INTERTEXTUAL SYMBOLISM, GULLAH AND LANGUAGE CONFLICT IN *DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST*

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Summary: The paper focuses on the analysis of the African-American film *Daughters of the Dust*. Due to the film's geographical setting, narrative techniques, feminist perspective and immersion in the postcolonial context, it is possible to analyze it in the context of intertextuality and in correlation with other important films and novels. The technique of juxtaposing the past and the present is emphasized as means of depicting the importance of communal memories. From a linguistic point of view, the film *Daughters of the Dust* represents an ideal site for investigating the characteristics of Gullah Creole as a product of contact between English and West African languages. Such linguistic contact represents a part of a broader cultural contact within which it is possible to identify language conflict and language ideology, notions which emerge in the analysis of efforts to maintain the cultural and linguistic identity of Gullah speakers.

Keywords: *Daughters of the Dust*, intertextual symbolism, communal memories, Gullah Creole, language conflict, language ideology

1. Introduction

Daughters of the Dust is an independent African-American film made in 1991. It was the first feature made by an African-American woman to receive a widespread theatrical distribution. Featuring a non-linear storytelling and a fragmented narrative line, the film had difficulties in finding a distributor, although it won the Sundance prize for cinematography. It was finally distributed by Kino International, a New York company, and eventually achieved a notable success. Mostly seen by a middle-class black female audience, the film's success surprised even Donald Krim, the company's president: «its appeal is wider than we thought. It's going to do over a million at the box office, which puts it in an elite category. Maybe a dozen art films a year reach that goal... It will hit more than a hundred markets before we're finished» (quoted in [Brouwer 1995: 13]).

Daughters of the Dust belongs to several very different subcategories of modern American independent film. At the same time it is an African-American film, a film made by a woman director and a film made outside the usual Los Angeles – New York film axis, belonging to a small category of regional films and featuring diverse, often non-urban settings.

Modern African-American cinema has developed alongside two very different concepts. The first of them refers to the blaxploitation films of the 1970s, which celebrated the rebellious and sexual nature of their main protagonists, but

soon became increasingly stereotypical in their representation. While this kind of cinema was very successful at the box office, the other type of African-American cinema revolved around the so called «L.A. School», featuring Charles Burnett, the most significant director of the movement, Billy Woodberry and Haile Gerima. These films challenged both the romanticized and idealistic portrayals of the blaxploitation cinema as well as Hollywood's mostly negative representation of African-American characters.

During the period of the classical Hollywood cinema, it was almost impossible to have a woman director, with very few notable exceptions (Ida Lupino). With the advent of independent films, the presence of women directors became more significant. While only Kathryn Bigelow found a special position within the mainstream cinema, independent films featured many women directors such as Allison Anders, Nancy Savoca or Maggie Greenwald, although majority of them made one film only: Stacy Cochran (*My New Gun*), Tamra Davis (*Guncrazy*), Darnell Martin (*I Like it Like That*), and Julie Dash.[1] Regional cinema is also one of the specific phenomena of modern American independent films. While there were important directors working in major urban centres (John Sayles and Abel Ferrara in New York, Quentin Tarantino and Todd Haynes in Los Angeles), there was an increasing number of directors who worked in non-traditional film regions: Long Island (Hal Hartley), the Midwest (Steven Soderbergh), Texas (Richard Linklater), the Northwest (David Lynch, Gus Van Sant), or Florida (Victor Nuńez). This enabled the filmmakers to explore their respective indigenous subcultures. The one filmmaker whose regional films most resemble *Daughters of the Dust* is Victor Nuńez, whose features *Gal Young 'un*, *Flash of Green*, *Ruby's Paradise* and *Ulee's Gold* are all set in Florida's mangrove swamps. The lyrical beauty of the area, with its idiosyncratic culture, plays a pivotal role in the development of the story. *Ruby's Paradise*, featuring a voice-over narration and having a strong feminist bent, also resembles *Daughters of the Dust* because of the vital role of the landscape in the depiction of the dilemmas of its main protagonist.

Daughters of the Dust was made with the support of American Playhouse, a part of the Public Broadcasting System, whose aim was to finance the representations of original American dramas.[2] It is the second installment in the series of films dedicated to depicting the experience of African American women at various points in history. The first film, the thirty-four-minute black and white drama *Illusions*, was made while Dash was still at UCLA, and focuses on a light-skinned African American woman passing as white in the 1940s Hollywood. The third part of the intended trilogy, *Bone, Ash, Rose*, will be set around the middle of the twenty-first century. In his analysis of *Daughters of the Dust*, Emanuel Levy juxtaposes the meditative pacing of the film (which explores the identity crisis of black women) with the violent inner-

[1] For a more comprehensive overview of this topic, cf. [Andrew 1998: 343].

[2] Other influential films produced by the American Playhouse include *Safe*, a delicate psychological drama by Todd Haynes, *El Norte*, a touching drama on Guatemalan workers by Gregory Nava and Tom Kalin's *Swoon*, a homosexual drama made in the film noir tradition.

city dramas of the period.[3] Emphasizing the impressionistic nature of the film, Levy's analysis focuses on the visual and mystical components of the film:

> «Using the format of oral history, the women's conflicts are presented in beautiful imagery laced with narration in a Gullah dialect. As they move around in long white dresses, the women are in sharp contrast to the landscape's palette of orange, green and brown. The alternating viewpoints, contained in a tale steeped in mysticism, clarify both the recollection of slave ancestry and the progressive drive to the new world [Levy 1999: 387]».

Daughters of the Dust is created in manifold oppositions, ranging from the lyrical visual beauty of the film[4] to its underlying subtext of slavery, the isolated island community opposed to the promised land of the American North, the values of tradition and bonds with ancestors versus the new forces of capitalism and industrialization. The same conflict is reflected in the characters, who symbolize different aspects of the same underlying binary opposition. There are two main narrators (the old generation versus the new), and the characters are either for respecting traditional values (Nana, Mary, Eula, Iona) or confronting them and embracing the values of the new world (Haggar, Viola). The values and symbols of tradition (Nana's charms, the graveyard, a wooden figure floating in the lagoon, the heritage of African religion) are opposed to the symbols of new civilization (the photographer, Viola's conversion to Christianity, Yellow Mary's prostitution, Yellow Mary and Trula's lesbian relationship).

From a linguistic point of view, the script of *Daughters of the Dust* presents itself as an ideal site for identification and analysis of the characteristics of the Gullah variety, primarily because of the time and the location of the story, but also because of the director's idea about the film's subject. The year is 1902 and the location is Ibo Landing[5] (Sea Islands), a place isolated from the mainland where the preservation of the West African tradition and language was still strong at the time. As for the director's idea, Dash [1992: 46] notes that she wanted to analyze «the condition of being African American in the Sea Islands at the turn of the century». The long isolation from the mainland includes the preservation of a particular language variety which represents a mixture of English and West African languages. The importance of studying this variety is also confirmed by the fact that more than half a million people in the Gullah region speak the Gullah dialect [Gordon 2004: 5], but in many other parts of the US as well.

2. The intertextual nature of the film

Due to its specific geographical setting (the ante-bellum South), unusual narrative techniques, a pronounced feminist perspective and an immersion in the postcolonial exploration of the importance of communal memories and the cultural heritage of the ancestors, *Daughters of the Dust* shares many inter-

[3] For a detailed analysis of the film, see Levy [1999: 386-7].

[4] The lyrical soft focus cinematography by Arthur Jafa emphasizes the blurring boundary between the realistic and mythical elements of the film.

[5] The location is sometimes referred to by the name *Igbo Landing* as well.

textual components with a number of influential films and novels. The narrative technique of the film, where the story is being reconstructed from the perspective of various narrating voices and intermittent flashbacks, resembles the technique of the Griot storytellers (mostly represented by Nana), a technique widely used by the most prominent African filmmakers (Gaston Kaboré, Idrissa Ouedraogo, Souleymane Cissé).

The Blood of Jesus, a 1941 religious drama made by Spencer Williams, is one of the foundational films of African American cinema. In her film Dash pays an homage to Williams by incorporating a baptismal ceremony, similar to the one showcased in *The Blood of Jesus*. The relationship between the living and the dead and the hybrid nature of different religions are other themes shared by both films. Zeinabu irene Davis' twenty-eight-minute film *Mother of the River* is an equally potent exploration of the shared cultural identity, relationship between parents and children and the powerful impact of African heritage. Both Dash and Davis use the trope of magic realism to convey a rich tapestry of historical and imagined events, an interplay of everyday hardships and supernatural powers.

The legacy of slavery is a theme with resonant echoes in many African American films. Haile Gerima's *Sankofa* and Kasi Lemmons's *Eve's Bayou* are important contributions to this canon, dealing with the symbolic presence of African ancestors (*Sankofa*), the power of the supernatural and the dissemination of the oral tradition (*Eve's Bayou*). Black women are seen as having a vital role in preserving the legacy of the past and representing its healing power. A list of films dealing with feminist themes may also be expanded with *Naturally Native*, written and directed by female Native Americans, which shares the strategy of multiple female narrative voices.

The Joy Luck Club, a Chinese American film directed by Wayne Wang, similarly explores a process of creating cultural identity by juxtaposing events from China with events experienced by the second generation living in America. Featuring only female voices, the film gives a strong feminist perspective of intercultural differences. The voices of men are completely silenced and objectified, and the same principle was already anticipated in *Daughters of the Dust*, made a few years before. There are only three male characters in Dash's film: Mr. Snead, Eli and Saint Julian Last Child, who identifies himself as the son of the Cherokee nation. All these characters are presented only through female perspectives (Eli is denied the vital information of who *ruint*[6] his wife and comes to his senses only by listening to Nana's healing words), giving the voice to persons who were mostly silenced in previous stereotypical representations of black women (cf. Spielberg's *The Color Purple*). Saint Julian Last Child, the only non African American protagonist, is the most enigmatic character in the film. Sharing the legacy of slavery, he is nevertheless rendered invisible in the film; his character never talks, but is always spoken for. The same fact is noticed by Brown:

[6] An expression used by the characters in the film to indicate rape.

> «Located on the periphery of the ensemble cast and community drama, Saint Julian Last Child, "Son of the Cherokee Nation", is objectified on several levels: as a male character by a female filmmaker; as a non-black by an African American; as an indigenous American by a culture asserting its own reconstituted yet distinctively foreign slave heritage [Brown 2003: 4]».

The only access to his thoughts is through Iona, who reads his letter to her relatives. The end of the film, when Saint Julian Last Child and Iona ride off into the sunset, subverts the conventional Hollywood films, where this sort of ending would have been utterly impossible. While there are many ethnographic details depicted in the film, Dash's aim is not to give a realistic presentation of the story, but to lend it a poetic, mythical quality in the vein of magic realism.

Apart from its intertextual film references, *Daughters of the Dust* shares many characteristics with some important African American literary works. Paule Marshall's 1983 novel *Praisesong for the Widow* is also located in the mythical Ibo Landing and the novel's legendary event of the refusal of enslavement (symbolized by the wooden submerged figure in the film) is explicitly mentioned in Dash's script. Gloria Naylor's novel *Mama Day* anticipates Dash's binary oppositions of the Sea Island life and life in the mainland urban areas, where black rural south becomes a source of healing power for its inhabitants. The awareness of the spiritual underlying subtext and the narrative voice of Unborn Child, the narrator of the film, links *Daughters of the Dust* with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the 1988 winner of the Pulitzer prize. Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, written primarily in the Southern African American dialect, is also a nostalgic exploration of the mythical past, a similar amalgam of ethnographic folklore and idealized communal memories.

Notwithstanding the many intertextual relations, Dash's project is highly idiosyncratic, revealing a strong authorial perspective. Dash states in an interview:

> «The films that I make are from a Black aesthetic and from an African American woman's reality. I make the kinds of films that I've always wanted to see. My films are about women at pivotal moments of their lives, enigmatic women who are juggling complex psyches; who speak to one another in fractured sentences, yet communicate completely through familiar gestures and stances; women who remind me of my old neighborhood and the women who raised me».[7]

3. Importance of communal memories

The complex narrative structure, resembling the Griot storytelling techniques and providing multiple narrative voices, gives a sense of fragmentation, of blurring the lines between the present and the past, the real and the imagined. This technique is one of the most widely used devices of the modernist cinema, where the exploration of the present is inevitably linked with reminiscences of the past. *Memories of Underdevelopment*, a Cuban film by Tomás Gutiérrez

[7] Quoted in Ogunleye [2007: 160].

Alea, is a psychological drama investigating the complex interweaving of the present and the past, with important political undertones.[8] The same kind of juxtaposing the past and the present can be found in two modernist films by the famous Croatian author Vatroslav Mimica. *Prometheus from the Island of Viševica* offers a dense palimpsest where the main protagonist is haunted by the memories from the past, trying to escape the legacy of war devastations and underdevelopment. His next film, *Monday or Tuesday*, takes place in one geographical setting (the city of Zagreb) over the period of one day, and this narrative structure is the starting point for investigating the uneasy tension between the real and the imagined.[9] Probably the most famous explorations of the memory process are modernist films by Alain Resnais, *Last Year at Marienbad* and *Hiroshima My Love*, where the impact of memories is the true core of the film.[10]

Roger Ebert describes Dash's film in similar fashion, comparing it to «a tone poem of old memories, a family album in which all of the pictures are taken on the same day.»[11] Emphasizing feeling, and not the conventional storyline, the film explores the impact of tradition facing an isolated community on the eve of impending change. The comparison to a family album is reminiscent of *Smoke*, another film by Wayne Wang, where the plot revolves around the main protagonist who works in a store, but whose aim in life is to document the subtle changes in his neighbourhood by taking one photograph of the same corner at the same time every day. The structure is the binary opposite – one day in *Daughters of the Dust* versus the time span of twenty years in *Smoke*, but the impact is the same – both films are about recording the process of change and the impact of past upon our lives.

The story of *Daughters of the Dust*, imbued with supernatural allusions and mysterious symbolism, is also inspired by the legacy of Yoruban cosmology. Every important character in the film is an image of a certain deity in Yoruban religion. Thus, Nana Peazant, the matriarch of the family, represents Obàtálá, the creator of humanity, Eula[12] is Oya/ Yansa (deity of winds and storm, bringer of change), her husband Eli is Ogun the warrior, while the Unborn Child

[8] The Third World cinema, encompassing Cuba, Africa, Brazil and Argentina, is one of the primary influences on the L.A. School.

[9] Mimica's next two films, *Kaja, I Will Kill You* and *The Event*, both have intertextual links with Dash's film. The former is an exploration of violence in a secluded Mediterranean city, mostly isolated from foreign influences, offering similar ethnographic insights. The latter takes place in the swampy marshes of northern Croatia, resembling very much the setting of *Daughters of the Dust*.

[10] Because of their complex and fragmented narrative structure deploying the associative montage technique, all of these films are rather hermetic and inaccessible to the wider audience.

[11] http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19920313/REVIEWS/203130303/ 1023

[12] Eula, as a creator of change, is the one who provides a direct link between the present and the past. Just before the migration to the North she says: «We're the daughters of those old dusty things Nana carries in her tin can. . . . We carry too many scars from the past. Our past owns us».

represents Eshu-Elegba, the keeper of the crossroads between the living and the spirit world.[13] The voice of the Unborn Child, whose figure is seen only by the photographer and the audience, but not by the main protagonists, is vital in connecting the film to the Yoruba tradition. This notion is also emphasized by Gates:

> «The most fundamental absolute of the Yoruba is that there exist, simultaneously, three stages of existence: the past, the present, and the unborn. Esu represents these stages, and makes their simultaneous existence possible, „without any contradiction", precisely because he is the principle of discourse both as messenger and as the god of communication [Gates 1988: 37]».

Although *Daughters of the Dust* has many overlapping story lines and is strongly nonlinear in construction, the narrative coherence is achieved by the use of symbols (dust, indigo dyed hands, constant images of water, submerged figure in the lagoon, African hairstyles, Nana's charms) and the words spoken by Nana, emphasizing the importance of the memory of the ancestral heritage. Nana's words from the beginning: «I am the first and the last, I am the honored one and the scorned one», resonate strongly throughout the film. In the graveyard scene with her great-grandson Eli, Nana explains the direct link between the ancestors and the descendants, where she represents «the last of the old», while the unborn child is «the first of the new». At the end of the film, when she distributes the charms, the same words are echoed again. The charms are given as «a bond between those who go North and those who remain; those of us who are here and those of us who are across the sea – a connection of the last of the old and the first of the new». Reconciling the collective memory and the legacy of slavery with the hopes of fulfilling the American Dream [Jones 1993: 20], Dash has managed to create a multilayered film where she unified the visual, symbolic, narrative and linguistic aspects of a seemingly fragmented structure.

4. Creole varieties as a field of inquiry within language conflict and ideology

Due to lack of research, the African element in the English language (as it is used by African Americans) was for a long time thought of as «corruption of English or the babbling of children», or a feature of the «innate inability of Africans to learn English» [Asante 2005: 65-66]. The existence of views according to which Gullah was considered a part of «baby-talk» which the whites needed to use in contact with African slaves is confirmed by other authors as well [Turner 2002: 5, Pollitzer 1999: 8, 108]. Although the impact of West African cultures is evident in all aspects of life in South Carolina [Rucker 2006: 167], the undermining of the immense influence of African languages on the creation of Gullah Creole has a long tradition.[14] It can be associated with the

[13] For a more comprehensive overview of Yoruba deities, cf. [Kaplan 2007: 523].

[14] Although the paper does not deal with theories of general creole origin and particular origin and development of Gullah Creole, the reader is referred to Wardhaugh [2006: 73-87], McWhorter [2005: 72-101], Ansaldo, Matthews [2007] and Pollitzer [1999: 124-126] regarding these issues.

lack of familiarity with West African cultures [Bascom 1975: 281], but, more importantly, with the fact that acknowledgment of such influence implies recognition of «an African thread in the cultural fabric of the white South» [Jones 1999: 104]. Besides the fact that Gullah Creole is a product of contact between English and West African languages [Weldon 2006: 179, Cross 2008: 128], this is precisely the notion on the basis of which it is possible to account for the maintenance of Gullah Creole by referring to a particular type of language ideology – the one which emerges in contexts of language contact and language conflict.

In such contexts, language ideology is frequently motivated by strong ties between specific language varieties and particular nations, minorities and ethnic groups. As language contact usually includes contact between a particular (ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.) majority group and one or more (ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.) minority group(s) and, as every situation of language contact implies some form of language conflict [Salverda 2003: 130, Nelde 1991: 59], the struggle for the maintenance of Gullah Creole presents itself as an example of contestation between the majority Standard English and minority creole speaking communities. In identifying language contact and conflict as one of the most important sites for investigating different language ideologies, Woolard [1998: 17] emphasizes that creole varieties are, among other outcomes of language contact, especially susceptible to negative evaluations and frequently judged «grammarless and/ or decadent and therefore as less than fully formed».

The whole film is clearly about conflict – one which emerges between the traditional Gullah culture as conserved on the Sea Islands and modern American culture awaiting the descendants of African slaves who are preparing to leave Ibo Landing for the mainland. Since language is one of the key elements of every culture, our aim is to identify ways in which the aforementioned cultural conflict is accounted for by the extent of usage of Gullah linguistic elements by the characters of the film. In doing so, we will be able to analyze the presentation of language conflict and consequential language ideology.

5. Analysis of linguistic features of Gullah Creole

The following linguistic analysis of Gullah Creole presented in the film *Daughters of the Dust* will largely be based on the works of one of the greatest authorities on this variety – Lorenzo Dow Turner, primarily on his book *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect.*[15] The analysis will cover most of the linguistic elements that Turner describes as characteristic of Gullah Creole and that we identify in the speech of the characters in the film. In each of the presented examples emphasis is placed on a particular linguistic form (underlined elements refer to Standard English as presented by the producer, writer and director, Julie Dash [1992], while the same elements placed in bold

[15] See Pollitzer [1999: 109], Jones [1999: 102], Bascom [1975: 287] and Weldon [2004] about the importance of this work for the discovery of the true nature of Gullah Creole. The first edition of the book was published in 1949, but throughout this paper we will use the third edition published in 2002.

refer to their equivalents in Gullah Creole as used by the characters in the film). Although much of the distinctiveness of Gullah Creole resides in its characteristic patterns of rhythm, stress and intonation [Pullitzer 1990: 107, Jones 1999: 102, Turner 2002: 249-253], our analysis will focus on specific phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic features of Gullah.

5.1. Consonant deletion

Turner [1990: 132] notices a tendency according to which speakers of Gullah pronounce English words that end in a consonant either by adding a vowel or by dropping a consonant. In example 105 Nana drops the final consonants in many words: ***firs****(t)*, ***las****(t)*, ***understan****(d)* and in the following example as well:

1. Nana: *They'll come to you when you least* ***expec****(t) them.* [97][16]

5.2. Nouns

Instead of adding the suffix *-s* to indicate the plural of nouns, Gullah distinguishes the number of nouns «by the use of a qualifying demonstrative pronoun or a numeral adjective» [Turner 1990: 131] or «by placing the third person pronoun 'they' before the noun» [Turner 2002: 223].

2. Nana: *That's the word that wets their* ***lip****(s) in the nighttime.* [86]
3. Nana: *We don't know where the* ***recollection****(s) come from.* [96]
4. Nana: *Let them touch you with the* ***hand****(s) of time.* [97]
5. Nana: *(...) that built up all those* ***plantation****(s) from swampland.* [105]
6. Nana: *Our* ***spirit****(s), numb from the sting of fever from the rice* ***field****(s). Our* ***back****(s), bent down forever (...).* [106]
7. Hairbraider: *Old people think they have all the* ***answer****(s).* [128]
8. Daddy Mac: *(...) because our* ***parent****(s) took us by the hand (...).* [140]
9. Nana: *They didn't keep good* ***record****(s) of our* ***birth****(s), our* ***death****(s), or the selling of the* ***slave****(s) (...).* [140]
10. Eula: *Upon their* ***ankle****(s) and their* ***wrist****(s) and fastened around their* ***neck****(s) like dog* ***collar****(s).* [142]
11. Eula: *(...) because we're all good women/* ***woman****.* [157]

There is also no indication of possessive case:

12. Hairbraider: *That's* ***Gussie****('s) daughter, isn't it? Old man* ***Peazant****('s) granddaughter has come home!* [110]
13. Yellow Mary: *Is this the same little girl I used to rock in* ***Gussie****('s) yard?*[111]
14. Yellow Mary: ***St. Christopher****('s) charm, (...).* [117]

5.3. Verbs

Gullah verbal system makes no distinction between singular and plural verbal forms. The omission of the third person singular *-s* for present tense and the omission of the verb *to be* is also very frequent. The absence of the third person singular *-s* for present tense is confirmed by Turner [1990: 131] as he identifies

[16] The numbers in brackets refer to page numbers in the script where the example is found [Dash 2002].

it as «the phenomenon of the verb form remaining unchanged throughout the singular and plural».

15. Nana: *That('s) the word that **wet**(s) their lips in the nighttime.* [86]
16. Nana: *North (is) what they wake up whispering in their husband's ears.* [86]
17. Iona (reading St. Julian Last Child's letter): (…), *everything **seem**(s) new, everything **seem**(s) good, everything **seem**(s) possible*. [91]
18. Haagar: *(...), they say a woman who **know**(s) how to cook (...).* [112]
19. Hairbraider: *(...) Nana Peazant **need**(s) to pack her belongings just like the rest of us, (...).* [129]
20. Haagar: *That('s) what she **want**(s). (...), she('s) too much a part of the past.* [129]
21. Eula: *Nobody **remember**(s) (...). (...), the war my grandmother always **talk**(s) about (...)*. [141]
22. Eula: *Our past **own**(s) us.*[157]

The following are also instances of absence of present and past form of the verb *to be*:

23. Nana: *Who('s) that? What('re) you children up to now?* [92]
24. Nana: *You know that('s) so.* [93]
25. Nana: *They('re) one, they('re) the same.* [94]
26. Iona: *Oh girl, you('re) so silly.* [103]
27. Viola's mother: *Pot('s) called (...)*? [104]
28. Viola's mother: *Now that('s) all that grandma remembers.* [104]
29. Hairbraider: *That('s) Gussie's daughter, isn't it? Who('s) that with her?* [110]
30. Nana: *What('s) that you wear around your neck?* [116]
31. Yellow Mary: *You('re) a real back-water Geechee girl!* [120]
32. Eula: *It('s) beautiful.* [120]
33. Myown: *She('s) a new kind of woman.* [123]
34. Haagar: *Where('s) that girl?* [127]
35. Myown: *That('s) mine.* [134]
36. Eula: *(...) because she('s) a part of you. Just like we('re) a part of our mothers.* [157]
37. Nana: *This (was) the worst place to have been born during slavery.* [105]
38. Nana: *Eula said I (was) the bridge that they crossed over on. I (was) the tie between then and now.* [107]

The fact that there is no distinction between singular and plural forms is evident in the usage of *don't* instead of *doesn't* for third person singular negative statements in the present tense, *was* instead of *were* for second person singular and first person plural past tense, and *is* instead of *are* for first person plural present tense.

39. Eli: *Just because we're crossing over to the mainland, it doesn't/ **don't** mean we don't love you. It doesn't/ **don't** mean we're not going to miss you. And it doesn't/ **don't** mean we're not going to come home and visit with you soon.* [92]

40. Nana: *Man's power doesn't/* ***don't*** *end with death.* [93]
41. Haagar: *The buzzard doesn't/* ***don't*** *circle in the air just for fun (...).* [112]
42. Eula: *That doesn't/* ***don't*** *mean you can't drown here.* [119]
43. Yellow Mary: *He doesn't/* ***don't*** *need to know (...).* [123]
44. Eli: *When we were/* ***was*** *children (...).* [95]
45. Nana: *I heard you were/* ***was*** *coming.* [116]
46. Nana: *Eli, never forget who we are/* ***is***.[96]

There is also the characteristic usage of *ain't*:

47. Nana: *It's not/* ***ain't*** *right to tease old folks, (...).* [92]
48. Nana: *You know your granddaddy didn't/* ***ain't*** *like to see a woman chewing tobacco.* [93]
49. Nana: *You're worried that baby Eula's carrying isn't/* ***ain't*** *yours (...).* [94]
50. Nana: *(...), you aren't/* ***ain't*** *going to no land of milk and honey*. [97]
51. Hairbraider: *That's Gussie's daughter, isn't/* ***ain't*** *it?* [110]
52. Eli: *I don't have/* ***ain't got*** *any more dreams, cousin.* [132]

When it comes to tense, the verb form is frequently identical for present, past and future reference, and there is a special form to indicate continuous action [Turner 1990: 131, 2002: 225]. The tendency of using the simplest form of the verb is visible in omission of the *-ed* verbal suffix and absence of irregular past forms of verbs as well. Asante [2005: 71] discusses the lack of inflection in differentiating between present and past. The examples in the film include:

53. Nana: *Now everything they own is all* ***box****(ed) up,* ***pack****(ed) up, and ready to head North*. [87]
54. Nana: *I visit with old Peazant every day since the day he* ***die****(d)*. [93]
55. Nana: *(...) because she got/* ***get*** *forced.* [94]
56. Nana: *You can't give back what you never* ***own****(ed). Eula never* ***belong****(ed) to you, she* ***marri****(ed) you.* [95]
57. Eli: *We* ***believe****(d) in the newsprint on the walls. We* ***believe****(d) in the frizzled-hair chickens.* [95]
58. Nana: *Eula said I was the bridge that they* ***cross****(ed) over on.* [107]
59. Eula: *My Ma came/* ***come*** *to me last night, you know. She took/* ***take*** *me by the hand. I needed/* ***need*** *to see my Ma. So I wrote/* ***write*** *her a letter (...). I waited/* ***wait****, and my Ma* came/ ***come*** *to me.* [119]
60. Daddy Mac: *They stole/* ***steal*** *Bilal from Africa (...). He came/* ***come*** *over on the very last slave ship.* [125]
61. Yellow Mary: *When they went/* ***go*** *to Cuba, I went/* ***go*** *with them. I* ***nurse****(d) their baby and took/* ***take*** *care of the other children*. [126]
62. Daddy Mac: *And they taught/* ***teach*** *us (...).* [140]
63. Nana: *I recollect how we* ***live****(d) in the time before freedom came/* ***come****, (...).* [140]
64. Eula: *(...) they just stopped/* ***stop*** *and took/* ***take*** *a look around (...).* [141]
65. Bilal: *I came/* ***come*** *here on a ship (...).* [151]

Since there is no special form to indicate continuous action, we find instances such as:

66. Iona: *What are/ **do** you **look**/ looking at?*[103]
67. Eula: *(...) you and me standing here talking/ **talk**.* [141]
68. Eula: *They just kept walking/ **walk**, (...).* [142]

The tendency to use the simplest verb forms is evident in the omission of the *-ing* form to mark continuous aspect. Furthermore, the combination of *been* + *da* (where *da* indicates imperfective mood) is common in Gullah and takes the form *beena.* A similar example is provided by Frank [2007: 162]: *A beena gii ya de money* 'I was giving/ used to give you the money'. This is confirmed by Turner [2002: 225] who emphasizes that *beena* [*bɪnə*] placed before a verb «may be expressed in English by the past, perfect or pluperfect tense and the section may or may not be continuous». In the film, the omission of *-ing* and usage of the form *beena* is evident in:

69. Nana: *Ya see, I've been/ **beena** working/ **work** on a plan.* [87]
70. Eli: *I wasn't/ **beena** scared of anything*. [96]
71. Nana: *I've been/ **beena** waiting to see you since daybreak.* [116]

Completive aspect is indicated by a preverbal marker *done* in Gullah [Frank 2007: 162]. Asante [2005: 78] states that it has perfective meaning and marks «the verb for completed action without reference to time». This is evident in the film:

72. Eli: *(...) who has done/ **done** this to us?* [100]
73. Hairbraider: *Old man Peazant's granddaughter has come/ **done come** home!* [110]
74. Haagar: *I have borne/ **done borne** five children (...).* [129]
75. Haagar: *Lord knows you've worked/ **done worked** hard (...).* [153]

In case of the future form *will*, Frank [2007: 162] uses the following example as an illustration: *E gwine hab a heapa money* '(S)he will have a lot of money'. However, the *gwine* element does not appear in the film in reference to the future *will* form, but only the main verb and, in some instances, *to be* + verb in *-ing* form:

76. Older cousin: *Iona, you('ll) have to go North with us*. [91]
77. Nana: *They('ll) come to you when you least expect them.* [97]
78. Nana: *They('ll) hug you up quick and soft (...).* [97]
79. Eula: *As much as I like to fish, I('ll) never put a pole in that water.* [118]
80. Eli: *But I'm still leaving/ still **be leaving** (...).* [132]

In cases in which infinitive forms are used, Weldon [2006: 180] emphasizes West African influence in the usage of the word *for* instead of *to* to form infinitival expressions in Gullah. This is exactly what occurs in the film as well:

81. Nana: *Now everything they own is all boxed up, packed up, and ready to/ **for** head North*. [87]
82. Nana: *But when they come today to/ **for** kiss these old withered-up cheeks bye-bye, (...).* [87]
83. Eula: *As much as I like to/ **for** fish, I'll never put a pole in that water.* [118]
84. Eula: *I needed to/ **for** see my Ma.* [119]

85. Eula: *(...) Yellow Mary sent money to/* ***for*** *get (...).* [155]
86. Eula: *There's going to be all kinds of roads to/* ***for*** *take in life (...).* [157]

There is also the nonstandard use of the verb *to learn*:

87. Nana: *I'm trying to teach/* ***learn*** *you how to touch your own spirit*. [96]

5.4. Pronouns

Turner [1990: 131, 2002: 227] states that the main characteristic of Gullah pronouns is that «the nominative or subjective forms of the personal pronoun are practically the same as the objective forms and the forms of the possessive». Although the first person singular nominative pronoun is usually *mi*, Turner also states that it sometimes takes the form [*ʋɪ*]. This is precisely the pronunciation we find in many examples, such as Nana's speech which opens up the film (see example 105), but in many others throughout the whole script. In the same example we find the first person singular possessive pronoun. It sometimes has the form of [*mʋɪ*], which is the form present in Nana's pronunciation of *my daughters* and *my name* in this example, but also in the following:

88. Eli: *This happened to* ***[mʋɪ]*** *wife.* [95]

However, in many other instances we can identify the usage of *mi* form of the possessive pronoun. This form of the possessive pronoun can be correlated with the example presented by Frank [2007: 165]: *E da me fada* which corresponds to English 'He is my father'. Here is an example from the film:

89. Nana: *My/* ***mi*** *life is pretty much over (...).* [86]

Third person plural nominal pronoun usually takes the form of [*dɛm*]. However, Turner confirms the usage of [*de*] as well [2002: 227], which is what occurs in the film:

90. Nana: North, *they/* ***[de]*** *say.* [86]

Both the third person plural possessive and the third person plural objective pronouns usually take the form of [*dɛm*] [Turner 2002: 227]. These forms are associated with the characteristic of substituting *d* and *t* for the voiced and voiceless varieties of the English *th* sound [Turner 1990: 132], which can be found in the pronunciation of the definite article *the* and other words:[17]

91. Nana: *That's the/* ***[dɪ]*** *word that wets their/* ***[dɛm]*** *lips in the nighttime.* [86]
92. Nana: *Sometimes we dream them/* ***[dɛm]***. [96]

Third person singular nominative pronoun *he* takes the form of either *i* or *him*; third person singular objective and possessive pronouns *her* take the form [*ʃi*] and both the Gullah form of first person plural objective and possessive pronouns is *wi.* [Turner 2002: 227]. The following are the examples from the film:

[17] Since utterances are full of definite articles and words with the *th* sound throughout the script, we will present just one example of this pronunciation.

93. Nana: *I visit with old Peazant every day since the day* <u>*he*</u>*/* ***him*** *died*. [93]
94. Nana: *But we carry these memories inside of* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi****.* [96]
95. Nana: <u>*Our*</u>*/* ***Wi*** *hands, scarred blue with the poisonous indigo dye (...).* [105]
96. Nana: <u>*Our*</u>*/* ***Wi*** *spirits, numb from the sting of fever (...).* <u>*Our*</u>*/* ***Wi*** *backs, bent down forever (...).* [106]
97. Hairbraider: *(...) Nana Peazant needs to pack her belongings just like the rest of* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi****, (...).* [129]
98. Daddy Mac: *(...) and not for* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi****.* [135]
99. Daddy Mac: *(...) because our parents took* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi*** *by the hand (...). And they teach* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi*** *(...).* [140]
100. Baptist Minister: *Come join* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi****.* [144]
101. Nana: *The bottle tree reminds* <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi*** *(...).* [148]
102. Nana: *(...) before she was sold away* from <u>*us*</u>*/* ***wi***. [150]
103. Eula: *That's the spot where the slave girl got frowned by* <u>*her*</u>*/* ***[ʃɪ]*** *owner.* [118]
104. Unborn Child: (…) *set* <u>*her*</u>*/* ***[ʃɪ]*** *off.* [164]

5.5. Proper names

In his presentation of the problems which are most frequently encountered by investigators of Gullah Creole, Turner [1990: 134] states that, although the Sea Islands and the mainland are places in which specific names of West African origin are very frequent, researchers often fail to recognize them as such. This might be accounted for by the fact that Gullah speakers usually have two names – «one used in school and with strangers in English, the other is the basket name or nickname» [Pullitzer 1999: 109]. The origin of the second name is most frequently found in one of African languages. The name of the main character, the 88 year-old matriarch and great-grandmother of the family in *Daughters of the Dust* is *Nana*. Turner [2002: 135] includes it in his list of Gullah personal names and traces its origin in several West African words. The three origins that could be strongly correlated with the character in the film are traced to Yoruba (Southern Nigeria), with the meaning 'name of a female deity', Twi (Gold Coast) and Tshiluba (Belgian Congo), both with the meaning 'grandparent'. These meanings are perfectly described in the opening lines of the film in which Nana describes herself:

105. *I am the first and the last. I am the honored one and the scorned.*
I am the whore and the holy one. I am the wife and the virgin. I am the barren one, and many are my daughters.
I am the silence that you cannot understand. ***I am the utterance of my name****.* [75-76]

Another proper name in the film is *Eli*, which can be traced back to Fon (Dahomey) and means 'far off' [Turner 2002: 80]. In the film Eli is Nana's grandson who is married to Eula. Eula has been violated and is pregnant. Eli is not sure whether the child is his and behaves distant. In the screenplay Dash explains:

106. *Eula turns towards him but Eli remains with his back to her* [80].

Jones [1999: 102] emphasizes Turner's identification of peculiar proper names like *After-dark* as instances of loan translations with origins in West African names which are based on a specific pattern of forming proper names. In *Daughters of the Dust* we can find similar instances in which proper names are created by means of loan translation from West African languages, for example, *Yellow Marry* and *Hairbraider*. The name *Yellow Mary* belongs to the character of the family's prostitute and the director herself emphasizes the following when she refers to her as light-skinned in the screenplay and compares this character to her friend Trula:

107. *(...) Trula's skin color is more 'Yellow' than Yellow Mary's.* [78]

In the course of the film Yellow Mary also emphasizes that part of her name after meeting Mr. Snead who addresses her only with *Mary*. She replies:

108. *Yellow... They call me «**Yellow** Mary»*. [78]

Such associations in personal names are confirmed by Turner [2002: 31] who states that they can be motivated by a specific feature, such as the height, size, or color of the child, but they could also be motivated by other objects of nature or of human manufacture. An example of the second type of motivation in which names are associated with objects of human manufacture is found in the film when Nana reminds Eli of how they used to call him:

109. *«Goober Head». We used to call you goober head. Remember that? Goober*[18] *means **peanut**.* [93]

The personal name *Hairbraider* might be considered a loan translation from West African languages since «some names indicate the general or specific occupation of the child's parents» [Turner 2002: 31]. The character of Viola describes ways in which names were coined, and she mentions some which the director uses in this film: *Myown* 'My Own', *Iona* 'I Own Her', and several others which do not appear in the film itself [Dash 1992: 138].

There are also two interesting names for the islands mentioned in the script – *Dahtaw*, which Dash presumes to be Gullah for *Daughter Island* [1992: 88] and *Dafuskie*, which is the Gullah pronunciation of *The First Key Islands*, often called *Keys*.

5.6. Other words of African origin

West African influences are confirmed in the usage of other nouns besides proper ones. Weldon [2006: 180] emphasizes the following: *buckra* 'white man', *gumbo* 'okra' and *tote* 'carry'. In the film, Viola's mother questions children on their knowledge of Gullah words which are different from Standard English: *gumbo* 'okra', *sojo* 'pot', *deloe* 'water', *diffy* 'fire' [Dash 1992: 104]. Yellow Mary uses another word of African origin to describe her employers – *buckra*, the meaning of which is described by Turner [2002: 191] as 'white man'.

[18] Pollitzer [1999: 8] emphasizes that *gubber*, as a common word in Gullah, has spread in American speech as well.

5.7. Word formations

In the discussion on how Gullah speakers, «instead of using a single word for a person or thing», frequently employ «a group of words in which some distinguishing characteristic of the person or thing is expressed», Turner [2002: 232] presents the same example which is used in the film – the expression *de klin*. He defines it as 'dawn', i.e., 'day clean', a translation of a Wolof expression. In the film it is used by Nana:

110. *I've been waiting to see you since daybreak/* ***de klin****.* [116]

Turner [2002: 235] confirms that Gullah is rich in reduplicated forms of words which are used to influence the meaning of the word, i.e. to intensify it. In the film we find the following example:

111. Eula: *You're going to be very sorry/* ***sorry sorry*** *if (...).* [156]

5.8. Syntactic features

We find frequent multiple negations in the film:

112. Nana: *You know your granddaddy didn't like to see a/* ***no*** *woman chewing tobacco.* [93]
113. Eli: *I don't feel like she's mine anymore/* ***no more****. When I look at her, I feel I don't want her anymore/* ***no more****.* [95]
114. Eli: *I don't have any/* ***no*** *other choice.* [96]
115. Nana: *(...), you aren't going to any/* ***no*** *land of milk and honey*. [97]
116. Hairbraider: *I wouldn't eat them anyhow/* ***no how****, (...).* [112]
117. Yellow Mary: *Don't tell him anything/* ***nothing****.* [123]
118. Eli: *I don't have any/* ***no*** *more dreams, cousin.* [132]
119. Myown: *You don't have a/* ***no*** *house.* [134]
120. Viola: *We don't need any/* ***no*** *charms (...).* [150]

Also, in sentences in which the infinitive phrase is the subject, the first word is deleted:

121. Nana: *(It)* ***is*** *up to the living to keep in touch with the dead, Eli.* [93]

An interesting syntactic feature of Gullah Creole is the word order in interrogative sentences where the subject is placed before the verb. Although Standard English can also form questions with the same word order, the difference is that in Gullah there is rarely a rising intonation to indicate that the sentence is interrogative [Turner 2002: 218-219].

122. Eli: *(Did)* ***someone put*** *the fix on me*? [95]
123. Myown: *Ma, can I/* ***I can*** *taste one?* [112]
124. Nana: *What kind of belief is that/* ***that is****? (Does)* ***he protect*** *you?* [117]
125. Cousin: *What kind of woman is she/* ***she is****?* [121]

6. Conclusions

The notion of conflict is interwoven with every aspect of *Daughters of the Dust.* It represents the backbone of the film and is expressed as conflict between traditional, African and modern, American values. Language is certainly a major aspect which needs to be taken into consideration in descriptions of this

type of conflict. On the basis of the analysis of the most important characteristics of Gullah Creole presented in the film, we can confirm that the conflict is, among other means, illustrated by linguistic elements used by the characters. Most of the basic characteristics of Gullah Creole, as outlined by Turner, are traceable in the speech of the characters. The speech of four generations of African descendants portrayed in the film allows for conclusions about the extent to which each generation preserves the characteristics of Gullah Creole. Naturally, most of the instances of such usage are identified in the speech of the representative of the oldest generation – Nana. Her grandchildren and their spouses use these characteristics to a lesser degree. The frequency of their usage of the Gullah characteristics depends on how they interpret the conflict between the different systems of values. For example, although Eula and Violet represent the same generation, their attitudes towards the conflict are completely different. Eula emphasizes the traditional, folk Gullah heritage and Viola does not see anything wrong with modernity, Christianity and the impact the move to the mainland might have on the traditional way of life. Their worldviews can be correlated with the extent of their usage of Gullah linguistic elements. Eula's speech bears many characteristics of Gullah Creole, while Viola's speech is practically Standard English with hardly any traces of Gullah elements. The speech of Eula's Unborn Child, the narrator and representative of the youngest generation, also shows the characteristics of Standard English. She does not use the grammatical features of Gullah (lack of *-s* for plural of nouns; lack of *-s* in third person singular present tense; lack of irregular past forms of verbs, etc.). However, unlike Viola's, her speech contains Gullah phonological characteristics (e.g. the substitution of *d* and *t* for the voiced and voiceless varieties of the English *th* sound in her utterance of *grandmother* [Dash 1992: 80], and one instance of the [ʃɪ] form of pronoun at the end of the film (see example 104)). Although one might expect the speech of the youngest generation to be the closest to Standard English, Viola's «more standard» speech can be accounted for by the fact that she left the island, while the Unborn Child remained to live there with her parents.

Since the film allows for identification of language conflict within the general cultural conflict (originating from cultural and linguistic contact), that type of conflict may be correlated with a particular type of language ideology. In the case of analyzing creole varieties, it works both ways – as means of arguing for the superiority of Standard English with all the benefits its usage implies, but also as a framework within which it is possible to emphasize the importance of conserving the characteristics of Gullah Creole in order to retain one's identity and the survival of traditional, Gullah culture.

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