

Foreign Emblems, Subversive Irony and Italicisation: Chameleonic Camouflage and Ridicule in *Mamzelle Libellule*

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ABSTRACT

Authors born within the Antillean space are often forced with a dilemma given their reality which emerges from antipodal parental ancestries of Africa and Europe. The issue is further made complex with the addition of Asia to the Caribbean context. The melting pot of cultures within the Caribbean makes it difficult for authors to identify with one culture especially when one culture is the dominant while the other is the dominated. Such is the reality of authors born in Martinique who are, at once, given their Departmental status, both French and Caribbean. Raphael Confiant, one such author, brings out this tension in his novel, *Mamzelle Libellule* [*Mamzelle Dragonfly*], and shows how negotiating the Martinican space is far from easy. Much care has to be exercised in how these authors attempt to denounce France, since France showers the island with goodies. In effect, subversion by these authors is, for the most part camouflaged, reminiscent of the folkloric chameleon.

The paper has implications for the Caribbean at large and any region across the globe that has been subjected to colonization and its aftermath, especially areas where the colonizer still has a dominant presence.

Keywords: irony, italicization, subversion, foreign emblems, chameleon, camouflage, subtly

INTRODUCTION

Language and culture centrally preoccupy Confiant's works, including *Mamzelle Libellule*. *In nuce*, this coming-to-age novel follows the life of the protagonist, Adelise, a countryside church mouse seeking desperately to escape the rat hole of poverty. Since mastering French often affords a *laissez-passer* out of penury for Creole subjects, Adelise's mother scampers to have her kitten perfect French first with Godmother Hermancia, and then in a local school. But the child can only *parler français comme une vache espagnole* [speak French like a Spanish cow]. With hopelessness around, Adelise's mother unwittingly dispatches her from the countryside frying pan to a fiery In-City life of prostitution. In ten pages of the novel, detailing frustrated efforts in acquiring French, lurk deeper messages of resistance enshrined by authorial chameleon-like strategies of intruding foreign emblems, irony, italicisation of direct speech, and adjectives.

Given Martinique's delicate reality, with France waving an in-island *carte blanche*, Confiant

welcomes these egg shell-walk-enabling rhetorical devices, as he displays "a committed writing, committed to the anti-colonialist struggle, [and] committed also outside any interior truth" [1]. For purposes of unity and focusing plot, discussing these strategies sometimes overlap, thus killing several birds in one trap. Because irony expresses meaning with language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect, the rhetoric passes as chameleon.

Similarly, the litote, an ironical understatement that expresses an affirmative by the negative of its contrary, is chameleon-like in nature. In the same rhetorical vein, foreign emblems, Confiant's *mene mene tekél upharsin*, hold meaning that dually expose and subvert the oppressor by alerting the reader to negative or unwanted presence.

Unlike irony and emblems, adjectives are not chameleonic *per se*. However, when plotted to uncover a subversive method to Confiant's madness, the part of speech functions chameleonicly.

Before getting down to brass tacks, more plot synopsis and contextualisation are in order. It bears reminding that French bitterly polarises Creole Martinicans into non-French- and French-speaking taxonomies. Acrolectal French hegemonises basilectal Creole such that acquiring French defines social mobility. The greater one's mastery of French, the closer one identifies with the hegemon. Monolingual speakers of Creole ingratiate French-speaking Martinicans, who pretend to help, but instead exploit and hog benefits to maintain the status quo. Confiant exposes the hypocrisy in Creole Martinicans, who betray their non-French-speaking brothers, and who side with French, the benefit-heralding tongue. These Judases, *selon* Confiant, ultimately fortify France's *divide et impera* agenda. He envisions a higher principle to rectify the French/Creole imbalance. Equity—that is what Confiant demands—equity.

Mamzelle Libellule introduces Adelise under slave-like plantation conditions to reflect a Creole culture “created in the plantation system” [1]. The *commandeur* rapes the child; the child shortly thereafter boards with the tutelary Hermancia, Adelise's godmother, who contracts to teach Adelise French. But “si mi and come liv wid mi a two different sinting” [seeing me and living with me are two different things]. Confiant dissects the stay and subtly uncovers the double-dealing of Hermancia and her sister, Giriane, wannabe French women, and mocks their *savoir-vivre*. After Adelise departs Hermancia, Confiant similarly subverts the child's school teacher; and if that is not enough, he takes Papa Césaire to task and oppugns Negritude. Confiant, in effect, camouflages subliminal messages in normal situations: a child's visit to her godmother, a school setting, a political rally, and a visit to a sorcerer. Confiant's camouflage recalls chameleon's disguise among leaves and Chiuta's doublespeak. In Creolist language, these fronts accomplish “powerful silent protests with screams. With hatred. With denunciations,” while “being obscure [,] a sign of depth” [1].

METHOD

A detailed study of the novel *Mamzelle Dragonfly* was done with an emphasis on the scriptural artefact of the chameleon and how the author's subversion of the colonizer is camouflaged. To further reflect the camouflage this paper celebrates many word plays that are

deliberately left unitalicised. In effect the camouflaged form of the paper seeks to mimic the content. Confiant's theoretical masterpiece, *In Praise of Creoleness*, is heavily consulted as a means of showing how his novel reflects the theory he postulates. The notion of detour by Édouard Glissant, esteemed Caribbean theorist, was employed to foreground this research. In few words, the detour “says by not saying.” This rhetoric creates an opposite route, and grounds irony (meaning within meaning) and camouflaged language that detours. Italics exemplify detour by functioning contrary to French literary conventions that render Creole as foreign language in italics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Subtly Subverting French Culture

Confiant ironically aligns the Creole sisters, Hermancia and Giriane, with several meaningfully described European colonial emblems, *aperçus* into France's invasive departmentalisation. *In omnibus*, five emblems emerge in this plot: La Rosière, imported trees, Médor, concrete structures, and French. After journeying in a bus past the verdant countryside with workers “singing lustily” in the fields, Adelise and her mother reach Hermancia's neighbourhood, La Rosière, guarded in by *red* and *orange* bougainvilleas and *enormous* concrete villas [2]. Isabel Hoving in “Moving the Caribbean Landscape” notes that “the Caribbean botanical landscape was aggressively colonised by arriving Europeans who imported... bougainvilleas... in order to systematically *replant* these newly claimed territories as *plantations*” (italics in original) [3]. The colours, red and orange, highlight these flowers, and contrast with the predominantly green, agrestic, original, pre-Columbian Martinican landscape. Confiant identifies the bougainvillea elsewhere in his novel; Féfé, Adelise's aunt's lover, who lives high on the hog, pimps Adelise to a European client who has “an imposing house, a colonial villa, its lawns crowded with bougainvillea and hibiscus” [2]. Understandably, during the Postnegritude ferment, Suzanne Césaire declared death and “shit upon the hibiscus...and the bougainvillea” [4], non-autochthonous plants in the Caribbean.

By naming Hermancia's village La Rosière, a ski-resort in Savoie, southern France, Confiant ironically identifies the Rosière-inhabiting, Creole sisters with the western intruder in Martinique. The enormous villas in both scenes

scare and dwarf Adeline and her mother. The Rosièrean concrete villas differ from the countryside wooden structures, and remind readers of France's intrusive and smothering urbanisation, which the Creolists actively resist. These foreign emblems portend the contemptuous and exploitative treatment Adeline and her mother shortly suffer under Godmother Hermancia.

By representing Hermancia and Giriane—Creole guardians of French—as spectres in the Creole feast, Confiant blames French for dividing Martinicans. The nettlesome French language segregates Rosière's *arrivistes* (the sisters) from Rosière's *arrivants* (Adeline and her mother). Monolingual speakers of Creole generally lick the boots of French-speaking Martinicans perceived as an elitist class. Confiant exposes this abhorred reality: "We are fundamentally stricken with exteriority... It is a terrible condition to perceive...one's world...with the eyes of the other" [1]. The anguish this language divide occasions for Martinicans surfaces as a motif in the works of Confiant and Chamoiseau.

Adeline's *madda* [mother], for example, demands Adeline to speak French in certain contexts. Her serious demand invokes humour, for the world knows that Adeline's French is nothing to write home about. The mother's haunting words to her child reinforces how French creates disquiet for non-French Creole speakers: "Parle français, tu m'entends" [Speak French, you hear me] [2]! These frightening words come as Adeline's mother spots Giriane approaching. However, scared stiff, Adeline clams up throughout the dialogue-riddled chapter. Confiant conjures up Martinique's delicate political language hierarchy that instructs Creole speakers to juggle Creole and French for respective audiences. The command to speak French is the Creolists' way of blaming parents for stifling Creole in Creole children: "Every time a mother, thinking she is favoring the learning of the French language, represses Creole in a child's throat, she is in fact bearing a blow to the latter's imagination, repressing his creativity" [1]. But how ironic to ask Adeline to speak French before Giriane, when speaking French provokes an out of body experience for a child unable to distinguish *A from bull foot*, that is, she is a dunce.

Using a European Pet to Undermine French Culture

Another meaning-holding foreign emblem, Médor—Giriane and Hermancia's pet dog—prefigures France's overbearing hostility to Martinican culture and the sisters' contemptuous disloyalty towards their Creole heritage. Giriane, without a spark of decency for her standing guests at the gate, addresses the dog: "*Au pied! Allez, Médor, au pied, j'aidit*" [Sit down, Go, Medor, sit down, I say] (italics in text) [2]! Médor is the classical name for a canine in old French language textbooks, equivalent to Rex or Fido in English. In some literary representations, the dog enjoys history and politics, and holds great distinction in literature. Joseph Policape describes him as "a true, great, and fearless companion to the end" [5]. Confiant invokes Médor as an angry, doggone metaphor to undermine French culture by highlighting the trepidation Creole subjects feel. It is not just the size of the dog in anger, it is the size of the anger in the dog: the *huge* dog runs immediately to the gate barking *viciously* at Adeline and her mother. By depicting Médor as hellhound as well as Hermancia's pet and best friend, Confiant associates the siblings, not with fellow Creole subjects, but with a brutal canine of a French culture. Confiant knows how in Creole terminology to "give a dog a bad name and hang him." The Creolist hounds the sisters, who succumb to self-denial with their canine exteriority. But of all available French-culture-invoking metaphors, Confiant resorts to a lower creature. Such pejorative invocation mocks the Creole sisters' loyalty to French. The imagery of a giant, powerful Médor, *semper fidelis* to French culture and standing *viciously* before a Creole-speaking Adeline and her mother, underscores the senseless hostility of French literature, history, and politics towards Creole culture. Confiant reveals, through Adeline's eyes, France's imposing, smothering, and hence unwelcome presence in Martinique. He parallels Chimombo, who extracts and inflates Napolo's negative, serpent-like traits to express disgust with rulers.

Further to a chameleon-like agenda, Confiant adds a classical French staple (Médor) to allure French readers and simultaneously bite them by hiding Médor's true textual signification. The French reader delights to see familiar emblems, not knowing their subversive potential. Sankara concludes: "There is obviously an exotic side to Confiant's work for a French audience fond of

localisms and amused by the autobiographer's play with the French language" [6]). Confiant thus situates *duppy behine bush* [clandestine meaning] for the French audience. His pronounced literary commitment to *Créolité* satisfies opposing dimensions of readership. He accomplishes a similar objective in his invocation of Rosière cited earlier. Glissant's rhetoric of counter-poetics—the turning of language against itself to impede understanding—is a form of detour Confiant employs here [7]. Glissant illustrates that this language strategy works by mocking French, “breaking its rules, undermining its original meaning, resisting an ‘order’ to form a ‘counter order’” [7].

Reversing French italicisation conventions also typifies counter-poetics. Confiant italicises the sibling's words to Médor to render French unnatural as the textual intruding language. He reverses colonial literary conventions that present Creole in italics in French texts. In so doing, the Creolist gives French a taste of its own medicine, and “abandon[s] the unnatural use of French which we had often adopted in writing” [1]. This reversal constitutes one of four examples explored. In all cases, the author links French to bizarre situations. *Dans ces exemples*, italicization emphasises unnatural wholesale adoption of French by these Creole sisters. The other occurrences surround Hermancia's state of delirium, the French school teacher's callousness to Adeline and her mother, and finally, Césaire's address to a non-French speaking audience.

The Irony: Dishonor in Honourable Sisters

How ironic that Hermancia never tests Adeline's level of French despite the child's purpose at the residence being to master the language! One *hav to wonda wat kine a patty shop!* unprincipled establishment Hermancia *a operate* [is operating]! Hermancia, to the reader's surprise, scrutinises the body of Adeline, not there for an auction but to learn French. The child relates: “She made me showed my mouth from every angle and examined me from every aspect” [2]. This auction-evoking scene uncovers rigorous screening to determine eligibility among paying Creole clients interested in acquiring French. Or humorously, could Hermancia be checking if the child's mouth is clean enough to speak French? Janus-facedly, Hermancia invites Adeline to kiss her, only on the heels of pocketing 34,000 francs, the fee for the French lessons. Glad to

see the back of Adeline's mother, Hermancia, who initially plays in Adeline's hair and pinches her cheek in the mother's presence, now labels the child a *négresse*, and claims that all country folks do not bathe. The godmother's two-facedness exposes her hypocrisy. Certainly, “behine dawg, a dawg, in front a dawg, a missa dawg” [Behind a person's back, you can disrespect him; but before the person's face, show respect]!

The honorable-looking sisters are ironically dishonorable. Through Hermancia and Giriane as metaphors of deceit, Confiant limns Creole guardians of French as traitorous and selfishly amoral. He subtly unmasks the hypocrisy and incompetence of Godmother Hermancia. Before leaving Hermancia's home, the mother forks out the 34,000 francs to pay the godmother for French lessons thrice weekly over four months. Adeline's mother communicates her ambitious expectations to have Adeline “read French correctly...” in this grossly inadequate time frame [2]. The ellipsis marks Godmother Hermancia's interruption to express strong reservations regarding Adeline's cognitive competence in language acquisition: “Given her age, it will be difficult you know. She wasn't going to school... Her little breasts are already starting to swell” [2]. Despite her three-tiered misgiving, Godmother Hermancia unhesitatingly pockets the money. *Dat ole crook* [That old crook]! The 34,000 francs cost the poverty-stricken mother an arm and a leg. Left with a Hobson's choice at the turn of events, she turns blue and away, leaving her daughter at Hermancia's.

The author again injects irony, a Chiuta-like stratagem, in an apparently normal business transaction to uncover Hermancia's avarice, senility, and moral bankruptcy. Like Chiuta's countermand, Confiant's representation of the term ‘godmother’ surprises the reader. Hermancia charges her godchild for French lessons! Charging, much more 34,000 francs, contradicts the role of godmother. The godparent, otherwise known as sponsor, faithfully undertakes to guide the child, and offers specific moral assistance. Without the godparent, the child cannot undergo baptism. One godparent may suffice, but if the decision is to have two, they must be male and female. The sponsor also gifts gifts to the child, while generally overseeing the infant's interests. So, Godmother Hermancia's acceptance of remuneration for Adeline's French lessons, and

such shocking sum at that, is highly unethical and breaches her godmotherly contract.

The godmother's *samfying*/ robbing Adelise allegorises the Mother country's exploitative relationship with her colonies under the selfish veneer of religion; in truth, the one pledging guidance exploits. Confiant re-enacts France's self-proclaimed role as guardian of Creole Martinique, but removes the wool from the reader's eyes to uncover the ineffectiveness and parasitism of French assimilationism. With the hegemonised adulating the hegemon, the Martinican situation appears paradoxical. Glissant captures this ambivalence when he describes how Martinicans suffer abjection and misery in their desperation to imitate the French [7]. By claiming to help Martinique, the French really cannot help but revealing ulterior motives of urbanisation. Recall that, upon arriving in La Rosière, *enormous* concrete villas greet the visitors, similar to the *imposing* colonial villa of Féfè's client. These European structural markers magnify the sisters' alienation from the basilectal population, and depict France's stronghold in Martinique. Confiant's adjectives, then, aid in satirising Martinique's rapid urbanisation, an urbanisation some locals process negatively.

Presenting Assimilation's Positives as Negatives

Products of French bricks and mortar enterprise, these villas represent bi-products of Martinique's 1946 departmentalisation policy to *betonise*/ cement existing hegemonic structures between the isle and the Metropole. A *fait accompli*, *bétonisation* symbolically speaks to a hardening of Martinican Creole culture through a rupture with the landscape. Metaphoric significance aside, the term literally defines the coating of a rural Martinique, parking lots, and other blocks of modernisation. Departmentalisation, father to *bétonisation*, mortars the island with new thinsets of environmental and cultural assimilationist practices. France reserves reserves in Martinique for urbanisation purposes, especially since, for the Hexagon, the road to development is the development to roads. Since French plasters itself onto Martinique's landscape, Chamoiseau and Confiant adjudge this form of assimilationism as negating space. France also pays locals to engage in deforestation for construction purposes, which upset the island's delicate ecology. Untold devastation results,

making the lives of hewmans harder and harder, year after year, thereby hindering a sense of community and alienating Martinicans from the identity-anchoring land and environment. Along with these environmentally unfriendly practices, the Creole conservationists reject cement while embracing "Creoleness [as] the cement of our culture..., the foundations of our Caribbeanness" [1].

Confiant exposes neo-colonisation at the heart of France's assimilation of Martinique. While *francization* [to make French] officialises French in the *départments*, *bétonisation*, a subset of francisation, aims at 'covering over' Creole language and culture. Covering over exemplifies France's chameleon behavior to conceal the landscape via urbanisation, and linguistically by smothering Creole. Renée Gosson employs the term, "*a layer of Frenchness*," to articulate the artificiality of Martinican culture that radiates French while stifling a Creole subsurface. To resist wholesale imposition of French culture, Creolist intellectuals expose France's neocolonialism, evoking a face-off between political chameleons and literary chameleons, similar to the Malawian government and Mapanje. To keep nostrils above cement, the Creolists endeavour "not to alter or lose any part of [themselves] *hidden beneath French ways*" (italics mine) [1]. The Creolists hold that Martinique's legacy lies in landscape and language. Thus, the act of erasing both terrain and dialect essentially extirpates Martinican identity. Accordingly, in the novel, when the Creole sisters block themselves in Rosière's block structures, Confiant is revealing how Hermancia and Giriane willingly block out their identity.

Making the French Wannabe Mad

Confiant ridicules Hermancia's incompetence as French instructor through her delirium. After the mother returns home, Adelise hits the hay. Petrified by a quavering voice, she awakens, opens the door, and notices a well-set table for guests. Upon closer examination, she remarks Godmother Hermancia off her rockers. The woman subconsciously yearns for Romain, her disappointing love, and engages in delusional self-talk: "*Mon cher Romain, j'ai très compris... que vous aviez décidé de prendrevos distances...*" [My dear Romain, I fully understand, that you had decided to go away] (italics in original) [2]. Hermancia further

questions ‘Romain’ about his “*petite putaine*” [little whore] and, for the life of her (Hermancia), cannot understand what he finds in this *bitch*. Many Antilleans believe that talking to oneself is the first sign of madness. Caught in the act, some locals humorously act as if they are consulting self for expert advice. But Hermancia becomes no wiser in her case, as her *folie* is as real as her stereotype-evoking perfect diction. Peter Mayles’ online article, “They really do say ‘oh la la,’” agrees that the French believe French is of the first water: “They consider their language to be the most elegant, their culture to be the most refined, their diplomacy to be the most diplomatic, their wines to be the most aristocratic, and their gastronomy to be the most subtle and interesting” [8]. But Confiant’s representation of her madness deconstructs the faulty logics that align French with acumen. The Creolists declare: “We completely agree with the Haitian proverb that goes: “Pale’ franse’ pa vle’ di lespri” [Speaking French is no proof of intelligence] [1].

Confiant bends the sacrosanct language to capture things bizarre. This literary sacrilege depicts the “most beautiful of languages,” communicating nonsense as in Hermancia’s delirious or hilarious French. *Éloge* highlights why the transgression is possible: “We are obviously against the religion of the French language” [1]. The author upsets the done thing by italicizing Hermancia’s speech to suggest the oddity of the Creole woman’s French, similar to Giriane’s words to Médor. In the same vein, *Marisosé*, the Creole version of *Mamzelle Libellule*, accentuates French even more as the peculiar language that trespasses on holy textual Creole grounds. Confiant’s odd representations of French alert the reader that all is not well regarding the language of Hermancia and the sister, the *nouveau riche*.

How ironic that Godmother Hermancia, who undertakes to certify Adelise’s level of French, now passes as certifiable! Mad, mad like shad, this *non compos mentis* shocks Adelise in laughter. Instead of being protector and guide, Hermancia requires protection and guidance. She awakens from her sleepwalking state, screaming. The horror! The screaming terrifying horror! Her sister scurries to her assistance while Adelise fetches water to lull Hermancia, who remains in bed under medical supervision. The sister heavily chastises Adelise for the laugh, a kind of laugh that doesn’t make Giriane

laugh. The wise saying notes: “No all kin teet a smile” [Not all who laugh means well]. The reader, nonetheless, baffles at the unjust tongue-lashing: “You don’t even know how to read and write properly yet, but you spy on the doings of grown-ups” [2] Giriane then hurries to tell Adelise that she and her sister only accept “children of good family..., not the offspring of riffraff” [2]. How does Adelise’s illiteracy relate to the child’s spying or laughing abnormally at an abnormality? Isn’t the sister’s line of reasoning abnormal? Her *non-sequitur* reveals her faulty logics, preparing her for a *folie à deux* with Hermancia.

In another arbitrary and eye-popping move, Giriane dispatches Adelise to her mother for fear the child corrupts other children! This action exposes Giriane’s crookedness, asininity, and prejudice. Adelise’s stay prematurely ends after a day, and yet Adelise’s mother Hermancia does not repay. When Adelise reaches home, the mother tells her: “The money I gave to Madame Hermancia was what your godfather Leon sent me for your New Year’s gift. So this year you’ll get nothing” [2]. The godfather’s generosity accentuates Hermancia’s deviation from her role as godmother. These French women Confiant casts in a *demi-monde*. Adelise’s experience with them typifies many counter productive sacrifices of Creole speakers to master French. Confiant exposes the ravenous system of French acquisition that fleeces non-French-speaking Creole Martinicans, who end up at square one. Apparently, the warning signs on Hermancia’s gate should read: *cave canem* [beware the dog] and *cave proprietarium* [beware the owner]. By portraying the human canine in a helpless state of unquiet and never alluding to her again, Confiant lastingly cripples the proud woman, turning her house into a funny farm. He teaches the teacher a permanent lesson; and what a lesson he teaches! Since she is going crazy to be French, Confiant, with an eye for revenge, grants her her wish: Hermancia remains committed in a mental institution and to French, thereby becoming good for nothing. Let the Martinican Hermancia class know: “*Oh jailer of our creativity, the new eyes are looking at you*” (italics in original) [1]! By portraying Hermancia as *licking har Creole hed* [getting mad] Confiant subverts her.

A Doll to Undermine French Culture

The Martinican doll also serves to ridicule Hermancia much like Mapanje’s undermining of

colonial figures by aligning them to caricatured local symbols. Now, the novel describes Hermancia negatively through her *accoutrements*. She sports an *aggressive* perfume, thus causing dizziness in Adelise. The woman's abode bodes a *frightening* and *unfriendly* colonial *décor* with vases, cushions, small lamps, pictures on the wall, and books everywhere clogged with cob webs, old clothes, and other dust-collecting antiquities. Adelise next likens her to "a doll, an old doll," a humour-sparking diacope. The child has a field day with the description. Regarding the Martinican doll, a leading object of fascination in the isle, Lafcadio Hearn relates: "But of all the objects exposed for sale, the most attractive, because the most exotic, is a doll—the Martinican poupée" [9]. He instances the *poupée-câpresse*, a doll with smooth-brown, reddish leather body imitative of the *câpresse's* complexion, and the *poupée-négresse* with a black leather body. Unfortunately, Hermancia lacks the elegance (physical and sartorial) of these two dolls. Instead, she lives on borrowed time reminiscent of the effete leopards in Jack Mapanje's work [10]. Confiant again, by distorting an emblem, ridicules Hermancia. These laughter-evoking scenes facilitate the author's colonisation-destabilising agenda. The Latin motto signals: *castigat ridendo mores* [laughing corrects morals].

Confiant capitalises on chaffing to capture the Caribbean context. He derides Hermancia through Adelise's laughter, much as crafty chameleon ridicules Crocodile and Tiger. This Balzac and Rabelaisian style of ridiculing empowers the oppressed to exact revenge. Glissant goes further to distinguish the Creole laughter from the appreciative smile [7]. Creole laughter surfaces in cynicism, cachinnation, and internal ridicule. The guffaw Godmother Hermancia's delirium provokes in Adelise exposes and ridicules the untruthful, nonsense-speaking French guardians with their lack of pies. Laughter additionally trivialises an acute situation and assuages dolour [11]. The ridiculer fashions society's wise into fools, and transforms tear-jerking situations, like Hermancia's, into humour-filled ones. Despite Hermancia's sister's condemnatory tirade, the well-received Creole refrain exonerates Adelise who "tek kin teet an kibba heart bun" [takes skin teeth and cover heart burn]. The Creole expression describes dissimulating an unpleasant feeling (heart bun) through laughter

(kin teet). Adelise's double giggle at Hermancia, an old doll and a mad self-talker, viscerally associates buoyancy with Caribbean humour-anchored relationships. Such tendentious humour, seen as "having an aim," reveals how Creole subjects mobilise political agency in real life.

CONCLUSION

Confiant has exercised great caution in his authorial subversive walk. It is obvious that the author is quite perturbed by France's smothering presence in Martinique. However, at the same time, he recognizes how devastating it could be if France were to suddenly rupture ties with the island. His employment of foreign emblems (often seen as positive) as negative provides a powerful template for subverting the oppressor. A direct, frontal approach rarely accomplishes much in the face of a powerful and ever-present colonizer as in the case of Martinique and France. Instead, his skillful use of irony and the language of italicization along recalls the chameleon's subtlety in approach in its environment, in other words, an indirect approach. Readers, therefore, have to look in the subtext to truly figure out the camouflaged subversion of the author. In fact, while an Antillean may be familiar with the language and its implications, a European may find it difficult to uncover the author's intentions. These are the discussions authors want to engage and subtly influence locals over a period of time, inform their consciousness while getting them in a state of readiness to effect change were the need to arise.

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