in Guyana, the role of the political elite in maintaining and exaggerating the importance of these tensions needs to be acknowledged.

5.3 *Comparing the Literary Representations of Ethnic Tensions in Suriname and Guyana*

Judging from the texts that were selected, it seems as if ethnic tensions were less frequently a topic in the texts of Suriname than of Guyana. Yet one should at least be aware of the possibility that the selection as well as the different socio-

historical developments in Guyana and Suriname may lead to a biased conclusion. There may be different reasons for this imaginable. *First*, it could be the case that I simply found more Guyanese than Surinamese texts on this topic – yet this would already constitute a significant fact in itself. *A second, methodological explanation* could be that, as this study did not focus on archival research, I was dependent on texts that had been previously published. Hence, it may well be that I simply did not come across or get access to enough texts from Suriname that portrayed ethnic tensions, and that potentially more texts written by Surinamese authors may exist in Surinamese archives or local Surinamese libraries. However, the fact of publication (in contrast to the mere composition) of a text remains, again, a significant fact in itself, which equals out any number of manuscript texts ‘lost’ in archives. Then, *a third and contextual reason* for such difference found between the discourses in those two neighbouring countries could be related to Bouterse’s military coup in 1980 and the following military dictatorship in Suriname. Afterwards, many Surinamese writers emigrated and concerned themselves with other issues than the ethnic tensions within the (ethnically divided) national discourse of Suriname. This, however, while true, would affect only the post-coup period after 1980, not the decades before. *Fourthly*, it could also conceivably be the case that ethnic tensions in Suriname were just not as pronounced as in the texts from Guyana – which then, once more, would constitute a significant fact of its own. *Fifthly and finally*, difference in the national discourses could also possibly result from a mix of all these factors – which, again and for a last time, would not devalue the results of the factual record and the related analyses of the present study.

In sum, it can be claimed that tensions between different ethnic groups are well represented in the texts that were discussed, in one way or another. Most of the texts focused on the salient issues between the Indo- and Afro-Surinamese / Guyanese population. Tensions between other groups, by comparison, were widely neglected. Although the Indo- and Afro-Surinamese / Guyanese formed the biggest ethnic groups, the tensions that resulted from the neglect of other groups, such as the Amerindian population, the Javanese, Chinese, Portuguese, or the Maroon communities in Guyana and Suriname were widely omitted from the

dominant discourses. Furthermore, religious tensions within, e.g. the Indo-Surinamese/Guyanese groups were largely neglected as well in these texts.

Last but not least, it should be noted that the presentation of ethnic tensions in these texts are not mimetic reflections of real life ethnic violence and discrimination that occurred in Guyana and Suriname in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, such representations engage with real life events. The literary presentations of ethnic relations were part of an ethnocentric, chauvinistic discourse of national identity which had *real* consequences (e.g. less access to jobs in the service sector for Indo-Guyanese under Burnham). Thus, the texts that have been discussed present specific aspects of the discourse on national identity in Guyana and Suriname; however, they should not be mistaken as sufficiently mimetic reflections of any social or psychic reality.

6. *Are Social and Psychic Realities of Different Ethnic Groups Equally Represented in the Literatures?*

In the face of the ethnic tensions that dominated the political and social climate in the 1960s and 1970s in Guyana and Suriname, it does not come as a surprise that not all ethnic groups were equally presented in the literature. The focus on an 'African consciousness' (even within Creoleness) in the Caribbean has been noted before in recent years (Donnell 2006, 149ff; Kutzinski 2001, 13), and Suriname and Guyana are no exceptions. However, due to the ethnic composition of Suriname's and Guyana's populations, the ethnocentric and chauvinistic tendencies inscribed into the discourses of identity in the Caribbean seem particularly hazardous to the feeling of unity that the new (national) identity was supposed to create. And yet, regardless of the hegemonic position of Afro-Guyanese / Creole culture in and Guyana / Suriname, there were Indo-Guyanese and Hindustani writers who wrote against the grain of the contemporary focus on Afro-Caribbean culture. Their texts try to express what it means to be of Indian descent in a society that chose 'African' culture and aesthetics as its new foundation.

6.1 *Suriname*

Most Surinamese texts in this study were representative of a Creole (i.e. Black) experience and notion of culture and identity: Bea Vianen's "Over Nonnen en Straffen", Rudi Kross's "Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe", Jozef Slagveer's "Totness" and "Ik", Eddy Bruma's "De Fuik", Thea Doelwijt's "13 Spelen met Land" and "De Nacht van de Winti", Leo Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend" and Frank Martinus Arion's "The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness", they present a version of reality from a Creole perspective. The odd examples are Jit Narain's "De Contractant" and Shrinivāsi's "Kila". Both texts convey the specificities and the complexity of the psychic and social experience of the Hindustani in Suriname.

The only text from the Surinamese group that offers a more personal or intimate experience of an interaction between a Hindustani and a Creole is Benny Ooft's "Shaantidevi (Een Idylle)". However, apart from Shrinivāsi's "Kila", the interaction between Hindustani and Creoles is not explored psychologically.

This ratio can also be related to the stories on migration. Noni Lichtveld's "Anansi Zakt op Schiphol", Edgar Cairo's "'Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!'", Rodney Russel's "Uit het Voorgeborchte" and Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend" present psychological and social issues related to migration from a purely Creole perspective. The only texts that engage with an Hindustani perspective on migration and cultural alienation in a more general sense are Bhāi's "Tussen de Schelpen" and "Yahân se Dur" as well as Shrinivāsi's "Dehati". Thus, migration is rarely described from a perspective other than the Creole default.

Another issue is the general neglect of the voices of other ethnicities in Suriname. In the texts, the specific experience of the Javanese, Amerindians, Lebanese, Chinese etc. are completely eclipsed by the Afro-centric discourse of national identity. Although a somewhat different experience is illustrated in Thea Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde" and "Hoppen in de Caribbean", the perspective is rather elitist and not really representative. The texts' accounts of migration and hybridity leave the topic of economic hardship completely aside. Hence, although "In den Vreemde" is a deep psychological exploration of the issues related to becoming aware of one's hybridity, it does not elucidate the economic and

political reasons that resulted in waves of migration – for Creoles and Hindustani alike.

6.2 Guyana

Although the earlier texts, such as Arthur J. Seymour's "Greenheart" and "Tomorrow Belongs to the People", Wilson Harris's "Tomorrow", and Roy Heath's "The Peasants", still presented a more general (anti-colonial) perspective on national identity in Guyana, these tendencies were soon stifled under a dominant representation of 'the centrality of the African consciousness' (Seymour 1980, 31, 65). There is an unambiguous focus on Afro-Guyanese history, identity, and culture. In Martin Carter's "Listening to the Land" and "Death of a Slave", Arthur J. Seymour's, "First of August", slavery is presented as *the* common history that can be invoked in memory of a common past. In the three essays on the fusion of Amerindian and African folklore¹³ by Wilson Harris, Roy Heath, and Jan Carew and Arthur J. Seymour's "Sun is a Shapely Fire", the Amerindians become a mere reference to cultural authenticity and nativism. The perspective of the Amerindians in this fusion is completely left out. In McDonald Dash's "Greenheart Men", the Amerindians are depicted as living a life of social atavism, unable to claim independence for themselves. In Celeste Dolphin's "Trouble Music" and Florence Caviglioli's "Lulu and de Camoodie", Afro-Guyanese culture is described as prototypical for Guyanese culture as such.¹⁴

As postcolonial scholars, such as Alison Donnell (2006, 149ff) and Vera Kutzinski (2001, 13), have noted before, this focus on an African cultural hegemony can also be found in relation to other pan-Caribbean notions of culture and identity. Correspondingly, in the Guyanese texts on West Indian ways of life, there is a certain bias towards Afro-Caribbean cultural elements. The presentation of African culture as some sort of *leitkultur* in the Caribbean is unmistakable in Denis Williams's essay "Guiana Today", as well as in Martin Carter, P.H. Daly, and E. Pilgrim's comments on the question "Is there a West Indian Way of Life?", in Arthur J. Seymour's "We must hear our brothers speak" and "Cultural Policy in

13 Note that the social and psychic reality of Amerindians plays a minor role in these essays; they refer more to the transferral of the status of an indigenous culture to Afro-Guyanese culture through the fusion between African and Amerindian culture.

Guyana” and in P. H. Daly’s “CARIFESTA, People’s Culture and the Power Units”.

Yet, it should not be forgotten that there are also some texts that refer to a specific Indo-Guyanese experience. Brojo Bhattacharya’s “Rice Harvest” and C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla’s “The Weeding Gang” associate the cultivation of rice and farming with a re-rooting of Indian traditions on Guyanese ground. Ruby Samlallsingh and Cheddi Jagan wrote critical comments that look at cultural and political issues from an Indo-Guyanese angle. Shana Yardan’s “Earth is Brown”, Sheik Sadeek’s “Sugar Canes”, Mahadai Das’s “They Came in Ships” are critical as well as affirmative of Indo-Guyanese culture – and most importantly, they contributed to a diversification of the voices and notions of the Guyanese discourse of culture and identity. Similar to the intellectuals of the *négritude* movement and their re-interpretation of African cultural elements, Rajkumari Singh’s “I am a Coolie” offers a positive re-evaluation of the term ‘coolie’ and Indo-Guyanese culture. Although Harry Narain’s “The Man at the Bottom” and “A Letter to the Prime Minister” are somewhat dogmatic, they seek to present a specifically Indo-Guyanese social and psychic reality.

Unfortunately, texts that provide a more complex perspective on Guyana’s society are rare. The two exceptions are Rooplall Monar’s “Cookman” and Jan Carew’s “Tilson Ezekiel Alias Ti-Zek”. Both texts suggest that Guyana’s national economics, culture, and identity are bedevilled by more than the (allegedly) ongoing ethnic tensions. Both stories seem to suggest that a real change is not introduced by simply overcoming the ethnically discriminating repercussions of *apan jhatt* and Burnham’s political policies. Instead they depict the intersections between ethnicity, class, and power, as well as the need to overcome corruption and the unequal distribution of land and resources in the country.

As in the texts from Suriname, the Guyanese texts do not offer an insight into the experience of other ethnicities. Although Wilson Harris’s “Fences upon the Earth” may depict the relationship of Amerindians to their historical homeland, the perspective on culture and identity of the Amerindians is widely neglected. Despite the fact that references to their culture play a role in several texts, such as in the three essays on the fusion of Amerindian and African folklore by Wilson

Harris, Roy Heath, and Jan Carew and Arthur J. Seymour's "Sun is a Shapely Fire", their culture and presence is exploited as a reference to indigeneity. By diagnosing a fusion of Afro- and Amerindian culture in Guyana, the native status of the Amerindians was transferred to the Afro-Guyanese, assigning some kind of quasi-indigeneity to Afro-Guyanese culture. The association between indigeneity, nativism, and authenticity was used by Afro-Guyanese writers to legitimise their own claims on land and cultural hegemony. Moreover, other ethnicities and the specificities of their individual experiences were completely omitted by the texts.

6.3 *Comparison: The Focus on Creole and Afro-Guyanese Subjectivity in Suriname and Guyana*

In the texts from Guyana as well as in those from Suriname, there was an unambiguous focus on the social and psychic realities of Afro-Guyanese/Surinamese people. Hence, particularly in relation to the discourses on national identity, the experience of the Indo-Guyanese / Hindustani population was neglected. The specific experiences of other ethnicities, such as the Amerindians, Chinese, Lebanese, Javanese, but also the Maroons were largely omitted; at best, in Guyana, the Amerindians were being spoken for and their cultural influence exploited as a token of indigeneity.

7. *Are the Narratives of Identity Related to Psychological Functions and Cognitive Mechanisms?*

In general, introducing a psychological perspective to the analysis of literary texts has brought new and interesting results. Hence, overall, many texts seemed to visibly engage with cognitive mechanism or appeared to serve psychological functions that surpassed the narrative level of story and discourse. Notably, Kelly's cognitive theory of personal constructs (1955) as well as McAdams's (2001) and Schachter's (2011) theoretical approach to narrative identity offered a useful framework for the analysis of presentations of self and other. In the broadest sense, the texts were also related to psychological needs, particularly the need for affiliation or belonging and security. In addition, aspects related to the basic need to maintain a positive self-esteem, such as self-enhancement and self-

comprehension appeared to play a role in the literature. Moreover, social psychological theories offered an analytical framework to better understand the mechanisms behind derogatory depictions of ‘others’. In-group favouritism and out-group derogation were salient and recurring characteristics of the texts that were discussed in this study. The analyses gave interesting results by employing psychological theories on categorisation, stereotypes, and discrimination and related concepts such as *realistic conflict theory*, the *social identity theory*, the *linguistic intergroup bias*, *in-group projection*, *social creativity*, and the *out-group homogeneity effect*.

7.1 Suriname

The narrative structure of anti-colonial tendencies in the Surinamese texts were analysed with Kelly’s (1955) theory of personal constructs and Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) social identity theory. Furthermore, in Vene’s “[Er is één grote verrader]”, R. Dobru’s “A Prasi foe Bigi Dorsi / Het Erf van Bigi Dorsi”, the representations of the colonisers were found to be related to the general narrative themes identified by Sternberg (2003). Hence, in these texts the anti-colonial messages were conveyed by presenting the (colonial) out-group as morally and culturally corrupt; simultaneously, the negative depiction of the out-group emphasised the positive qualities of the in-group (Iser 1997; Kelly 1955). In R. Dobru’s poem “4-juni Overpeinzing”, Bea Vianen’s “Over Nonnen en Straffen”, and Marcel de Bruin’s “Dagorder”, the illegitimacy of colonial rule and the inadequacy of colonial symbols for the representation of Surinamese culture and identity were implied by a similar narrative strategy based on dichotomous representations. The negative depiction of the (colonial) out-group evokes a positive perception of the in-group – without even defining any specific characteristics of the in-group at all.

In the texts on national identity, the needs for positive self-esteem, security, and belonging play a salient role (McAdams 2001). For example, Rudi Kross’s “Een Röntgenfoto, een Mythe” does not only express the desire for an identity that is unambiguous and unique, he also assigns power and importance to the writers who supposedly express and create this identity in their texts. Similar

aspects can be found in the texts that portray Creole identity as prototypical for Surinamese national identity as such. Eugène W. Rellum's "Sranan", Jozef Slagveer's "Totness" and "Ik", Thea Doelwijt's "De Nacht van de Winti" and "13 Spelen met Land", Paul Marlee's "Landbouwer" and Eddy Bruma's "De Fuik", Leo Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend" and Frank Martinus Arion's "The Great Curassow or the Road to Caribbeanness" employ narrative strategies that can also be related to in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Although the texts pretend to convey the culture and identity representative of a united Suriname, they only look at and portray Creole culture. Notably, in Arion's text, Creole and Afro-Caribbean culture is not only presented as prototypical for Surinamese culture, but also for Caribbean culture as a whole. Hence, although Caribbean or Surinamese identity is thought of in terms of a super-ordinate group, power and positive characteristics are still only reserved for one subgroup (i.e. in-group projection) (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). The negative psychological ramifications for the designated (Hindustani) out-group are described in Jit Narain's story "De Contractant".

Moreover, the basic psychological need for affiliation and belonging seems to run through these stories like an under-current – no matter if written by a Hindustani or Creole. The desire for cultural and psychological rootedness can also be found in Shrinivāsi's "Kila", Benny Ooft's "Shaantidevi (Een Idylle)", Thea Doelwijt's "Hoppen in de Caribbean", Noni Lichtveld's "Anansi Zakt op Schiphol", Edgar Cairo's "'Is Hierzo Heb Ik Gewoond!'" and Rodney Russel's "Uit het Voorgeborchte". Notably, several stories depict the distress that is entailed by a lack of affiliation and psychological security. Bhāi's "Tussen de Schelpen" and "Yahân se Dur", Leo Ferrier's "Notities van een Vriend", Shrinivāsi's "Dehati" and Thea Doelwijt's "In den Vreemde" provide an elaborate account of the excruciating feeling of anxiety and meaninglessness related to the loss of a positive identity or belonging (Guibernau 2004, 135-6; McAdams 2001, 117). Thus, they offer a more complex account of what it means to have or lose (national) affiliations, and how hybridity and creoleness are experienced. Accordingly, overall, incorporating a psychological perspective provided interesting and new insights on national identity, creoleness, and hybridity.

7.2 *Guyana*

The Guyanese texts could be related to similar psychological functions and cognitive mechanism. Out-group derogation and in-group favouritism played a role in texts that conveyed an anti-colonial agenda (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Particularly Roy Heath's "The Peasants" and Arthur J. Seymour's "Tomorrow Belongs to the People" follow Kelly's principles of the dichotomy and choice corollary in their depiction of coloniser and colonised (Kelly 1955, 59f). And again, moral bankruptcy and illegitimate (exploitation) of power were major themes in the portrayal of the colonisers (see also Sternberg 2003). In addition, the texts that wrote back to a colonial centre by engaging with European aesthetics and cultural values can be considered to have had a positive effect on the writers' self-esteem as well.

The most dominant aspect in the Guyanese texts that have been discussed can be related to in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). There are several texts written by Afro-Guyanese writers that leave no doubt that Guyanese culture and identity are tantamount to Afro-Guyanese culture and identity. Thus, in Martin Carter's "Listening to the Land", the three essays by Wilson Harris, Roy Heath, and Jan Carew on the fusion of African and Amerindian folklore, Arthur J. Seymour's "Sun is a Shapely Fire" and "First of August", Martin Carter's "Death of a Slave", Celeste Dolphin's "Trouble Music" and Florence Caviglioli's "Lulu and de Camoodie" make clear that, in Guyana, national identity is a matter of Afro-Guyanese norms and values.

The same kind of in-group projection occurred in the conceptualisation of West Indian identity. The comments on the question "Is there a West Indian Way of Life?" by Martin Carter, P.H. Daly, and E. Pilgrim, Forbes Burnham's "Message to CARIFESTA 1976", Arthur J. Seymour's "We must hear our brothers speak" and "Cultural Policy in Guyana" and P. H. Daly's "CARIFESTA, People's Culture and the Power Units" all exhibit some kind of ethnocentrism and chauvinism. Taking McAdams's (2001) theory of narrative identity into account, it becomes clear why cultural unity under one common (African) denominator may have been so desirable. On the one hand, by asserting their position at the centre of the national / West Indian discourse, Afro-Guyanese identity was

endowed with self-esteem and meaningfulness. On the other hand, by concealing the gaps and inconsistencies of Guyana's complex social reality, a unitary account of national identity provided feelings of wholeness, belongingness, and security.

Yet, self-esteem also played a role in the texts of Indo-Guyanese writers. The most salient example may be Rajkumari Singh's essay "I am a Coolie" in which she re-evaluates the derogatory term coolie and turns it into a denomination one can claim with pride. A similar aspect can be found in Mahadai Das's "They Came in Ships", Sheik Sadeek's "Sugar Canes", and C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla's "The Weeding Gang". The texts do not only express an Indian presence in Guyana, but they also call for acknowledgement of the hardship that the Indo-Guyanese indentured workers had to endure. Hence, these texts seek recognition and acceptance – and in that way they can also be related to the need for a positive self-esteem. The psychological consequences of discrimination and derogation can be felt in Shana Yordan's "Earth is Brown". Being deprived of a positive identity, the poem associates Indo-Guyanese culture with meaninglessness and death.

Although the psychological perspective was not equally useful for the analysis of all Guyanese texts discussed in this study, it helped to gain a more complex understanding of the interaction between narration, identity, and psychological mechanisms and needs.

7.3 *Common Psychological Themes and the Possibility of a Comparison*

As noted in the preface, colonialism did not only establish a system of economic exploitation and cultural hegemony, it also installed an insidious web of cognitive and emotional relationships centred on norms of 'Europeanness'. The derogatory discursive strategies of this normative project were explained in the preface. Hence, from a psychological perspective,¹⁴ it did not come as a surprise that the political struggles for independence in the Caribbean entailed a re-evaluation of the local cultures and identities. In the broadest sense, the alteration and

14 Taking the need for a positive self-esteem, self-enhancement and self-comprehension into account (Aberson, Healy, and Romero 2000; Rubin and Hewstone 1998).

appropriation of former normative discourses can be seen as acts of *social creativity*, i.e. formerly negative characteristic or negative identities were re-interpreted in ways that are more positive (Scheepers et al. 2006). Prominent examples in the Caribbean were the cultural projects of *négritude* (e.g. Senghor [1964] 2005) and *coolitude* (Carter and Torabully 2002). In the texts from Suriname and Guyana, these tendencies were particularly salient in the poems of Jozef Slagveer, “Totness” and “Ik”, and Rajkumari Singh’s essay “I am a Coolie”. Yet, psychological theories were also useful for the analysis of most other texts. With the theoretical framework offered by Kelly (1955), McAdams (2001), and Schachter (2011), the (cognitive) structural characteristics of these new narratives of identity as well as their psychological benefits were identified and analysed – and in both bodies of literature, the tendency for positive re-evaluations and appropriations were found.

Notably, these newly-created or re-articulated identities were not free from generalisations and discrimination. Yet, in the texts on national identity, the culture and identity of the former colonisers was moved somewhat to the background. The relationship between the population of African and Indian descent was of greater concern. Although there was a general consensus on the need for independence and decolonisation, the relationship between the Indo- and Afro-Caribbean populations played more salient role in these texts – and for this aspect, psychological theories offered useful analytical perspectives. The literary representation of the ethnic relations in Suriname and Guyana were analysed in terms of social identity theory¹⁵ and realistic conflict theory.¹⁶ The difficulty to create a common identity in a multi-ethnic society was related to in-group projection (Mummendey and Wenzel 1999): in both discourses on national identity, Creole or Afro-Guyanese cultural identity was portrayed as *prototypically* Surinamese / Guyanese. Thus, the new, common (super-ordinate) identity was not defined in terms of all groups, but only in relation to the Afro-

15 Social identity theory maintains that categorisation and thinking in terms of groups leads to in-group favouritism and out-group derogation – and, as in this case, to ethnocentrism, discrimination, and chauvinism (Davis 1994; Otten and Mummendey 1999; Perreault and Bourhis 1999; Tajfel and Turner 1986).

16 Realistic conflict theory maintains that competition of any sorts – as in this case for political power – can intensify in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Sherif 1966; Duckitt 1994; Taylor and Moghaddam 1994).

Surinamese / Guyanese group. The psychological benefits of in-group projection could be traced back to a more general positive effect of identity narrations (McAdams 2001; Mummendey and Wenzel 1999; Schachter 2011). By asserting its position at the centre of the national/ West Indian discourse, Afro-Guyanese identity was endowed with self-esteem and meaningfulness. In turn, the texts of the Hindustani Harry Narain and the Indo-Guyanese Mahadai Das and Shana Yardan revealed the negative psychological consequences that derive from living in a society in which one's social group and identity is derogated (see also McAdams 2001; Kelly 1955). A psychological perspective on belonging, self-esteem (other related mechanisms and needs) as well as other psychological mechanisms related to inter-group conflict provided useful analytical tools for the discussions of both bodies of literature. Although there were texts in which social or political aspects were more salient, the analyses were generally fruitful.

However, it is difficult to *compare* the results of the analyses with regard to psychological aspects. There seems to be a general under-current related to the need for a positive self-esteem, but that does not come as a surprise, as the desire to build and maintain a positive self-esteem can be considered as a human universal that is crucial for psychological well-being as well as for cognitive and social functioning (Aberson, Healy, and Romero 2000; Ekman 1999; Baumeister 1999; Baumeister 1997b; Rubin and Hewstone 1998). Considering the political and social situation in Suriname and Guyana in the 1950s and 1960s, it is also not surprising that identities were communicated in terms of in- and out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1986; 2010). Colonial power structures and their associated history of racist ideologies created a discourse in which ethnicity was considered as a meaningful quality, explaining a person's rights, motives, and actions. Hence, despite the fact that in both countries politicians from Indian and African descent initially joined forces to achieve independence (Lachmon and Bruma in Suriname; Jagan and Burnham in Guyana), their political disagreements were interpreted in ethnic terms once their collaboration ended. Interestingly, the theory of in-group projection provided a useful analytical tool to make sense of the ethnocentrism and chauvinism inherent to the national discourses in both Suriname and Guyana (see Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). Despite the fact that in both countries ethnic

diversity and dissent was recognised as an inhibiting factor that would have to be overcome through a common super-ordinate national identity, only one group's (i.e. Afro-Guyanese / Creole) culture and identity were considered and presented as prototypical for Suriname / Guyana as such. Although complex or dual identities may have the potential to reduce discrimination and chauvinism, the texts from Suriname and Guyana revealed the difficulties to truly overcome 'identity politics'. Furthermore, in both bodies of literature, there were texts in which characters grappled with their creole or hybrid identities – although this tendency is more noticeable in the Surinamese texts. Accordingly, the analysis of both bodies of literature provided an insight into the psychological limitations of theoretical and ideological approaches to social change – even if they may be 'good to think' (Khan 2007).¹⁷

In sum, in both bodies of literature, psychological theories were useful for the analysis of the cognitive as well as motivational aspects related to representations of (national) identity. However, there was a relatively high variability within each bodies of literature in relation to how exactly the need for self-esteem and other psychological phenomena were expressed. It is important to note that these differences cannot be traced back to any idiosyncratic psychological factors related to the authors, but should be mainly related to the context.¹⁸ Although cognitive aspects do play a role in how reality is perceived (and constructed in literary texts), it is impossible to attest any individual psychological differences between the authors of one group and the other group *on the basis of literary analyses*.

8. *Merit and Limitations of the Study*

Overall, this study revealed interesting aspects of literary representation of the discourses on national identities in Suriname and Guyana. The interdisciplinary approach of this study provided a new perspective on national identity in

17 It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that these approaches are futile or useless. The texts actually describe the gap between the theoretical or ideological approaches and the psychological dimension of their realisation.

18 Differences related to the specific discourses on nationality and national identity were elaborated in the sections above.

postcolonial contexts. Hence, while this study can be tied in with previous research on national identity in the Caribbean (and came to some similar results), it provided a new perspective on a topic already debated elsewhere recently (Forbes 2005; Girvan 2001; Khan 2004; Knight 2011; Rosenberg 2007). Yet, the present study addressed shortcomings and neglect of previous research. The regional focus on Guyana and Suriname, the comparative nature of this study, the focus on short stories and the exploration of new text bodies altogether constitute assets and make for the novelty of this study (see also Evans 2011; Smith 2011). In addition, in the face of the amount of texts that were discussed, this study also has a certain anthological character. Here, texts were analysed that had not received any particular attention before – particularly short stories. Thus, this study and its theoretical position may contribute to create a different, interdisciplinary, and more holistic perspective on identity in postcolonial contexts. Considering that a similar theoretical position was proposed by Patrick Colm Hogan (2015) shortly before this study was finished, emphasises the timeliness and value of this study.

Of course, this study also has its limitations, and I would like to point them out explicitly. One limitation was related to the choice of texts. As a literary scholar, I am dependent on relevant texts that I can find. Although I was able to compile a selection of relevant texts, I mainly had access to texts that had been canonised or published before. However, the possibility that archival research may come up with new texts does not impair the relevance and representativeness of my selection. As mentioned before, the fact that these texts count as part of a national or regional canon is what makes these texts representative for a certain discourse at a certain time.

The same issue may be related to genre. Although I tried to focus on short stories, I had to include a considerable amount of poems and essays to accumulate a representative selection of texts for the analysis of national identity. At the same time, having more variety in the selection of genres should be considered as an asset. As different genres turned out to be concerned with similar topics and themes, the results of this study can also be seen as representative of a general literary discourse of this time.

Another limitation is related to the analytical focus of this study – I focused on content, not on form. Due to the focus on psychological aspects related to literary representations of national identity, this study did not include a detailed analysis of the poetics of the texts. Although narratological and poetic aspects were taken into account whenever they were conducive to the analysis of the content, they were not the main analytical focus of this study. In the face of the amount of texts that were discussed, a detailed analysis of content *and* form would have exceeded the scope of this study – and the central analytical theme of this study, i.e. the psychological aspects of narrative identity, may have been eclipsed by poetic concerns. Furthermore, the selection of texts may have looked differently, if poetic aspects would have been taken more into account. However, to pay tribute to the texts' poetics, further literary research may be needed. For example, Helge Nowak (2007) offers a detailed account of the poetics of (written) Caribbean poetry in which he also includes poems by Arthur J. Seymour and Martin Carter. Yet, a detailed and comparative poetic analysis of the Surinamese texts included in this study is still missing.

A further issue may be related to a critical perspective on other texts and documents that have been used for this study – particularly in relation to Guyana. Up to date, the most extensive literary history that was available for Guyana in the 1980s was written by Arthur J. Seymour – who did not only function as an editor, but also as a writer and cultural agent under Burnham. Hence, a diversity of perspectives on literary culture in Guyana was scarce, considering that most publications went through the hands of Seymour. Of course, this does not imply that the material is useless; however, it should be kept in mind that a single person had a lot of influence on the literary discourse in Guyana. Furthermore, it should be noted that these aspects *are* characteristics of the literary discourse in Guyana and Suriname of the time. And in this study, I tried to reflect critically on the agents and sources that shaped the literary discourse on national identity in Guyana and Suriname.

Another limitation of this study concerns the lack of attention that was paid to the diversity within Afro- or Indo-Caribbean communities and perspectives. This neglect is related to the national discourse on identity in Suriname and

Guyana. In these discourses, the Indo- and Afro-Surinamese / Guyanese were presented as two dichotomous groups with little internal diversity. The literary representations of national identity often remained within this perspective. In reality, of course, the individual experiences of identity looked different. For example, the ethnographic, historical, and anthropological studies of Fokken (unpublished conference paper), Misir (2010), Nettles (2008) and Peake and Trotz (1999) provide a detailed account of the cultural context and individual expressions of identity within Indo-Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean communities. My study simply focused on the discursive representations of these identities in literature – which should not be seen as mimetic reflections of the complex psychic and social experiences of actual people, but as narrative strategies serving specific political or even psychological goals.

9. *Outlook*

Exile will probably be the most dominant experience of the Guyanese writers of the early twenty-first century. But with exile, there will also be a longing for the native country (Figueredo 2006, 360).

In the 1970s until the end of the 1980s, people left in Guyana and Suriname in droves.¹⁹ In Guyana, the net migration rate exceeded the natural growth of the population in the 1980s – the population dropped from 759,567 in 1980 to 740,153 in 1991 (CCDP 2002, 22). In Suriname, migration rates steadily increased from the late 1960s onwards, with a peak of 40,000 who left Suriname in 1975 and second surge of another 40,000 between 1979 and 1980 (Heemskerk and Duijves 2015, 26-7). The migration rates were particularly devastating in relation to intellectuals. Between 1964 and 2000, 89 per cent of the tertiary educated labour force in Guyana left the country – in Suriname, ‘only’ 48 per cent of this group left (Mishra 2006, 16). Correspondingly, as suggested by the quote of Figueredo (2006, 360), for the new generation of post-independence

19 In both countries, the economy declined. Thus, many people left due to economic hardship and socio-political instability. Furthermore, the prospect of national independence was not attractive for everyone. Fearing to lose access to Dutch or British citizenship, people left the country (Heemskerk and Duijves 2015; Hyles 2013).

Surinamese and Guyanese writers, national identity, a sense of belonging, root- and routed-ness is discussed in a different way than by the authors of the independence generation.

Many texts of the post-independence generation portray a complex relationship between rootedness and displacement, and they do not only map the geographical, but also the psychological up-rootedness entailed by migration. For example, in Pauline Melville's short story, "Eat Labba and Drink Creek Water" (1992) the characters cross national borders and seas. Yet, the possibility for an emotional home-coming is foreclosed: "We do return and leave and return again, criss-crossing the Atlantic, but whichever side of the Atlantic we are on, the dream is always on the other side" (Melville, "Labba", 308). In Astrid Roemer's short story, "The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for Listening" (1995), the adolescent main character is torn by the emotional affiliations to both her Surinamese father and her Dutch mother: "My darling, whatever you may experience in your fatherland, do not forget that there is also a woman who has given you a motherland" (Roemer, "Inheritance", 352). Nativism is no longer a possibility for the accommodation of longing and belonging; while rootedness to a place still haunts the imagery of a second and third generation of immigrants who grapple with multiple ties and affiliations. Thus, further research may help to elucidate the social as well as psychic reality that is inscribed in these texts – preferably with an interdisciplinary perspective.

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Appendices

Tables and Figures

| | All Other Regions** | | Caribbean Region*** | | Totals | |
|-----------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Embarked* | Disembarked* | Embarked | Disembarked | Embarked | Disembarked |
| 1501-1550 | 64,126 | 44,909 | — | — | 64,126 | 44,909 |
| 1551-1600 | 213,380 | 154,376 | — | — | 213,380 | 154,376 |
| 1601-1650 | 632,539 | 499,954 | 35,354 | 27,751 | 667,893 | 527,705 |
| 1651-1700 | 618,214 | 530,615 | 589,524 | 464,356 | 1,207,738 | 994,971 |
| 1701-1750 | 1,261,830 | 1,093,967 | 1,298,804 | 1,074,920 | 2,560,634 | 2,168,888 |
| 1751-1800 | 1,401,685 | 1,264,971 | 2,532,300 | 2,176,010 | 3,933,985 | 3,440,981 |
| 1801-1850 | 2,642,739 | 2,290,935 | 1,005,232 | 890,633 | 3,647,971 | 3,181,568 |
| 1851-1866 | 29,620 | 25,310 | 195,989 | 163,947 | 225,609 | 189,257 |
| Totals | 6,864,133 | 5,905,038 | 5,657,203 | 4,797,618 | 12,521,336 | 10,702,656 |

*** British Caribbean: Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, St. Kitts, Grenada, Dominica, British Guiana, St. Vincent, Monserrat/ Nevis, Trinidad/ Tobago (and unspecified); French Caribbean: Saint-Domingue, Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana (and unspecified); Dutch Americas: Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and Dutch Guiana; Danish West Indies; Spanish Caribbean: Cuba, Puerto Rico.

Table 2: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: Numbers of Embarkation/Disembarkation of African Slaves – British Guiana vs. Dutch Guiana (Estimates Database 2009b)

| | British Guiana | | Dutch Guiana | | Totals | |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Embarked | Disembarked | Embarked | Disembarked | Embarked | Disembarked |
| 1658-1700 | 0 | 0 | 47,128 | 40,128 | 47,128 | 40,128 |
| 1701-1750 | 0 | 0 | 99,268 | 84,333 | 99,268 | 84,333 |
| 1751-1800 | 33,509 | 30,647 | 165,163 | 144,835 | 198,672 | 175,482 |
| 1801-1842 | 47,001 | 42,039 | 28,654 | 25,355 | 75,654 | 67,394 |
| Totals | 80,510 | 72,685 | 340,988 | 294,652 | 421,498 | 367,338 |

* The numbers refer to the number of African slaves who embarked and disembarked slave ships to British Guiana and the Dutch Guiana; the numbers for the British Guiana and the Dutch Guiana are listed separately; the numbers are divided into periods of 50 years.

Table 3: Trans-Atlantic Slave: Numbers of Embarkation/ Disembarkation of African Slaves – African Regions of Embarkation vs. Disembarkation in British Guiana and Dutch Guiana 1658-1842 (Estimates Database 2009c)

| | British Guiana | | Dutch Guiana | | Totals | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | Embarked | Disembarked | Embarked | Disembarked | Embarked | Disembarked |
| Senegambia and off-shore Atlantic | 2,174 | 1,982 | 2,940 | 1,879 | 5,115 | 3,861 |
| Sierra Leone | 10,213 | 9,265 | 8,101 | 6,829 | 18,314 | 16,094 |
| Windward Coast | 7,587 | 6,795 | 73,275 | 62,971 | 80,861 | 69,766 |
| Gold Coast | 29,767 | 27,014 | 83,722 | 71,569 | 113,489 | 98,583 |
| Bight of Benin | 5,221 | 4,617 | 48,299 | 40,102 | 53,520 | 44,719 |
| Bight of Biafra | 8,456 | 7,531 | 22,609 | 18,387 | 31,064 | 25,918 |
| West Central Africa and St. Helen | 17,092 | 15,481 | 102,042 | 92,915 | 119,135 | 108,396 |
| Totals | 80,510 | 72,685 | 340,988 | 294,652 | 421,498 | 367,338 |

* The numbers refer to the number of African slaves who embarked and disembarked slave ships to British Guiana and the Dutch Guiana from the respective regions in Africa; the numbers for British Guiana and the Dutch Guiana are listed separately; the numbers refer to the total number of people deported from the respective African region between 1658 and 1842.

Figure 2: Contributions (poems, short stories, and cultural or literary criticism) to the Issues of *Kyk-Over-Al* 1945 – 1989¹ by most relevant² authors.

| | 1945 → 1961 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1981 → 1989 → | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------------|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|--|--|
| Kyk-Over-Al Issue → | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 33/4 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | | | |
| Arthur J. Seymour | | | a | | | b | | | | | | c | | | | | d | | e | f | | | | g | | h | i | | | j | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wilson Harris | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Martin Carter | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jan Carew | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Celeste Dolphin | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| P.H. Daly | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ian McDonald | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mahadai Das | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| McDonald Dash | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rooplall Monar | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Other relevant contributors in these issues:

- a Edgar Mittelholzer
- b Rajkumari Singh
- c Sheik Sadeek
- d Roy Heath
- e Roy Heath, C.E.J. Ramcharita-Lalla
- f Edgar Mittelholzer
- g Florence Caviglioli
- h Brojo Bhattacharya
- i Florence Caviglioli
- j This issue, the *Golden Kyk*, also included Edgar Mittelholzer, Sheik Sadeek, Denis Williams

¹ Unfortunately, I did not get access to the issues 24, 25, and 32. Thus, they are not included in the table.

² Apart from Dash, Das, and Monar these writers had been re-selected for the *Golden Kyk* issue 33/34 by Seymour. Furthermore, they are the ones who appeared most frequently in *Kyk-Over-Al*.

Zusammenfassung

Diese interdisziplinäre, komparatistische Studie befasste sich mit den nationalen Diskursen in der Literatur Surinams und Guyanas in den zwei Jahrzehnten vor und nach deren Unabhängigkeitswerdung (also ca. zwischen 1945 und 1985). Mit der Zusammenführung von theoretischen Ansätzen aus den Postkolonialen Studien und der Psychologie versuchte diese Studie eine neue Perspektive in die Forschung zu nationalen Diskursen in karibischer Literatur einzubringen. Um den bisherigen Forschungsstand zu erweitern, wurde nicht nur eine neue interdisziplinäre theoretische Perspektive erarbeitet, sondern zudem auch ein Forschungsgegenstand gewählt, dem bisher wenig Aufmerksamkeit zuteil geworden war. Die Analyse von Kurzgeschichten, vor allem aus dem niederländischen Teil der Karibik, hatte bisher wenig Beachtung gefunden. Guyana und Surinam baten sich nicht nur durch ihre geographischen, sondern auch durch ihre demographischen und politischen Ähnlichkeiten als Vergleichsgegenstände an. Beide Länder erzielten in einem ähnlichen Zeitraum ihre Unabhängigkeit, in beiden Ländern war und ist die Mehrheit der Bevölkerung indischen Ursprungs, in beiden Ländern waren die politischen Diskurse in der Zeit der Unabhängigkeitswerdung von ethnischen Spannungen geprägt, und in beiden Ländern ist der Diskurs stark auf die Erfahrungen und Ziele der Bevölkerung afrikanischen Ursprungs ausgerichtet – obwohl diese nicht die ethnische Mehrheit in der Gesamtbevölkerung stellt. In mehr als sechzig Texten wurde der Diskurs zu nationaler Identität und Zugehörigkeit in beiden Ländern untersucht. Dabei wurde auf bestimmte Merkmale besonderer Wert gelegt. Zum einen wurde untersucht, welche Konzepte von Identität und Nationalität in den Texten auftauchen und

nach welchen Regeln und Prinzipien diese Konzepte aufgebaut wurden. Hierfür boten sowohl postkoloniale als auch kognitive Theorien eine analytische Basis. Neben Fragen der Angemessenheit der Repräsentation (also typische Fragen der Postkolonialen Studien) wurde auch die psychologische Notwendigkeit von Identität beachtet. Zum anderen wurde untersucht, inwiefern Identität, Zugehörigkeit und Nationalität mit den politisierten ethnischen Spannungen der Zeit in Verbindung stehen. Vor allem sozialpsychologische Theorien, zum Beispiel die Theorie der Sozialen Identität nach Tajfel und Turner (1986), boten einen theoretischen Rahmen, in dem das Zusammenspiel zwischen psychologischen Faktoren und politischen Zielen in Diskursen erörtert werden konnte. Die Analysen bestätigten einige bereits vorher bekannte Aspekte von nationalen Diskursen in der Karibik und konnten diese mit erweiternden Einsichten ergänzen. Vor allem die Analyse von hybriden oder kreolisierten Identitäten gewann durch den Einbezug psychologischer Theorien an zusätzlicher Tiefe. Die Hauptergebnisse der Studie lassen sich wie folgt zusammenfassen.

In beiden Ländern wurde Literatur als Medium für den nationalen Diskurs verwendet. Sowohl in Surinam als auch in Guyana wurde Literatur sogar als die schaffende Kraft für eine gemeinsame Identität und Zugehörigkeit stilisiert. In beiden Ländern wurde 'die Nation' als eine Nation des 'einheimischen' Volkes dargestellt. Das Recht des Volkes auf Unabhängigkeit wurde mit typisch nativistisch-nationalen Argumenten begründet, die sich an einer Dichotomie von fremd (kolonial) und eigen (einheimisch) orientieren. Demzufolge spielen Land und ein natürlicher Bezug zum nationalen Boden in vielen Texten eine ausschlaggebende Rolle. Obwohl die Nation auch als Mittel zum Zweck, also als politische Strategie zu politischer Unabhängigkeit verstanden wurde, wurde die Nation im Diskurs als 'Naturrecht' eines Volkes legitimiert.

Der Diskurs um nationale Identität drehte sich jedoch nicht nur um politische Unabhängigkeit, sondern auch um eine politische Vormachtstellung innerhalb des jeweiligen Landes. Da in beiden Ländern die beiden großen politischen Parteien nicht nur nach politischer Ausrichtung sondern auch nach ethnischer Zugehörigkeit getrennt waren, bedeutete politische Vormacht auch ethnische Vormacht. Soziale und politische Probleme wurden aus einer ethnischen Perspektive interpretiert und dargestellt, auch wenn die tatsächlichen sozialen und psychischen Erfahrungen der Menschen anders ausgesehen haben mögen.

Dadurch ergaben sich auch Unterschiede in der Darstellung und Begründung der natürlichen und unveräußerlichen Bindung bestimmter Bevölkerungsgruppen zum nationalen Boden. Vor allem die Bevölkerung afrikanischen Ursprungs wurde als 'einheimisch' stilisiert. Obwohl in einigen Texten auch die historische Beziehung zwischen Land und Kultur der tatsächlich indigenen Bevölkerung eine Rolle spielt, wurde diese Bevölkerungsgruppe vor allem *instrumentalisiert* ohne ihre tatsächlichen Interessen zu beachten. Aufsätze zur Verschmelzung der indigenen und afro-guyanischen Kultur überschrieben einen quasi-indigenen Status auf die afro-guyanische Bevölkerung durch eben diese Verschmelzung. Ein auffallend hybrider oder kreoler kultureller Aspekt wurde also nicht als ein gemeinsamer Ausgangspunkt für eine gemeinsame Identität verwendet, sondern lediglich um etwas Essenzielles über eine der beiden Gruppen auszusagen. In der Beziehung zwischen den Bevölkerungsgruppen indischen und afrikanischen Ursprungs kam ein zeitliches Argument zum Einsatz. Da die afrikanischen Sklaven vor den indischen Kontraktarbeitern nach Guyana und Surinam gebracht worden waren, wurde die Kultur von deren Nachkommen als 'einheimischer' oder 'prototypischer' dargestellt. Die Kultur der Bevölkerung indischen Ursprungs wurde entweder marginalisiert oder schlichtweg diffamiert. Nationale Identität wurde also in beiden Ländern hauptsächlich mit der Kultur der Afro-Guyaner in Verbindung gebracht. Insgesamt konnten diese diskursiven Strategien mit sozialpsychologischen Phänomenen, wie *in-group favouritism* und *in-group projection* in Verbindung gebracht und erklärt werden.

Die Darstellungen von Identität und Zugehörigkeit von Autoren indischen Ursprungs waren etwas komplexer. Obwohl auch hier 'Land' eine wichtige Rolle spielte, machen viele Texte auch vor allem auf die Marginalisierung indo-guyanischer und indo-surinamesischer Erfahrungswelten aufmerksam. Einige Texte können als offene Gegenpropaganda gesehen werden, wobei die meisten jedoch auch darauf eingehen, was es bedeutet, sich nicht im Diskurs um eine vermeintlich 'gemeinsame' nationale Identität nicht wiederzufinden und auf die psychologisch negativen Konsequenzen verweisen.

Interessante Unterschiede zwischen Guyana und Surinam ergaben sich in der Darstellung von transnationalen Identitäten. In Guyana setzte sich der Diskurs um nationale Identität über nationale Grenzen hinweg. Die Identität Guyanas wurde als Teil einer regionalen west-indischen Identität gesehen, die als durch

bestimmte Gemeinsamkeiten verbunden dargestellt wurde. Trotz der Überwindung nationaler Grenzen, weist dieser Diskurs jedoch ähnliche ethnozentrische und chauvinistische Tendenzen auf. So wurde zum Beispiel argumentiert, dass eine gemeinsame west-indische Identität nur auf starken afrikanischen Wurzeln fußen könne und dass sich andere ethnische Bevölkerungsgruppen unterordnen sollen. Die Hartnäckigkeit, mit der sich diese Argumentation hielt, spiegelt sich in einem der jüngsten Texte aus dem Jahr 1998 wieder. Trotzdem waren auch kritische Stimmen vertreten. Besonders in Guyana war ein Perspektivenwechsel zu verfolgen, der seinen Fokus von einer ethnozentrischen Darstellungsweise abwendet. Der Grund für soziale Probleme in Guyana wurde nun nicht mehr in der Kluft zwischen ethnischen Gruppen gesucht, sondern in der generell ungleichen Verteilung von Macht in der Gesellschaft. Die Existenz dieser ethnischen Kluft wurde sogar an sich in Frage gestellt und über die gewollte Aufrechterhaltung der Erzählung einer angeblichen ethnischen Teilung als strategisch-politisches Mittel reflektiert.

Die Texte aus Surinam waren besonders im Hinblick auf kreole und hybride Identitäten interessant. Obwohl man wohl alle dargestellten Identitäten (national oder transnational) in den Texten als 'hybrid' bezeichnen könnte, gab es bestimmte Texte, in denen Hybridität eine besondere Rolle spielte. Interessanterweise kam das Thema kulturelle Vermischung in den Texten beider Länder selten vor. In den Texten aus Surinam wurde jedoch die bewusste Wahrnehmung des Prozesses der eigenen Hybridisierung als besonders negativ beschrieben. Aus psychologischer Sicht beschreiben diese Texte vor allem den Verlust von Eindeutigkeit und Bedeutung *an sich* als verheerende Konsequenzen der eigenen Hybridität. Diese Perspektive erweitert postkoloniale Diskussionen zu Identität, da psychologische Theorien eine Erklärung dafür bieten können, wieso der Verlust eines eindeutigen Identitätsgefühls in manchen Fällen so negativ bewertet wird und wieso es so schwer ist 'Identität' nicht in essenziellen Kategorien zu denken.

Insgesamt konnte festgestellt werden, dass es viele Parallelen zwischen den Diskursen zu nationaler Identität und Zugehörigkeit in der Literatur Guyanas und Surinams gibt. Eindeutige Unterschiede ergaben sich in der transnationalen Ausrichtung des Diskurses in Guyana. Eine Tendenz, die in Surinam kaum festzustellen war. Insgesamt erwiesen sich die Analysen als ertragreich, und

eröffneten neue Perspektiven auf Identität in karibischen Diskursen. Theoretische Ansätze aus den postkolonialen Studien konnten durch einen interdisziplinären Ansatz erweitert werden. Somit konnte diese Studie einen wichtigen Beitrag leisten, der die Forschung zu nationalen Diskursen in karibischer Literatur mit einer weiteren analytischen Perspektive bereicherte.

