CROSS-MEDIA LANGUAGES
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VARIA

DUB POETRY IN JEAN BINTA BREEZE

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Abstract

(EN) This study grapples with the use of the English language in Dub Poetry, the first innovative genre fusing words and music in the 1970s Caribbean. Jean 'Binta' Breeze, born in Jamaica in 1956, is the first female exponent of the genre. She experiments new track-poems beyond the male-centred Rastafari and Reggae cultures, using Jamaican Creole to dismiss any language or literary compliance. Black identity, women issues, experimentation and resistance in post-colonial Caribbean are her main issues.

KEYWORDS: Jean Binta Breeze, Dub Poetry, Caribbean Literature, Jamaican Creole, Post-colonial Literature

(ITA) Questo saggio indaga l'uso della Lingua Inglese nella poesia Dub, il primo genere innovatore ad unire musica e parole nei Caraibi degli anni '70. Jean 'Binta' Breeze, nata in Giamaica nel 1956, è la prima esponente donna di questo genere. Tra lingua Standard e Creolo giamaicano, usato per sovvertire ogni regola e conformismo, Breeze sperimenta una nuova Poesia 'doppiata' andando oltre le culture maschiliste Rastafari e Reggae. Tra i temi, la cultura e l'identità nera, il genere e la resistenza.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Jean Binta Breeze, Poesia Dub, Letteratura giamaicana, Creolo giamaicano, Letteratura post-coloniale

1. Introduction

English language is not only the Standard English of official grammar books or the language of White English-speaking natives; it represents neither European literate elite nor their canonical masterpieces (Ashcroft 2002). In the midst of all English-speaking countries featuring official and non-official language variants, special attention is here devoted to one of the most environmentally and culturally rich world areas: the Caribbean.

Post-colonial literature offers lots of great Caribbean representatives, from musicians to writers. Once dominated by the British and other Empires, Caribbean colonies have created interesting language forms to resist official Standard English (SE), thus originating disruptive and nonconventional arts, ideological and poetic futurism and language innovation.

The assertion at the base of post-colonial literature is the importance of the 'subaltern' over the 'oppressor', the 'margins' over the 'centre', the 'variant' over the 'standard' (Ashcroft 2002). To establish their difference from imperial centres, Caribbean artists write back to dismantle hegemonic

elites and restore indigenous identity. One of the most powerful ways to deconstruct hegemony is wresting colonial languages into new post-colonial voices (Ashcroft 2002).
The present paper focuses on the impactful creativity and experimentation of the English language in 'Dub Poetry', an innovative Black genre born in Jamaica in the 70s. Its forefathers are the great revolutionary poets and performers Linton Kwesi Johnson and his female colleague Jean Binta Breeze. The study is about the feminist revolution led by Breeze: her legacy resides in mixing poetry and music as a proper DJ or performer (Pollard 1994), as well as denouncing gender issues as a culturally and socially displaced Black woman in multicultural Jamaica.

2. The "Caribbean discourse"

Dub poets evolved out of Dub musicians and denounced post-colonial Jamaica, totally transformed after British colonialism. The Caribbean is homeland of powerful cultural ideologies and movements; Black culture of African ancestors here fuses with religion and art. Suffice to say, Jamaica is the birthplace of Rastafari religion and its majestic Reggae music, conveying universal messages of brotherhood, peace and humanity (Martino 2009).

The Caribbean is a fascinating melting pot of cultures and history, resulting from decades of agonizing oppressions imposed by 19th century European colonizers: from the Spanish "*patrones*" to the British, passing through Portuguese, Dutch and French occupiers. It is precisely this painful past that still gives birth to new outstanding arts, from literature to music and dances. Yet, Caribbean art diversity is embedded in a communal feeling of revenge and claim for cultural identity, memory retrospection and history redemption.

It is the so-called "Caribbean discourse" and has a lot to do with a spiritual need to revive the so long denigrated indigenous cultures and abrogate White dominant ideology (Ashcroft 2002). It is a decentralising impetus from the centre to the margins of the Empire, which now stand out with their polyphonic voices to '*bear the burden*' of their own experience (Achebe 1975). Here artists all fuse indigenous legacy to create new genres, to redeem both destroyed indigenous cultures and *Mama Africa*, their true motherland. Not to forget, when talking about motherland, the Caribbeans refer to Africa and the Black ancestors they represent. Hence, Caribbean arts are subversive tools for cultural resistance and Black empowerment; they are ideological and political forms of communication apt to negate the White dominant culture of US "gringos" stakeholders, Europeans former colonizers and sometimes invading tourists, willing to cancel their memory and past. As well as music and dances, the Caribbean is remarkable for reactionary creativity in literature and visual arts too. Worth mentioning, the modernist poet and academic Kamau Braihwaite and the novelist and poet George Lamming, both born in Barbados, who depict social class inequalities and the elitism of colonial and post-colonial societies. Similarly, relevant female artists emerge, like Jean Rhys from Dominica and the feminists Una Marson and folk poet Louise Bennett-Coverley, named 'Miss Lou', from Jamaica, who struggled for gender, sexuality and identity.

3. Jamaica, African orality, Reggae and Dub Culture

Jamaica plays a crucial role in overlapping ways of speaking and subversive art forms, from Rastafari religion to its means of communication, Reggae music. Named after the African King Ras Tafari, Jamaican Rastafarianism developed in early 70s as a populist political and religious creed conveying strong universal messages of brotherhood, equality and redemption of the African Black race (Martino 2009). It is based on social change and Reggae is the means of spreading its beliefs.
Masterly brought to universal peaks by Jamaican musician Bob Marley, Reggae is the link between Jamaican street culture and that of Afro-Caribbean Blacks, a bridge between past and present, reconnecting Caribbean people to their African ancestors. Its lyrics unify Black people to heal Black

community's global struggles (D'Aguiar 2022). Social and political issues at the heart of Rasta philosophy fit in Reggae sounds, since musicians all chant their concerns as in a strong denouncing liturgical prophecy. The great Marley himself is known as 'the Prophet'. Reggae represents an impactful form of Black popular art, «a social, revolutionary art form where a radical voice shouts of the struggle of the oppressed all around the world» (Habekost in Martino 2009). It fuses African folk tradition of oratory, poetic, spontaneous and improvisational speech, turning them into lyrics adapted on rhythms and beats. Apart from the power of his music, Marley became a world charismatic leader also for his intellectual and social engagement, comparable to those of poets and novelists. As pointed out by Cooper, Marley's «skilful verbal play – his use of biblical allusion, Rastafarian symbolism, proverb, riddle, aphorism and metaphor – is evidence of a highly charged literary sensibility» (Martino 2009: 7). Reggae is not only about music records; it involves live performances and community events, as musicians, lead and back-up singers and DJs all appear in the scene. Historical reggae performances, yet, were basically male-centred; in the 70s, Jamaican women were only seen as back-up singers, and gender issues were not much debated in Reggae lyrics.

4. Dub Poet Jean Binta Breeze (Jamaica, 1956-2001)

This background greatly attracts the young Jean Binta Breeze. Influenced by a women-driven family and the male-dominant Reggae, Breeze breaks as revolutionary becoming the first Dub female artist. Grown up in Patty Hill village, she got soon fascinated by Rastafari and Reggae, both founded on Bible themes, oratory preacher style, storytelling musical technique, live performances and Afro-beats at the service of the spoken word. As a Black woman, she greatly absorbs the cultural scene she lives in, yet goes beyond Reggae, exploring other music rhythms.

Being a Dub artist, she fuses words and sounds mixing more than a music genre, including body language and social issues. Her 'performance poetry' speaks out Black socio-political concerns on a musical track, along with live performances, radio and TV shows, DJ sets and community lectures.

From the countryside, the artist moves to Kingston Town to study Drama and lives several years in the Clarendon Hills as a member of Rastafarian community. Here she gives herself the second Rasta community name 'Binta' and totally encapsulates the creed. In the 80s she moves to London and spreads Black ideologies in her writing and shows. In 1983, she publishes her first books of poetry, "*Answers*", albeit her masterpiece is "*Riddym Ravings and Other Poems"* (Breeze 1988). After many years in London, she starts suffering from schizophrenia and returns to Jamaica, where she writes her last collection in 2016, "*The Verandah Poems*".

Breeze also writes scripts for plays and films and releases five music albums of various genres, from traditional Calypso to Reggae, Mento, Quadrille and Afro-beat; worth mentioning, the albums "*Riddym Ravings*" (1987), "*Tracks*" (1991) and "Eena Me Corner" (2010). Her works reverse conventional literary canons in that she starts a" female performance poetry" in a men-driven social and art panorama (Martino 2009).

Jamaican post-colonial artists write in urban *patois* to unsettle official English; like Brathwaite, Johnson and Jamaican folk poet Louise Bennett, Breeze uses Creole provocatively to create further ideological distance from the original lexifier (Pollard 1994). Jamaican Creole (JC) precisely originates as a new Black community code and resistance tool against White hegemonic culture, as in the lines by Nichols:

> I have crossed an ocean
> I have lost my tongue
> From the root of the old one
> A new one has sprung. (Nichols 1983: 80)

JC is ideal to connect to Black roots since it contains lots of African-derived lexicon and sounds, which can be traced back to West-African linguistic groups (Chang 2021). Frequent examples are found in "Soun de Abeng fi Nanny" (Breeze 1998), celebrating the legendary Maroon leader Nanny in the voice of a rural woman. Here Breeze employs the African "*yeye*" for "*eye"* to signal the alternative Rasta language and make the reader come closer to the vernacular spoken by Nanny (Pollard 1994). Among all indigenous dialects, JC is the most suitable to allow the 'Caribbean discourse': based on African memory and retrospection, it recollects aspects of Black history (Glissant 1989); also, it forges the existence of Black culture in opposition to the White's (Nesbitt 2013). Apart from its political impact, it adapts well to music and beats, due to its rhythm structure and expressive performativity (Cassady 1961).

Following accurate research by linguist and Professor Bickerton on English forms, Acrolectal Creole (AC) is the most accurate, which fully sticks to SE rules; Mesolectal Creole (MC) is partially inaccurate and Basilectal Creole (BC) is totally rule-deviant (Bickerton 1976). All these variants are present in Breeze's poetry, as well as oral and musical performances and graphic layout changes, so that her art stands as a proper cross-media genre. The following sections investigate such a language mix and the features of JC in the poet's works.

5. Caribbean plurilingualism, Black culture empowerment and Rasta language

Post-colonial language issues better take place in polyglossic or 'poly-dialectical' communities, like the Caribbean, where a multitude of dialects interweave to form a fully comprehensible language. Here Creole continuum refers to the need of altering SE using vernaculars to inscribe alterity, otherness and indigenous perspective in literature (Ashcroft 2002).

Multicultural Caribbean attracts for its language richness: it is a mix of African and indigenous dialects -such as precolonial languages, which were really distant from continental ones and all went slightly disappearing. Also, it includes the languages of European colonizers, so English, Spanish, French, Dutch and Portuguese. New colonial languages coexist with vernaculars, contributing to neologisms and language contamination (Nigro 2009); this is the case of Patois, or *Patwa*, one of the dialects of Jamaica, Costa Rica and Panama, born as a proper Afro-English language in Saint Kitts and Barbados, the first British colonies of the Caribbean (Martis 2018).

Jamaica is where the language better alters to suit religious, philosophical and social concerns, becoming means of empowerment. Rasta speech is a 'spiritualized discourse' known as "Dread talk", from Rasta's dreadlock hairstyle, symbol of their strong connection with the God 'Jah'. Rastamen want to discredit official SE and destroy the logics of power and hegemony." Dreak talk" is a community language unifying people of the streets and intellectuals.

Breeze greatly adopts Rasta language strategies. As proved, JC is ideal to fit poetry, in that it is written as it is pronounced, basically transcribed as it is heard, hence coping with different accompanying music. Also, JC is more incisive than SE to better convey social denounce and ideological issues. Creole variants are not only socio-political «determined choices» (Coppola 2013), but proper textual audio-visual adaptations. Lexical choices are not merely «creative interventions» of an artist, but a «defamiliarizing strategy to unsettle the readers' expectations of the printed word in English» (Pollard 1994). Being a non-standard language, Creole does not have official rules, either orthographic or phonetic.

Breeze adores such non-conformity and freely moves from a language form to another without a logical order. Her revolutionary freedom in creativity skilfully mixes more than a language form. To Brathwaite, Breeze is brilliant «getting poetry off the page» and she herself states: «I like this space, there are no rules here» (Breeze 1990).

6. "Dread Talk" language strategies in Breeze

Post-colonial writing is defined by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it to fully represent the colonized place and its cultural references. To do so, there are two language processes. The first is abrogation, a denial of the privileged centrality of English by rejecting its aesthetic imperial power and illusory standard of 'correct' usage. The second is appropriation, a reconstitution of the imperial language to new usages (Ashcroft 2002). Language is adopted as a tool and used differently to widely narrate the varied cultural experiences of multicultural countries.

These assumptions are at the base of Rastafarian 'deconstruction' of English, symbol of the hegemonic controls of the British on Black peoples throughout Caribbean and Africa (Ashcroft 2002). Redemption only seems possible through art and language, so Rastafarians adopt various strategies to 'free' the language from within.

Like them, Breeze uproots SE and adopts plenty of innovative strategies. The first interesting one is the recurrent use of the personal pronoun "I", referring to both the individual and the God 'Jah'. Like all Rastafarians, she writes in first person about her constant fight for justice and identity through the everyday concerns of a Black woman in the alienated post-colonial Jamaica. In "Dread Talk", "I" appears in the singular form, in the plural form "*I and I*" and in the reflexive form "*I-self*". On some occasions, it is also preferred instead of the possessive pronoun "my" or the object "me", to subvert colonial dominant logic of control and possession. Singularly, the pronoun "I" is also incorporated into nouns, transforming them; that is how Rasta neologisms occur, as the word "*human*" turning into "*I-man*", "*unity*" into "*I-nity*" and "*Ethiopian*" into "*I-thiopian*". A deeper analysis may lead to conclude that the sound "you" in the first syllables of "*human*" and "*unity*" is substituted with "I" to shift from the others, or the colonial occupiers, to the independent Caribbean self (Breeze 1992).

These examples are remarkable in the poem "Red Rebel Song" of the collection "Spring cleaning" (Breeze 1992:6), where the individual "I" is tripled to beat the rhythm of the musical soundtrack and refer to a larger community of people, who only exist when connected to their music, to their "own song" (Breeze 1992:6):

I jus a come
I I I own rainbow
I I I own song

Owens puts it better:

> More specifically, the pronoun 'I' has a special importance to Rastas and is expressly opposed to the servile 'me'. Whether in the singular ('I') or the plural ('I and I' or briefly: 'I-n-I') or the reflexive ('I-sel', 'I-n-I self') the use of this pronoun identifies the Rasta as an individual. […] Even the possessive 'my' and the objective 'me' are replaced by 'I'. (Owens 1976: 65-66)

In the same collection, the work "I poet" (Breeze 1992:88) shows a new use of the pronoun "I" which becomes "ah":

ah was readin
readin all de time
[...]
ah was full a love
ah give it here
ah give it dere
[...]
ah read all yuh poems ah read all yuh plays
ah read all tea leaf, palm

7. *Code-switching* in Breeze: merging Standard English with Jamaican Creole

Breeze masterly moves from official English forms to Creole-dissenting ones, applying the technique of 'code-switching' used by all post-colonial Black writers, merging Standard English (SE) with Jamaican Creole (JC). Breeze uses SE to ensure better expressivity and reach a wider audience; alongside SE, she uses JC, full of African lexis and idioms, nursery rhymes and Rasta neologisms, thus allowing the 'Caribbean discourse'. 'Code-switching' is a subversive practice of Jamaican writing and achieves the dual result of abrogating SE appropriating a new culturally significant local English (Ashcroft 2002). Alternating the standard and the vernacular, post-colonial poetry turns both accessible and experimental.

The poem "Riddym Ravings and Other Poems" (Breeze 1988) offers many examples of SE mixed with JC:

> De simple tings of life, mi dear
> de simple tings of life
>
> She rocked the rhythms in her chair
> brushed a hand across her hair
> miles of travel in her stare
>
> De simple tings of life
>
> Ah hoe mi corn
> an de backache gone
> plant mi peas
> arthritis ease
> […]

In other poems, she only writes in SE, as in "Mother…Sister…Daughter…" (Breeze 1992:74), where a correct conditional "if" clause opens the entire work:

> If you should see me
> walking down the street,
> […]
> know
> that this is no woman bent on sacrifice
> just heavy
> with the thoughts of freedom.

On the contrary, in "Seasons" from the collection "The Arrival of Brighteye and Other Poems" (Breeze 2000), the artist fully uses Creole to be more intimate and convey ethnical messages that only native Caribbeans may understand.

Seasons

> sometime,
> wen im coming
> is like a cole front cross de Atlantic
> or a chilling eas wind
> den yuh have to meet him
> ratianal,
> lagical,

wid a clarity
dat is more
intellectual
but occasionally spirit tek
an a smile
wid a twinkle

in de I
does warm de heart
like summer come in May
or tulips out in Feb
an yuh haffi sey
it did wut it after all
fi endure im winta

8. Other strategies: allusion, glossing and neologisms

Allusion is a strategy that marks cultural distance in the post-colonial text. Breeze uses allusions to Jamaican cultural references, such as local trees or fruits, Caribbean food, traditional customs, folk music, African words or practices. Although SE serves for clearer explanations, allusions enable semantic connotations to Jamaican or African past and culture, performing an ethnographic function. The reader can infer the indigenous signifier, yet distance is established, creating a "gap", a textual and intelligible break in the cross-cultural text between what is widely known and what is typical of pre-colonial heritage.

Among others, the "kisko-pop" of the poem "Recess" (Breeze 1992: 54), referring to Kisko Jamaican brand of juice ice bars or freezies; in the same poem, the "bad man" "Stakalee" recalls the black bandit prominent in African American literature, songs, toasts, and folktales (elsewhere known as Stagolee, Stackerlee or Stagger Lee); the poem dedicated to her Nanny mentioning Afro Maroon tribes, rituals and folk songs (see section 11); the "mellow fruit", "mango trees" or the "cutting coconuts" Caribbean habit, all evoking Afro-Caribbean culture (Breeze 1992). Also, the metaphor "a country go look mango" (Breeze 1992:19) geographically hints to African countryside and Black culture, now entrapped in a new multicultural country.

Similarly, some words are glossed, that is left as indigenous people name them, with no explanations. The writer invades the cross-cultural text creating voids, psychological abysses between cultures (Ashcroft 2002). Also, untranslated words, like the Caribbean dish "cou cou" (Breeze 1992: 84) or the Jamaican "crocus bag" (Breeze 1992:21), as well as neologisms contribute to mark differences. These are signs of cultural distinctiveness and force the reader to enquiry indigenous histories to get their meaning. Breeze creates lots of new words, like "pengalengalenga" (Breeze 1992: 54), derived from the African vegetable "lenga lenga", or "leewardwindward" ("Ilands" in Breeze 1992: 84), evoking the Caribbean Leeward Islands.

9. Creole language variants in Breeze

9.1. Lexical choices: transformation and simplification

What makes Rasta language so experimental are constant transformations within the same text; one after the other, extravagant and inconsistent examples of this language mix all liven up the page, like multiple rhythms and beats of the same song.

Even into the same sentence, Breeze puts together multiple variants of the same lexifier, thus signalling unique and sometimes bizarre SE alterations.

The reader's eyes jump from a well-known form into a brand new one, from official SE to JC adaptations and neologisms; this polyphonic approach to writing links poetry to music of various genres and proves the greatness of Dub poets as real performers.

Examples of such language performativity are" *can't*" turning into either "*kyan"* or" *kean"*, "*boy*" into "*bway"* or "*bwoy", "other*" becoming "*adda*" and then "*odder"*, "*ebery"* instead of "*every*"; "*first*" becoming "*firs*" and then "*fus*", or the preposition "*in a"* which other Jamaican writers turn into "*inna"*, while Breeze chooses "*eena"* or" *een".* Similarly, the unconventional use of /k/ rather than /c/ has a precise ideological intention, as "*ketch"* instead of "*catch"*. Not merely a visual representation of a Creole sound, but a «powerfully symbolic rejection of standard norms» (Coppola 2013).

In the poem "Seasons" (Breeze 2000), the totally rule-deviant BC forms "cole", "de", "ratianal", "lagical", "occasianally" and "yuh" substitute SE "cold", "the", "rational", "logical", "occasionally" and "you".

These lexical choices testify to the revalueshanary structure of Dub poems: Breeze's music works are contaminated by plenty of Afro-Caribbean beats and sounds, mixing diverse rhythms both visually and acoustically, like Reggae, Calypso, Quadrille, Blues, Mento, Gospel and European Folk songs (Martino 2009). The language of her poems, then, constantly changes and adapts to music soundtracks.

Here, lexical simplification is paramount. Creole words assume a high phonetic charge, since they have to fulfil musical adaptability and fit the poems' music track. Spelling is guided, so the reader is involved to participate in the musical performance. Jamaican words appear shorter and cut in their non-musical sounds according to the poems' rhythms, to maintain the reading's flow and the balance between words and music.

The opening line of "Seasons" starts with the adverb "sometime", simplified without the final "s" in order to easily fit music; on some occasions, even first syllabic sounds are altered, as the word "*woman*" turning into "*ooman*" and losing the sound /w/. The poem is full of simplified words, as following: "ole" for "all", "bout" for "about", "an" for "in", "dung" for "down", "fah" for "for", "troo" for "through", "till" for "until", "pon" for "upon" (Breeze 2000:13, 32, 40).

Other phonetic and orthographic variations occur in the verb forms "make" and "take" which lose the final sound becoming "mek" and "tek" , as in "but occasionally spirit tek" (Breeze 2000).

9.2. Orthographic and phonetic variations

At the phonological level, spelling is compromised in order to fit musical rhythms. Many SE sounds are removed or altered. The voiced dental fricative sound /ð/ typical of SE is changed into the easier /d/, so the sounded "th" in "the", "that", "those", "these", "then" turns into "de", "dat", "dos", "des", "dey", "dus", "den" (see "Seasons"). Hence, all the nouns or verbs containing the same sound change into their Jamaican variant, as for "either", "fifth", "nothing", "other", "think", "mother" and "with" becoming "eida", "fif", "nutten", "odda", "tink", "madda" and "wid".
In Jamaican Creole, the final sound /r/ is not pronounced. As observed in the poem "Seasons", the final word "winta" substitutes SE "winter" (last line). Similarly, Rasta words like "bredda", "daughta", "fadda", "madda", "ova", "sista", "spida" and "wanda" substitute "brother", "daughter", "father", "mother", "over", "sister", "spider" and "wonder".

The sound /r/ is eliminated even before consonants, so that "born", "burn", "darling", "years", "lord", "morning", "Saturday", "start", "trousers" become "bun", "bun", "dahlin", "yeas", "lawd", "mawning", "Satday", "staat" and "trousis".

Jamaicans do not even pronounce the sound /h/, so that Breeze writes "wat" instead of "what", "wen" instead of "when", or the one-word "oomuch" instead of "how much".

As illustrated, Creole supports ideological resistance for every Caribbean artist, either visually or acoustically. The poem presents plenty of morphological and phonetic variations. BC spelling

variations include “ribbit”, “im”, “weh”, “laas nite”, “*kudda*”, “eena”, “troo”, “mawga gal”, “ah” or the Spanish interference “mi” instead of “my” or “me”, or even “I”.

At the same time, Breeze also uses AC forms, like “operate”, “go”, “land”, “radio”, “head”, “bed”, “cancer”, “same night”, “pay”, “place”, “no feel no way, town is a place”. Other in-between MC forms are “nobady”, “de”, “wid”, “dat”, “dem”, “befo”, “kar”, “tek”, “belang”, “outa”, with single vowel or consonant variations, but mostly resembling official forms.

Regarding acoustic changes, a precious contribution on how JC modifies SE phonetic rules is given below:

> The plosives /d/, /t/ instead of British English fricatives, as in: *dem*, *wid*, *ting*, *mout*; half-open monophthongal vowels are used in words like make (*mek*), say (*seh*), go (*goh*), no (*noh*), where British English has diphthongs. The presence of a glide /j/ after velars and /w/ after bilabials, when a low vowel follows: *cyaan*/*kean*, *bwoy*; loss of final consonant in clusters: *bes*, *an*; velar plosives /k, g/ in medial positions where British English has alveolar /t, d/: *miggle*, *lickle*; the non-pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ (*start*, *turn* and *mother*) is signalled as: *staat*, *tun*, *maddah* for *start*, *turn*, *mother*. (Coppola 2013:14)

9.3. Grammar subversion

In Breeze grammar is also simplified. In the sentence “wen im coming” instead of “when he’s coming”, the object “him” is turned into “im” and the subject is omitted. Other grammatical omissions occur in the expression “is like” instead of “it is like”, where the very subject is absent (Breeze 2000, lines 2 and 3).

Again, the auxiliary “do” appears in the sentence “does warm de heart” (“Seasons”, line 15) which in SE would be “for warms the heart”.

In the last line of “Seasons”, grammar is altered in the particle “fi” instead of “if”, which may have a dative, genitive, final or modal function.

With regard to tenses, Creole verbs mostly appear in the present, even when they indicate past actions, like in “wen mi fus come a town/ mi use to tell everybady ‘mawnin’” (Breeze 1988). Here “wen” introduces past actions occurred in an antecedent period of time, while the verbs “come” and “use to tell” are in the present simple. In JC, past forms are absent, apart from some little use of the auxiliary “did” before basic verb forms, as in “weh did a gi mi cancer” (Breeze 1992): here the verb “give” is simplified and cut into “gi” and its past form does not follow the SE irregular construction “gave”. These phenomena of degrammaticalization also include the different use of personal pronouns. Jamaican does not make distinction between pronouns. The pronoun “his” appears as “him”, “we” as “our” and “ourselves” becomes “weself”, as in the following extract from “Testament” of the collection “Spring Cleaning” (Breeze 1992:10):

> ah know it embarrass yuh
> wen ah tek it out
> but in dis place
> dem trow weh nuff good tings
> an waste is something
> drill out me
> from young
> we had to save weself
> from a shoestring
> to a likkle lef over […]

For Breeze, the second singular “yuh” instead of “you” is not only a personal pronoun, but a possessive adjective substituting “your”, as in “yuh tongue” (Breeze 1992: 7, 9, 10):

use to plait yuh hair
wid pride
[…]
ah see yuh eye turn weh
anytime yuh see mi han

The Spanish-derived possessive "mi" and the personal pronoun "I" substitute "my" and "me", thus reversing SE correlation of pronouns with number and gender, as in "anytime yuh see mi han" (Breeze 1992: 9). These forms may all appear in the very same sentence or period; indeed, an interesting sign of non-conformity of Jamaican Dub poetry is the mix of standard forms to non-standard ones. The following section about the poem " RiddymRavings (the mad woman's poem)" (Breeze 1992) gives multiple examples of such promiscuous use of pronouns: the possessive "*mi*" followed by the correct forms "*my*" or "*me*" appear in the same period or end-stop.

Well, dis mawnin, mi start out pon Spanish Town Road,

fah mi deh go walk go home a country
fah my granny use to tell mi how she walk tram wes come a town

come sell food
an wi waan ketch home befo dem put de price pon i'

[…]

Ah!
see wan stanpipe deh!
so mi strip aff all de crocus bag dem
an scrub unda mi armpit
fah mi hear de two mawga gal dem laas nite

Plurals are not always marked, but introduced by the general pronoun "dem" instead of "them", referring to both things and people. See the poem below "Soun de Abeng fi Nanny" (Breeze 1988).

an ebery shake of a leaf
mek dem quiver
mek dem shiver
fa dem lose dem night sight
an de daylight too bright

10. *Spring Cleaning* (1992)

Spring Cleaning is one of Breeze's famous collections of 50 poems. The works all depict countryside life in Kingston Town, culturally unspoiled by British colonialism. The protagonist is a "mad" Black ordinary woman, caught by a general mania of cultural identity-loss. All Jamaicans passively receive White norms as signs of urbanity and civilization and feel lost and confused about their existence and homeland. Jamaica, where native people should live like landlords ("de lan lord"), now feels different and causes enduring mental and physical pains, as in "ribbit mi han - eh – ribbit mi toe". This is the refrain of the famous autobiographic poem "Riddym Ravings" published in the collection (Breeze 1992: 19-22):

Riddym Ravings (the mad woman's poem)

de fus time dem kar me go a Bellevue
was fit di dactar an de lan lord operate
an tek de radio outa mi head
troo dem seize de bed
weh did a gi mi cancer
an mek mi talk to nobady
ah di same night wen dem trow mi out fi no pay de rent
mi haffa sleep outa door wid de Channel One riddym box
an de D.J. fly up eena mi head
mi hear im a play she

Eh, *Eh,*
no feel no way
town is a place dat ah really kean stay
dem kudda – ribbit mi han
eh – ribbit mi toe
mi waan go a country go look mango
[…]

so country bus, ah beg yuh
tek mi home
to de place, where I belang
[…]

dis time de dactar an de lanlord operate
an tek de radio plug outa mi head

On Kingston Town, Breeze writes that "town is a place dat ah really kean stay" (line 14), where Creole "dat" instead of "that", "ah" instead of "one" and "kean" instead of "can" merge with SE words, like "town is a place" and "stay". The woman pretends "madness" to preserve her own identity which seems to be lost, instead of conforming to the new multicultural atmosphere.

As previously seen, tonic vowels vary, as in "dactar" for "doctor", "nobady" for "nobody", or "belang" for "belong". Other alterations follow: "fus" for "first", "kar" for "car", "lan" for "land", the doubled "haffa" for "half a-sleep", "fi" for "if". The incoherent variety of her poems show multiple versions of the same term: the adverb "there" appears as "de", "deh" or "dere" or the recurrent pronoun "I" as "ai", "i" and "ah" (see above). As follows, some examples (Breeze 1992: 20):

wen mi fus come a town
mi use to tell everybady 'mawnin'
but as de likkle rosiness gawn outa mi face
nobady nah ansa mi
silence tun rags roun mi bady
in de mids a all de dead people dem
a bawl bout de caast of livin
an a ongle one ting tap mi tram go stark raving mad

In JC the sound /h/ vanishes in "wen", while the dental "th" alters originating "de" or "dem", or a single "t" sound, as in "ting"; the opening sound /a/ is lost in "bout" and "roun", which also loses the final "d"; the pre-consonantal /r/ is lost in "fus" for "first" or "tun" for "turn". The same occurs in the word "mawnin", Breeze's version of "morning": here the tonic vowel /o/ is also altered into the original diphthong /aw/ and the final occlusive /g/ disappears, as in "livin".

Rasta language, indeed, unsettles the typical SE "-ing" form, both graphically and acoustically, cancelling the final /g/, as in "endin", "gettin", "lovin", "preachin", "readin", "sayin", "shakin", "steppin", "walkie" and "writin" (Pollard 1994).

In the title, the word "riddym" substitutes the English "rhythm": here the doubling technique occurs. Doubling is typical of JC, where sounds like "h" and "th" disappear turning into "dd" (Pollard 1994); to complete the sound, the linking sound "y" serves to pronounce the final consonant "m", making the word adapt to music.

Doubling is found in words like "likkle" (as in "if likkle rain jus fall") or "sekkle", replacing "little" and "settle", where the sound /t/ totally changes into /k/. The loss of final /r/ is notable in "ansa", where the suffix "-er" of "answer" turns into the single sound /a/, as previously illustrated. Tonic vowels change shifting from /o/ to /a/, as in "everybady" for "everybody", "nobady" for "nobody" or "bady" for "body". On other occasions, musicality and African oral folk tradition compel to modify the sound /o/ into a doubled /aa/, as in "caast" for "cost" (see "a bawl bout de caast of livin"):

an a ongle one ting tap mi tram go stark raving mad
a wen mi siddung eena Parade
a tear up newspaper fi talk to
sometime dem roll up
an tun eena one a Uncle But sweet saaf yellow heart breadfruit
wid piece a roas saalfish side a i
an if likkle rain jus fall
mi get cocanat rundung fi eat i wid

The poem depicts Caribbean women status (Breeze 1992: 20): the protagonist represents oppressed cultures. She is Black, penniless, unemployed and wanders in the streets of Kingston uttering incohesive words, while the new multicultural society shows up in street "Parade". Breeze narrates "madness" as a common mental condition of all Jamaicans after British colonization, particularly women. She describes the uncertainties and dilemmas woman faces in her city routine. Black woman is alienated, culturally displaced and excluded from both men-driven society and post-colonial Kingston: this is why she gets "madness" and resides in Bellevue mental hospital (see opening lines). The Creole expression "mi tram go stark raving mad" explicits this cultural estrangement.

11. Semantics as resistance: language puns and connotations

Murther
Pull up Missa Operator!

As anticipated above, neologisms mark difference and provoke readers. The above closing of "Riddym Ravings" (Breeze 1992: 22) presents an interesting neologism: the term "murther", a linguistic pun between the words "mother" and "murder". Breeze intentionally fuses the terms to signal the murder of both herself as woman and mother, and of her mother country. Modern multicultural Jamaica tries to brainwash Black people and cancel their history. JC, then, allows the artist's ideological resistance in an efficient and ironic way.

Like JC, which visibly changes on paper and deconstructs SE orthography and morphology, music rhythms and body performances accompany such changes. Breeze's Creole is accompanied by her apparently "sexual slack body" to continue the physical revolution against rigid social customs, traditions and standards imposed on Blacks, especially women. The woman is "ribbit" or imprisoned in urban Jamaica and the only connections to her culture are music and any reference to the indigenous past, as "a country go look mango", "yellow heart breadfruit", "ancestral echo", "roas saalfish", "my granny use to tell mi", "an wi waan ketch home befo dem put de price pon i'", "come sell food", "crocus bag", "cocanat" (Breeze 1988, 1992). Written differently, the symbolic "coconut" also appears in the poem "Red Rebel Song" (Breeze 1992:2), in "breadfruit baiting/coconut shaking". Other connotations of Afro-Caribbean history are "cherry tree", "garden chairs", "tinkling ice in lime grass glasses" and "the sensible hibiscus" of the poem "Cherry Tree Garden" (Breeze 1992: 17). Besides African countryside, another reference to Black culture is Black music, which helps to overcome feelings of cultural indifference and estrangement. In "the mad woman's poem" the protagonist is considered mad because she listens to her music; she only wants to stay connected to her roots and feel free and sane in the head phones of her radio, but she is forced by the bus conductor to get off "an tek de radio outa mi head" and "an troo im no hear de riddym eena mi head" (see below). In Rasta language, "de canductor bwoy" marks a significant sign of cultural oppression and dominance since he personifies new British power and urban laws (Breeze 1992: 20):

an de canductor bwoy a halla out seh
'dutty gal, kum affa de bus'
an troo im no hear de riddym eena mi head
same as de tape weh de bus a seh

In "Soun de Abeng fi Nanny" (Breeze 1988) many textual connotations remind of African tribal traditions, as the following:

so mek wi soun de abeng/ fi Nanny

Here, the Maroon leader Nanny incites her granddaughters to play the "abeng", a typical musical instrument of the African Maroon Tribe, once used by slaveholders to call the slaves and as a revolt coding system for runaway slaves to arrange rebellions. "Abeng" is an untranslated indigenous term of the language of African Akan tribe. Music is not only a Dub soundtrack, but a constant textual reference not to be censored.
In "Red Rebel Song" (Breeze 1992: 2), rebellion is expressed through Black music, but also breaking the page's linearity:

is lang time
i waan sing dis song
sing it loud
sing it long
no apology
no pun
jus a raw fire madness
a clinging to de green
a sargasso sea
[…]
lang time I waan
free Iself
from the white black question
from the constant hairpulling
breadfruit baiting

coconut shaking
hypocrisis
of I skin
having nutten to do
[…]
outside
field slave sing loud
to open sky
hear dim own ancestral echo
in de wind

12. Conclusion

Cross-mediality and language creativity perfectly describe Jean Binta Breeze. Linguistically, acoustically and visually, her works pop out, denouncing cultural, political and gender issues in an outstanding way.

As above, her works also appear visually impactful and do not respect standard linear margins, like "*Mermaids*" (Breeze 1992: 29), about the gender issue. In the poem, the condition of women from different parts of the world also appears dislocated graphically, so on different parts of the page too.

somewhere
along the road
a woman eases off
her load
unwraps
her bundles
[…]
today
a woman comes
in ragged cloth
scratching plants
tearing leaves
head down

Breeze's paper shouts and cries and her words perform the beats of various soundtracks. As Caribbean storytellers, she is a community 'self' engaged in a universal mission of redeeming Black history and concerns. Her language and visual chaos resemble the socio-political canfusion of colonial Jamaica, as she says in her live performance of "Confusion" from the album "Tracks" (Breeze 1991). Her ironic protest voices out Black woman condition through "ordinary", yet universal troubles of every woman, as she chants in her liturgical track "Ordinary Mawning'" (Breeze, 2011).

To conclude, as the first female Dub artist ever, Breeze stands out for her creative, disruptive and multimedia works; her voice is a political, cultural and human denounce and performs on music-poems of mixed genres. Her history is the one of all Black people and women in the Caribbean and the world. Her universal message is cultural redemption, in the name of political and human freedom and resistance. Her poetry is graphic, polyphonic and performative. Her language is innovative and subversive. Her legacy, then, is creativity in all its most unconventional and revolutionary forms.

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