

« L'art de la plume **kincaidienne**:  
fertilisation croisée et enrichissement  
mutuel au service de la construction du  
moi caribéen »

Nadia YASSINE-DIAB

Journées d'études CRILLASH, UA, 23 et 24 juin 2016

1- L'art de l'objectif (photographie)

2- L'art du pinceau (peinture)

3- L'art du râteau (jardinage)

4- L'art de la plume (écriture)

1- « the importance of visibility to literary strategies of decolonization » (Emery 1997, 260)

2: « the cross-pollination of images, ideas and concepts » (Chamberlain 1998, 33)

3: « Mariah had given me a book of photographs I particularly liked. They were photographs of **ordinary** people in a countryside doing **ordinary** things, but for a reason that was not at all clear to me the people and the things they were doing looked **extraordinary** – as if these people and these things had not existed before. » (*L*, 115)

**4** : « La Photographie est unaire lorsqu'elle transforme emphatiquement la 'réalité' sans la dédoubler, la faire vaciller [...] ; la Photographie unaire a tout pour être banale [...] » (Barthes 1980, 69-70).

**5** : « All around me on the walls of my rooms were the photographs I had taken, in black-and-white, of the children with Mariah, of Mariah all by herself, and of some of the things I had acquired since leaving home. I had no photographs of Lewis and no photographs of myself. I was trying to imitate the mood of the photographs in the book Mariah had given me, and though in that regard I failed completely, I was pleased with them all the same. I had a picture of the children eating toasted marshmallows; a picture of them with their bottoms facing the camera – their way of showing me how disgusted they were with requests for more smiles; a picture of Mariah in the middle of an elaborate preparation of chicken and vegetables cooked slowly in red wine; a picture of my dresser top with my dirty panties and lipstick, an unused sanitary napkin, and an open pocketbook scattered about. [...] **Why is a picture of something real eventually more exciting than the thing itself?** » (*L*, 120-1)

- **6** : « Lucy's need to fix and control reality with her own gaze » (Brancato 2001, 220).
- **7**: « [...] la fonction de l'œuvre d'art n'est pas seulement de représenter le réel, mais aussi de le créer » (Jauss 1978, 36).
- **8** : « I understood that I was **inventing myself**, and that I was doing this more in the way of a painter than in the way of a scientist. I could not count on precision and calculation. I could only count on intuition. » (L, 134)

- **9** : « He brought us a large bouquet of small yellow roses, and he gave me a photograph he had taken of me standing over a boiling pot of food. [...] That was the moment he got the idea he **possessed** me in a certain way, and that as the moment I grew tired of him. » (*L*, 155)
- **10** : « there is something **predatory** in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to [...] [turn] people into objects that can be symbolically possessed » (Sontag 1977, 14).

- **11:** « It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles. [...] The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's *avenging* anger. » (Bhabha 1994, 44)
- **12 :** « Yvonne had a child, a girl, and they, Yvonne and her girl child, lived with Mr. Potter in a house with many rooms and each room had more than one window and each window was made up of four pieces of glass pane and each window was framed with curtains and the curtains were made of cotton on which had been printed the images of hibiscus in bloom and birds, just birds, in flight, all in colors and sizes that were not known in the natural world. » (*MP*, 155-6)



**13:** « I could see her **teeth** were crooked and yellow, and I wondered how they had got that way. Large half-moons of perspiration **stained** the underarms of her dress, and I wondered if when I became a woman I, too, would perspire so profusely and how it would smell. Behind her shoulder on the wall was a large female **spider** carrying its sac of eggs, and I wanted to reach out and crush it with the bare palm of my hand, because I wondered if it was the same kind of spider or a relative of the spider that had sucked saliva from the corner of my mouth the night before as I lay sleeping, leaving three small, painful bites. » (*AM*, 21)

- **14** : « [...] the world is filled with many people and each of them is like a second in a minute and a minute is an hour and an hour is in a day and a day is in a week and a week is in a month and a month is in a year and a year is in a century and a century is in a millennium and a millennium is in the world and the world eventually becomes a picture trapped in a four-sided frame. » (*MP*, 188)
- **15**: « Lucy's interest in photography also strikes a connection between textuality and visual imagery. Both attempt to **document history by crystallizing memory** » (Brown-Hinds 2003, 145).

- **16:** « [...] after the **rain** stopped, the waters formed into **streams**, the streams ran into **rivers**, the rivers ran into the **sea**; the ground retained its shape » (AM, 72-3).
- **17:** « The Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic device, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse. However impeccably the content of an 'other' culture may be known, however anti-ethnocentrically it is represented, it is its *location* as the closure of grand theories, the demand that, in analytic terms, it be always the good object of knowledge, the docile body of difference, that reproduces a relation of domination and is the most serious indictment of the institutional powers of critical theory. » (Bhabha 1994, 31)

1- L'art de l'objectif (photographie)

2- L'art du pinceau (peinture)

3- L'art du râteau (jardinage)

4- L'art de la plume (écriture)

- **18** : « It is part of the life of a garden, that because creating a garden is such an act of will, and because (if it is a success) it becomes the place of great beauty which the particular gardener had in mind, the gardener's death (or withdrawal of any kind) is the death of the garden.» (*MGB*, 111)
- **19**: « I was then four years old and saw the world as a series of soft lines joined together, a sketch in charcoal; and so when my father would come and take his clothes away I saw only that he suddenly appeared on the small path that led from the main road to the door of the house in which I lived and then, after completing his mission, disappeared as he turned onto the road where it met the path. » (*AM*, 7)

- **20:** « subvert specific visual cultures imposed through colonialism » ; (Emery 1997, 262)
- **21:** « How soft is the blackness as it falls. It falls in silence and yet it is deafening, for no other sound except the blackness falling can be heard. The blackness falls like soot from a lamp with an untrimmed wick. The blackness is visible and yet it is invisible, for I see that I cannot see. The blackness fills up a small room, a large field, an island, my own being. The blackness cannot bring me joy but often I am made glad of it. » (*ABR*, 46)

**22:** « 'I have followed the sharp darts of yellow, red, blue, green, orange, and violet lights into the overwhelming blackness; the blackness is soft and moist and hot, and I can feel it clinging to me, becoming a permanent and essential part of my nature', said Annie. » (*AGLPT*, 4)

1- L'art de l'objectif (photographie)

2- L'art du pinceau (peinture)

3- L'art du râteau (jardinage)

4- L'art de la plume (écriture)



- **23:** « I know now that it is from our mother that we, he and I, get this love of plants » (MB, 11).
- **24:** « No, I **don't feel any balance**. I live this life full of contradictions. [...] Balance? No. I hope never to have balance. I suspect if I have to have so much as balance, the next thing I know I'll be voting Republican or something criminal like that! No, **I'm totally unbalanced.**» (Wachtel 1996, 57)

## 25 : « THE YARD

A mountain. A valley. The shade. The sun.

A streak of **yellow** rapidly **conquering** a streak of **green**.  
Blending and separating. » (*ABR*, 17)

**26:** « It is a small lump of insignificance, **green, green, green,**  
and **green** again.

Let me describe this landscape again: it is **green**, and  
unmistakably so; another person who had a more specific  
interest, a painter might say, It is a **green** that often verges on  
blue, it is a **green** that is often modified by reds and yellows  
and even other more intense or other shades of **green**. To me,  
it is **green** and **green** and **green** again. I have no interest other  
than this immediate and urgent one: the landscape is **green**.  
For it is on this **green** landscape that suddenly I and the  
people who look like me make an appearance. » (*MGB*, 157)

- **27:** « My father admired Philip's garden, in which he grew fruit from the various tropical regions of the world, only he forced them to become a size they were not normally; sometimes he made them grow larger, sometimes he made them mere miniatures. Philip belonged to that restless people unable to leave the world alone, unable to look at anything for too long without becoming troubled by its very existence; silence is alien to them. » (*AM*, 209)
- **28 :** « And what is the relationship between gardening and conquest? Is the conqueror a gardener and the conquered the person who works in the field? » (*MGB*, 116).

**29:** « He had an obsessive interest in rearranging the landscape: not gardening in the way of necessity, the growing of food, but gardening in the way of luxury, the growing of flowering plants for no other reason than the pleasure of it and making these plants do exactly what he wanted them to do; and it made great sense that he would be drawn to this activity, for it is an act of conquest, benign though it may be. »  
(*AM*, 143)

1- L'art de l'objectif (photographie)

2- L'art du pinceau (peinture)

3- L'art du râteau (jardinage)

4- L'art de la plume (écriture)

**30:** « I became a writer out of desperation, so when I first heard my brother was dying, I was familiar with the act of **saving myself**: I would write about him. I would write about his dying. When I was young, younger than I am now, I started to write about my own life and I came to see that this act saved my life. When I heard about my brother's illness and his dying, I knew, instinctively, that to understand it, or to make an attempt at understanding his dying, and not to die with him, I would have to write about it. » (*MB*, 195-6)

- **31:** « For me, writing isn't a way of being public or private; it's just **a way of being**. The process is always full of pain, but I like that. It's a reality, and I just accept it as something not to be avoided. This is the life I have. This is the life I write about.» (interview with Marilyn Snell)
- **32:** « Elle écrit, tout en effectuant un travail sur son propre moi, dans le but de comprendre les rapports du caribéen à son monde et à l'autre. Son écriture est une réaction à la blè, c'est-à-dire à cette maladie qui ronge à la fois du dedans et du dehors les hommes et leur société. » (Donatien-Yssa 2007, 40)

- **33** : « As I wrote it I realized that I had all this feeling and that it was anger. I wanted it to be crude and impolite – and all the other things that civilized people are not supposed to be. I no longer wanted to be a civilized person. Really, for me, writing is like going to the psychiatrist. I just discover things about myself. » (Perry 1993, 133)



- **34** : « To me, telling the story of my growing up years was intimately connected with the longing to kill the self I was without really having to die. I wanted to kill that self in writing. Once that self was gone –out of my life forever- I would more easily become the me of me. It was clearly the Gloria Jean of my tormented and anguished childhood that I wanted to get rid of, the girl who was always wrong, the girl who was to end up in a mental institution because she could not be anything but crazy, or so they told her. [...] By writing the autobiography, it was not just this Gloria I would be rid of, but the past that had a hold on me, that kept me from the present. **I wanted not to forget the past but to break its hold.** This death in writing was to be liberatory. » (Warhol 1991, 1036)

- **35** : « Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference » (Chamberlain 1998, 23).
- **36**: « When I sit at my typewriter, I'm not a woman, I'm not from the Caribbean, I'm not black. I'm just this sort of unhappy person struggling to make something, **struggling to be free.** » (Interview with Vorda)
- **37**: « l'écriture de soi peut aussi constituer une sorte de catharsis ; une manière parmi d'autres d'essayer de se réconcilier avec soi-même » (Million-Lajoinie 1999, 134)

**38** : « The call for the rediscovery and the resumption of our language is a call for a regenerative reconnection with the millions of revolutionary tongues in Africa and the world over demanding liberation. It is a call for the rediscovery of the real language of humankind: the **language of struggle**. It is the universal language underlying all speech and words of our history. Struggle. Struggle makes history. Struggle makes us. In struggle is our history, our language and our being. » (Ngugi 1986, 108)

- **39** : « I like living in America because it gives me the language and the idea to rearrange the world in what I'd think would be a just equation. I think by now I'm supposed to be a Republican. I'm supposed to be someone who says, 'Yes, the system works.' But actually I'm someone who says, 'I'm not sure that it works.' I suppose if my perspective has changed it would be that I'm now a politically conscious person. To America's credit I've become, at least verbally, a politically conscious person. I suspect that if I wasn't writing, being the person I am who has become politically conscious, then I would be throwing bombs. If I didn't have the pen, I would certainly be someone who would take up the **sword**. » (interview with Vorda)
- **40**: « The poet is the fighter. » (Condé 1995, 18)

# Conclusion

- **41:** « I stood as if I were a prism, many-sided and transparent, refracting and reflecting light as it reached me, light that never could be destroyed. And how beautiful I became » (ABR, 80).
- **42:** « The term ‘Caribbean literature’ is, in a way, misleading, as it intimates a degree of categorial unity which in fact encompasses a very diverse construction: geographical and political fractures keep the individual areas in a state of neocolonial structural dependency, thus encouraging connections with former colonial powers but making a fluid and constant inner-Caribbean discourse nearly impossible. Only recently [...] have a significant number of writers succeeded in establishing contacts across language barriers, thereby discovering common themes, topics and techniques as well as postulating mutual concerns. » (Glaser, Pausch 1994, XI- XII)



Nadia YASSINE-DIAB

[Nadia.yassine-diab@univ-tlse3.fr](mailto:Nadia.yassine-diab@univ-tlse3.fr)