Université de Montréal

**Direction des bibliothèques**

**AVIS**

Ce document a été numérisé par la Division de la gestion des documents et des archives de l'Université de Montréal.

L'auteur a autorisé l'Université de Montréal à reproduire et diffuser, en totalité ou en partie, par quelque moyen que ce soit et sur quelque support que ce soit, et exclusivement à des fins non lucratives d'enseignement et de recherche, des copies de ce mémoire ou de cette thèse.

L'auteur et les coauteurs le cas échéant conservent la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent ce document. Ni la thèse ou le mémoire, ni des extraits substantiels de ce document, ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans l'autorisation de l'auteur.

Afin de se conformer à la Loi canadienne sur la protection des renseignements personnels, quelques formulaires secondaires, coordonnées ou signatures intégrées au texte ont pu être enlevés de ce document. Bien que cela ait pu affecter la pagination, il n'y a aucun contenu manquant.

**NOTICE**

This document was digitized by the Records Management & Archives Division of Université de Montréal.

The author of this thesis or dissertation has granted a nonexclusive license allowing Université de Montréal to reproduce and publish the document, in part or in whole, and in any format, solely for noncommercial educational and research purposes.

The author and co-authors if applicable retain copyright ownership and moral rights in this document. Neither the whole thesis or dissertation, nor substantial extracts from it, may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms, contact information or signatures may have been removed from the document. While this may affect the document page count, it does not represent any loss of content from the document.

Université de Montréal

# Geographies of Displacements: Theorizing Feminism, Migration, and Transnational Feminist Practices in Selected Black Caribbean Canadian Women's Texts

par

Amy Kebe

Département d'études anglaises

Faculté des arts et des sciences

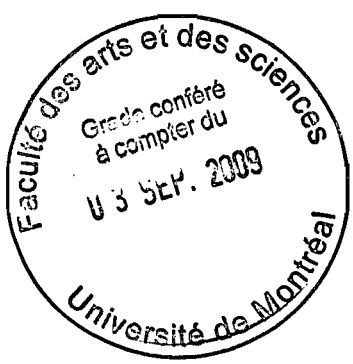
Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures

en vue de l'obtention du doctorat

en études anglaises

Mai 2009

© Amy Kebe, 2009



Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures

Cette thèse intitulée :

Geographies of Displacements:
Theorizing Feminism, Migration, and Transnational Feminist Practices in Selected Black Caribbean Canadian Women's Texts

présentée par :

Amy Kebe

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

FES

# Résumé

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, un nombre important de théories est apparu pour remettre en question la prédominance de doctrines traditionnelles dominantes comme le féminisme occidental ou les conceptions masculines postcoloniales. Une de ces théories est le Féminisme Transnational qui essaie de venir à bout des limites de la théorie occidentale féministe aussi bien que celle de la diaspora nationaliste postcoloniale. En tant que méthode féministe postcoloniale qui prend en considération comment les notions d'origine ethnique, et de classe sont exacerbées par le fait d'être de sexe féminin, les études transnationales féministes sont de considérables alliées, contrairement aux théories traditionnelles qui sont juste concernées par la race *ou* le sexe.

Cette dissertation analyse les œuvres de Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip, et de Makeda Silvera en s'appuyant sur ces récentes théories transnationales féministes. En mettant l'accent sur le fait que leur identité est multiple et fluide, ces écrivaines renoncent aux théories simplistes qui s'occupent juste de question de sexe, en même temps qu'elles refusent les théories patriarcales ineptes. Situant leur projet féministe dans le contexte de l'esclavage et de la mondialisation, ces écrivaines insistent sur le fait que les théories antérieures de race influencent comment leurs corps noirs sont perçus dans le contexte actuel. Je maintiens que de la même manière que l'esclavage a empêche la mère esclave de garder sa progéniture, le système capitaliste contemporain produit également des enfants sans mère, du fait qu'il utilise ces mères comme travailleuses migrantes.

En analysant la servitude dont les corps noirs font l'objet, tant aussi bien dans le passé que dans le présent, ces écrivaines juxtaposent des histoires de femmes immigrantes à celles de leurs ancêtres. A travers un vaste corpus de livres, allant d'essais, à la poésie, en passant par les documentaires et la fiction, elles théorisent comment le corps féminin noir a été réduit à un territoire envahi aussi bien par l'esclavage que par le capitalisme. Par le biais de leurs héroïnes, j'essaie d'examiner comme ces femmes habitent le milieu incertain qui existe entre le patriarcat et l'impérialisme capitaliste. Le message suprême est que cette

espace de marginalité est aussi un espace de résistance, où existent simultanément la résistance, la consolation et la transformation.

**Mots-clés** : Féminisme, Migration, Transnational, Esclavage, Travail, Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Makeda Silvera, Postmodernité, Diaspora.

# Abstract

For the last two decades, a growing number of racialized and historicised standpoints have emerged to challenge the relevance of traditional paradigms such as mainstream western feminism, or male-centred postcolonial theory. One such groundbreaking attempt is transnational feminist studies, which challenge global feminism's monolithic focus on gender, and the ossified notions of identity politics offered by most masculinist notions of diaspora and nation formation. As a feminist approach which takes into consideration how gender collides with race, national origin, and class in the context of neo-colonial imperialisms, transnational feminist studies attempt to bridge the gap left by these theories that either look at gender *or* at race.

This dissertation examines the work of Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip, and Makeda Silvera in the light of these recent transnational feminist developments. By insisting on a fluid and multiply positioned self, these writers enact a transnational feminist identity that repudiates simplistic notions of gender oppression at the same time as it challenges masculinist notions of home. Situating their feminist project within the context of slavery and globalization, these writers insist on the need to apprehend the extent to which the former constructs of black femininity and black womanhood allow for the contemporary displacement of their raced and sexed bodies. I argue that in the same way slavery prevented the black slave woman from mothering her children, contemporary capitalism also produces motherless children in the ways in which it uses the female migrant body for labour.

Analysing, thus, the multiple erasures of black female bodies in both ancient and contemporary times, these writers construct tales of generational displacement of Caribbean women's immigrant experiences in Canada juxtaposed against their African forebears' experiences of slavery. Through an eclectic corpus ranging from fiction, essays, poetry, oral narratives, and documentaries, they theorize the black female body as a site of oppression and suffering, a territory mapped by slavery, as a site of reproduction through which new

slaves will be issued, as well as a capitalist extraction site, through which postmodernity sustains itself. Through their characters, I attempt to analyse how these writers inhabit the in-between space that exists between patriarchal imperialism and colonialism. For the ultimate message is: this place of marginality in which they dwell in is both a place of deprivation as well as a space of resistance, a space that embodies multiple possibilities, including that of healing and transformation.

**Keywords**: Feminism, Migration, Transnationalism, Slavery, Labour, Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Makeda Silvera, Postmodernity, Diaspora.

# Table des matières

# No Site is Immune from History

(Susan Stanford Friedman)

# Acknowledgments:

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of many people.
I would like to thank first my supervisory committee for helping me through this journey. I will be eternally indebted to both Caroline Brown my head director, and to Lianne Moyes who served more than a co-director. You have been both exceptional mentors, and without your constant guidance, kindness and encouragement, I would not have been here today. Thank you very much. I also would like to thank my committee members: Heike Härting for her steady support and mentoring; Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi for his focused and challenging mentoring. I also would like to thank the English department for providing financial opportunity and a vibrant learning environment. I am indebted to professors Micheal-Eberle Sinatra, Robert Schwartzwald, and Joyce Boro for their help and their support. My deepest thanks also go to Madame Simard and Madame Gemme for their constant help since I came to the English department, to France Giasson; and to Céline Bisson and Douglas Delcid at Udem BLSH. I also would like to thank Terence Frater for his revision of the manuscript. Thanks to you also Richard for providing emotional and intellectual collaboration and to you also Andrea for all you did for me. I also would like to thank Pr Harting and Pr Kamboureli for providing the intellectual forum of the TransCanada PhD Workgroup, and to all the members. My deepest thanks go to my external Leslie Sanders and to Dionne Brand for introducing me to Leslie.

Many other people have also been important in this journey: from Tonton Ibrahima and Pr Kandji in Senegal, to Jeanne Brooks, Heather Blease, Karen Tilbor, Carl Smith, Candace Myers, Peggy Callaghan in Maine; to Auntie Minda and Karen Moyes-Hinkley in Ontario, to Susan Knutson, Betty Hogan, Tunde Oduntan, Marjorie Stone, Evangelia Tastsoglou, Alexandra Dobrowolsky in Nova Scotia, and Anita Gagnon, and Cigogne in Montreal. I could not have been here without all your help, support and reinforcement.

*For Madeleine and Ibou, and for our families and friends*

*For my mother for her strength and resilience*

*For all the daughters...*

# UPRISING

**[Bob Marley]**

---

*Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;*
*None but ourselves can free our mind.*
*Wo! Have no fear for atomic energy,*
*'Cause none of them-a can-a stop-a the time.*
*How long shall they kill our prophets,*
*While we stand aside and look?*
*Yes, some say it's just a part of it:*
*We've got to fulfil de book.*
*Won't you help to sing*
*Dese songs of freedom? -*
*'Cause all I ever had:*
*Redemption songs -*
*All I ever had:*
*Redemption songs:*
*These songs of freedom,*
*Songs of freedom.*

**(REDEMPTION SONG)**

# INTRODUCTION

**Writing "In-Betweeness" Postmodern Deterritorializations**

The dialogic pull between *routes* and *roots* has become the predicament of our contemporary postmodern era, in which many of us now have locations in the plural.[1] This is especially relevant when we look at how contemporary theory is replete with metaphors of travel, geography and space, such as nomadism, migration, exile, homelessness, displacement, to name only a few. This "poetics of displacement," according to James Clifford, which has come to represent most of the writings about place, has been dictated to by the condition of postmodernity, in the ways in which the grip of global capitalism has resulted in a shifting landscape of group identity. Arjun Appadurai calls this the "global ethnoscape".[2] Homi Bhabha has also theorized about this postmodern predicament in *The Location of Culture*, by advancing that the figure of homelessness, of "the unhomely," is a paradigmatic postmodern condition (1) producing subjects caught between "rootedness and errantry" (Glissant and Wing 211). It represents a hybrid site of in-betweeness, of living between cultures, between languages, between nations, between races, which are social spaces in which "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt 4).

Furthermore, writers such as James Clifford,[3] Paul Gilroy,[4] Susan Sandford Friedman,[5] and Stuart Hall,[6] have used the homophone roots/routes in order to not only describe two different modes of cultural identifications, but also to argue for dynamic and reciprocated movements between rootedness and rootlessness. Whereas 'roots' are often

---

[1] See Caren Kaplan's Introduction in *Questions of Travel.*

[2] See Appadurai's article "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity.*

[3] James Clifford, "Travelling Cultures," *Cultural Studies*, ed. Cary Nelson Lawrence Grossberg, Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[4] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[5] See her "Routes/Roots: Boundaries, and Geopolitical Narratives of Identity" in *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998

[6] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, ed. Les Black and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000).

discarded because of their undertones of a fixed homogeneous location, with ossified and bounded notions of tradition and culture, 'routes,' on the other hand, imply the fluid, vibrant, intercultural/transcultural movement between cultures, nations, languages. This latter metaphor captures the writings of Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip, and Makeda Silvera, the writers whose work is the focus of this dissertation, writings that are rooted in slavery and oppression and routed through dislocation, economic imperialism and globalization, with notions of rupture, loss, displacement, mutability, discontinuity, heterogeneity, struggle, resistance, liberation, and of moving between barriers:

> Moving, we confront the realities of choice and location. Within complex and ever-shifting realms of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing relations? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed, ready to offer our ways of seeing and theorizing, of making culture, towards that revolutionary effort which seeks to create space where there is unlimited access to pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible? This choice is crucial. It shapes and determines our response to existing cultural practice and our capacity to envision new, alternative, oppositional aesthetic acts. It informs the way we speak about these issues, the language we choose. Language is also a place of struggle.
> (Hooks *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* 145)

This thesis presents and analyzes the writings of the Caribbean women authors mentioned above. Through the characters in their works, they articulate their own struggles, marginalisation and advocacy against imperialism, displacement and oppression, and the resultant search for identity and belonging, due to their history, race, gender, and sexual preferences. As Clifford has argued in the acclaimed essay "Diasporas," the "old localizing strategies" that traditionally identified people through nation, race, community or region no longer function in the logic of our Global Age (Qtd in *Questions of Travel* 134). Indeed, far from being a mere economic process and exchange, the global capitalist economy has also resulted in forms of destabilized nationalisms that point to the urgency of moving beyond theorizing national ties of identity, to theorizing other outer national forms of filiations. Rather than performing a mere "organic unfolding of identity," it is rather "the mapping of

territories and boundaries" that is important, in order to highlight what Susan Standford Friedman calls the "spaces of dynamic encounter, the 'contact zone,' the 'middle ground,' the borderlands, *la frontera*" (Susan Stanford Friedman 19).[7] This living in a transnational, liminal state between nations, languages and cultures becomes the predicament of postmodernity, which none of the three writers discussed in this thesis escape from. Dionne Brand, for example, writes: "I don't know where I'm from" (*In Another Place, Not Here* 117), before adding, "I'm from no place at all that I could describe" (181). In *In Another Place Not Here*, the figure of the "displaced, homeless person," represented by her character Elizete, becomes the most poignant and tragic representation of our transnational and capitalist postmodern time (Davies *Black Women, Writing, and Identity : Migrations of the Subject* 113). Dionne Brand admitted in an interview with Frank Birbalsingh that, like herself, most of her characters live between "here and there" (122), astraddle between "not nowhere and is" (*In Another Place* 18).[8] For such characters, the politics of dislocation that silence their voices are always inscribed in place and space.

---

[7] In her chapter "Routes/Roots": Boundaries, Borderlands, and Geopolitical Narratives of Identity," Susan Standford opens her discussion by referring to the play between rooting and routing:

> THINKING geopolitically about identity is a "spatial practice," to echo Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. It involves maps and mapping, routes and routing, borders and border crossings. As a form of relational spatialization, however, it incorporates the opposing dimensions of the homophone routes/roots. Traveling is a concept that depends upon the notion of stasis to be comprehensible. Routes are pathways between here and there, two points of rootedness. Identity often requires some form of displacement—literal or figurative—to come to consciousness. Leaving home brings into being the idea of "home," the perception of its identity as distinct from elsewhere. Rootlessness—the sense that Spivak expresses of being "always on the run"—acquires its meaning only in relation to its opposite, rootedness, the state of being tied to a single location. Moreover, routes imply travel, physical and psychical displacements in space, which in turn incorporate the crossing of borders and contact with difference. Roots, routes, and intercultural encounter depend upon narrative for embodiment. What I plan to explore is the narrative poetics of geopolitical identity as the symbiosis between roots and routes and the encounters they engender as they are mediated through other particularities based on gender, sexuality, class, religion, and so forth. (Mappings 151)

[8] In this interview, Brand also tells Frank Birbalsingh: "I finally decided that I don't live there, and in some ways I don't live here either, so I live between here and there".

The two other writers discussed in this thesis, Makeda Silvera and Marlene Nourbese Philip, as women and black persons displaced by race, gender, sexuality, and place, straddle two nations, two cultures, multiple 'languages,' and deeply express the transnational displacements so relevant in our times, as shown in the corpus on hand.[9] But as Susan Standford Friedman contends, this sense of dislocation that Brand, Silvera, and Philip express leads to a complex space that is at once desired and at the same time invites transgression:

> As the liminal space in between, the interface of self and other, the interstitial location of syncretic transculturation, borders highlight the paradoxical processes of connection and separation. Regulatory borders are erected to defend against the pollution of the Other or to impose confinements of the Other. But borders are also porous sites of intercultural mixing, cultural hybridization, and creolization. Borders are spaces where murderous acts take place, where identity, particularly in its fundamentalist form, ensures clashing differences and fixed limits. They are also the spaces of desire for connection, utopian longing, and the blending of differences. (27)

But "what happens" Hans Mayer asks, "when the crossing over to the marginal and the outside has been determined by birth: through one's sex, origin, peculiarities of body or soul?" Mayer's conclusion is non-ambivalent: "then one's existence itself becomes a transgression of borders".[10] In writing this thesis, this is exactly how I read the intervention of the writers discussed here, who not only "'transgress' when they transport themselves 'across patriarchally-determined boundaries" (Ghosh-Schellhorn 8*)* but also, whose very existence becomes a transgression of borders just because of their gender, their sex, their

---

[9] For Brand: *In Another Place not Here*, Silvera: *Silenced: Talks with Working Class West Indian Women about their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada,* and for Philip: *She Tries Her Tongue Her Silence Softly Breaks*, which all outline the issue of "moving out of one's place" in order to recover a voice and push against the boundaries set by race, class and sexuality.

[10] Hans Mayer's comment is quoted from Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn's edited collection of essays, *Writing Women Across Borders and Categories* in which Ghosh-Schellhorn did a 'free translation' of Hans Mayer's original quotation:
"Wer die Grenze überschreit, steht draußen.... Wie aber, wenn der Übertritt ins Abseits und Außen durch Geburt auferlegt war: durch et das Geschlecht, die Abkunft, die körperlich-seelische Eigenart? Dann wurde die Existenz selbst zur Grenzüberschreitung." Hans Mayer. Außenseiter. (1975. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1983: 18).

class, and their race. Indeed, I claim that as women, Black, and [sometimes] lesbian, a significant number of Caribbean Canadian women do not fit within our contemporary "patriarchal, racist, and homophobic society" (25) as Makeda Silvera contends. In their writing, Brand, Philip, and Silvera seek to expose factors such as patriarchy, racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and ethnocentrism that collide with black women's lives, often negatively defining who they are and their place in society. If belonging is impossible in the Caribbean because of the persistence of the legacy of slavery, the capitalist exploitation of the cane field, or because of their gender and sexuality, in Canada, to be black and be at home is both to belong and not to belong, as Rinaldo Walcott maintains.

Since these multiple displacements are discursively produced, a challenge to, and rewriting of, the master narratives is a must for these writers who then carve what Margaret Lawrence calls a discursive space in order to rupture these dominant discourses. More than that, the liminal subject position that places these women both inside and outside the sphere of power, signals their ambiguous position, on the edge, between margin and center. Furthermore, this in-between position, in which Silvera, Brand, and Philip found themselves, becomes the source of creation in their art. By inscribing themselves and their characters within "the crevices of power," Philip, Silvera, and Brand chart a new terrain, an alterable, albeit uncomfortable, in-between place, which just like Linda Brent's grandmother's garret, becomes a place characterized both by limitation and possibility.[11] According to Katherine McKittrick, by using the garret, which is a place of deprivation as well as a strategic geographical site, women like Silvera, Brand, and Philip assert their sense of place. Likewise, I state that these writers use their feelings of dislocation and

---

[11] In *Demonic Ground*, Katherine McKittrick analyzes how Linda Brent's retreat in the garret becomes a strategic use of space, which allows her to escape from enslavement:
If the geographies of slavery are primarily about racial captivities and boundaries, and the garret is both a site of self-captivity and a loophole of retreat, it becomes increasingly clear that it is Brent's different sense of place that allows her to explore the possibilities in the existing landscape. This is especially relevant given the lack of authority black women's geographic knowledge and experiences are given during (and after) transatlantic slavery. The space Brent discloses both in the landscape of slavery and through her sense of place, demonstrates an unresolved, but workable, opposition to geographic domination. (40)

displacement in order to forge more habitable spaces for themselves. In this sense, space becomes for them a limited place, as well as an enabling departing point from which to assert their entitlement to a better space and place.

## Background to Thesis

I came to this particular body of "Caribbean Canadian women's writing" through the detour of "Black Women's Writing." Initially, when starting my doctoral work, my intention was to write my thesis about a larger body of writing by Black women writers in order to continue my earlier research undertaken for my M.A. thesis. However, once I "encountered" Dionne Brand's novel *In Another Place Not Here*, in my English-Canadian Literature class during my very first freezing cold Montreal Winter, everything changed. I fell madly in love with Brand's prose poem, and her bewitching narrative. From that moment on, I wrote all my essays for that class based on that book. Believing that my engagement with *In Another Place Not Here* was not enough, when it was time for me to write my PhD thesis proposal, Brand's novel stood vividly in front of my eyes, begging to be included.

Born in 1953 in Guayguayare, Trinidad, Dionne Brand immigrated to Canada in 1970 at the age of seventeen. She has authored eight volumes of poetry, including the Governor General Award-winning *Land to Light On* (1997); *'Fore Day Morning: Poems* (1978); *Primitive Offensive* (1982); *Winter Epigrams and Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia* (1983); *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* (1984); *No Language Is Neutral* (1990); *Land to Light On* (1997); and the Trillium Award for Literature winner, *thirsty* (2002). Brand has recently written another piece of poetry, *Inventory* (2006), which has been nominated for the 2006 Governor General's Award for poetry, shortlisted for the 2007 Pat Lowther Award and the Trillium Book Award. Brand is also a novelist, an essayist, and oral historian, as well as a literary critic. Besides her fiction work: *Sans Soucis and Other Stories* (1988), In Another Place Not Here (1996), *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999), and *the* winner of the 2006 City of Toronto Book Award –*What We All Long For-*

(2005), Brand has also written the oral histories of Black Women, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920's—1950* with Lois De Shield (1991), and a collections of oral histories regarding the struggle of black people in Toronto with Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta, *Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism* (1986). Together with Linda Carty, Brand co-authored the collection of essays, *We're rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (1994), and the witty article titled "Defining World Feminism: If this is Global, Where the hell are we?" These articles have also been written by Brand: *Sight Specific: Lesbians & Representation* (1988), "Abortion Justice and the Rise of the Right" in *Twist and Shout: A Decade of Feminist Writing in This magazine* (1992), "Dualities" in *Brick* (1998), and "Black Women and Work: The Impact of Racially Constructed Gender Roles on the Sexual Division of Labour" in *Scratching the Surface: Canadian, Anti-Racist, Feminist Thought* (1999), "Sleeping's Beauty and the Prince Charming" in Elizabeth Nunez and Jennifer Sparrow's *Stories from Blue Latitudes: Caribbean women writers at home and abroad* (2006). Brand has directed four documentary films for the National Film Board of Canada: *Listening for Something -- Adrienne Rich and Dionne Brand in Conversation*, *Long Time Comin'*, about two Black women artists, *Sisters in the Struggle*, about Black women activists fighting racism and sexism, and *Older, Stronger, Wiser*, which portrays five older Black Canadian women,[12] and she has written the narrative of this film: *Borderless: a docu-drama about the lives of undocumented workers* with Director Min Sook Lee in 2006. Brand has also published in the area of Children's Literature: *Earth Magic: poems*, published in Toronto in 2006 by Kids Can Press. Immersed in activism and revolutionary work, Brand first and foremost identifies herself as a leftist, whose work is entirely dedicated to causes about revolution and socialism. As she told Makeda Silvera in an interview, she has never been ashamed of being a leftist, and has always seen her work as "leftist work" ("In the Company of My Work: An Interview with Dionne Brand" 365). So when Brand went into Journalism in her early years in Canada, she did not see her work as

[12] Bibliographical information provided by the Athabasca University Center for Language and Literature.

a career, but as "struggle work" (Butling and Rudy 70), so convinced was she about the need to dedicate herself to a cause.

Thus, guided by the uncontrollable desire to fit Brand into my larger project about black women's writing, my intention was to map the writings of heterogeneous groups of black women, by pulling together Buchi Emecheta from the African continent, Alice Walker from the African American perspective, and Dionne Brand. Initially then, my project was to be a cross-cultural comparison of African American, West African and Caribbean women's texts. My main point would be to draw out the tensions between the two terms "womanism" and "African feminism." To frame my argument, I thought that I would look at how the two concepts converge and complicate each other, and try to illuminate the differences between them. Apart from the real dangers of cultural homogenization that such a comparative approach might have caused, I was also met with the dilemma that such a project would take far too much time and could turn into one more worthy of several books instead of a doctoral dissertation. Confronted with the necessity of downsizing the scope of my research and focusing either on the African, African American, or Caribbean texts, without hesitation, I chose to write on Caribbean women writers. Although I wrote my M.A. dissertation on African women writers with a focus on Somali women, and was well familiar with African American women's writing, my encounter with Dionne Brand's *In Another Place Not Here* led me to embark on this journey of immersing myself in Caribbean women's writing. In fact, it was not really hard to make a decision, for Emecheta's ambivalence about feminism, exemplified by her "feminism with a small f" had started to make me hesitant about including her in my corpus. Besides, when I read passages from *In Another Place Not Here*, such as "a girl gazing out of a window would let the rice burn" (40), or about the displacement and anonymity of immigrants lost in the emptiness of Toronto's streets, where no one would look at your face and ask "Oh! Is you again," "Aha where your mother? What she doing now?" (63), I felt that I could conciliate issues of personal belonging and (un)belonging with my research.

As a black woman from Africa now living in Canada, I could relate to the historical journey of Dionne Brand and the other two Caribbean writers Marlene Nourbese Philip and Makeda Silvera, whose writing I subsequently also fell in love with. For, in living between two cultures, we end up losing all tangible boundaries. We live in this "neither nor" state, putting on characters, and shedding characters all at once. In Canada, I have the freedom to enjoy a system free of patriarchal abuses, at least when I compare it to more patriarchal societies such as the one I came from in Senegal. However, my race excludes me from being fully accepted in my country of adoption. As a woman, I can be free, relatively speaking, to exercise whatever freedom I want –as a married woman, mother and student– but as a black woman, I suffer from a racial discrimination that I have never experienced in my native home. I still have the vivid memory of that man, who, because I returned his gaze, shouted at me: "fuck you under a tree." At first I wanted to convince myself that I was dealing with a misogynist, who did this to all women he met; however, the "under the tree" troubled me. Why did he add this? Was he referring to me as someone who comes from the "bush," as I was told by a woman at the library? This "under the tree" term made me think that this was a racial insult. I was insulted not only as a woman by him shouting "fuck you," but also as a black woman with the inclusion of "under a tree". So, whereas a white woman would have suffered only from one assault -being insulted for her gender- I have the additional burden of the racial insult too. It felt the same on the day a woman at the Samuel Bronfman Library (yes, at the Université de Montréal!) told me to go back to the jungle where I came from. I wanted to tell her that I did not come from a jungle but from a city, but I guess that would have fallen upon deaf ears. Stereotypes are hard to overcome, aren't they? Many black women in the diaspora have theorized what I am personally experiencing, how sometimes home is nowhere for women, especially for black women whose racial and gendered identities render the concept of "home" a problematic one. So, in addition to keeping me very warm during this, my first Montreal winter, since it confirmed that other people were experiencing and writing about what I was personally experiencing, *In Another Place Not Here*, initiated a passion for Caribbean women's

writing, and little by little, a whole world began to unfold for me. My decision having been made to include Dionne Brand in my dissertation, I started to research other African Caribbean women writers whom I could also include in my thesis.

In reading Philip, I reflected on Mae Henderson's theory of the "simultaneity of discourse," which enables black women writers like Philip whose "privileged" positionalities as both insiders and outsiders, allow them to speak in "dialogically racial and gendered voices to the other(s)" (Henderson 146-47). Born into a middle-class family in Moriah, Tobago, in 1947, Marlene Nourbese Philip was part of the black and brown social class with aspirations for their promising sons and daughters to pursue professions such as medicine, law, nursing, teaching and accounting. In the wake of independence and its "heady promises," Philip notes that she first conformed to her family's aspirations by taking her first degree in Economics at the University of the West Indies (*She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* 10). After immigrating to Canada in 1968, she completed an MA and an LLD in Political Science at the University of Western Ontario, and then went on to practice immigration and family law for seven years. As Henderson suggests, if black women writers, like Philip, at once privileged and oppressed, are engaged in a contestorial struggle with what Henderson calls the "Hegemonic Dominant," meaning the white patriarchal and imperial world, they are also engaged in a contestorial dialogue with the "Subdominant" – black men– notwithstanding the dialogue aimed at their inner self. This notion of speaking in tongues, thus, leads them away from an examination of "how the Other has written/read black women" toward an examination of "how black women have written the other(s)' writing/reading black women" (20). In relation to Philip, I also drew on Smaro Kamboureli's notion of "body politics" that she developed in her reading of Joy Kogawa's *Obasam*. By taking into account how the body's visuality and physicality become its pathological condition, we can thus more easily access how Naomi's "racialized subjectivity" has written her out, as a raced and sexed Other (192). However, as Kamboureli also makes explicit, this body politics is a double-edged sword, since the body

becomes a paradoxical site upon which domination is enacted, but at the same time, it also remains the locale through which agency and resistance are sought out.

Mohanty's assertion that women workers of particular caste/class, race, and economic status are necessary to the operation of the capitalist global economy, and that particular kinds of women: "Poor, Third and Two-Thirds World, working-class, and immigrant/migrant women – are the preferred workers in these global, 'flexible' temporary job markets" (246) informs my reading of Makeda Silvera with her work, *Silenced.* The third of the three Caribbean women writers discussed in this thesis, Makeda Silvera, was born in 1955 in Kingston, Jamaica, and immigrated to Canada at the age of twelve. As a Canadian writer and editor with African Caribbean roots, Silvera's work embodies the concerns of women of colour regarding nationalism, multiculturalism, and politicization. Indeed, as a black woman, she confronts multiple challenges: her race excludes her from mainstream culture in Canada, while in the Caribbean she is an ultimate *Other*, because of her gender and —more emphatically— her lesbian identity. Silvera firmly believes that Black women's lives cannot be reduced to simplistic analysis by looking at the women's race or gender dimensions individually. She is, instead, strongly convinced that race and gender intersect in shaping structural and political responses to women of colour. Silvera dramatizes the particular plight of the black woman writer, caught at the intersection of multiple oppressions:

> The Black woman writer was full of despair; she wanted to explain to the villagers, once again, that what made writing dangerous for her was who she was. Black/woman/lesbian/ mother/worker. [...] But they would not let her continue. In angry, harsh voices they pounded her head. "You want to talk about sexuality as a political issue? Villagers are murdered every time they go out, our young people jailed and thrown out of schools." Without success, she explained that she wanted to talk about all the dangers of writing. (*Her Head a Village* 17-8)

With an acute awareness that contemporary feminist and anti-racist discourses have both failed to adequately address the intersecting patterns of racism and sexism by responding

only to one *or* the other, Silvera's literary commitment, just like Brand's and Philip's, is both feminist and anti-racist.

## In Search of an Encompassing Theoretical Discourse

Even though I rapidly found many Caribbean Canadian women of African ancestry, I was met with the dilemma of being unsure whether there was any theoretical framework associated with such a specific body of writing as "African Caribbean Canadian women's writing". This was quickly resolved when I started to explore the body of work and to examine the discourse. In "This Body for Itself," Dionne Brand affirms: "I am a woman, Black and lesbian. The evidence of this is inescapable and interesting" (*Bread out of Stone* 20). It then became evident to me that this intersectional identity that Brand is claiming, can be seized neither by an all-feminist perspective that homogenizes the category woman and empties it of its other constituencies, nor by a male-focused diasporic approach which privileges patriarchal notions of identity. Granted, when Dionne Brand affirmed that she thought to take refuge in feminist theory in order to transcend the primacy of black male's history, she realized that "something was missing there" too (*No Burden to Carry* 29). For Brand, the same "axiomatics of imperialism" that have produced tangentially built characters such as Brontë's Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, or Jean Rhys' Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, have written black Canadian women out of the margins of both feminist and black male histories (29). Therefore, I thought that the pragmatic method that imposes itself for analysing Caribbean Canadian women's writing is one that does not privilege gender over race or vice versa. In *Woman Native Other*, Trinh Minh-Ha has also challenged the presupposition that women can prioritize their allegiances to gender or race as if there was a hierarchy. Indeed, for diasporic women writers such as Brand, Silvera, and Philip, there is no prioritizing of their racial or gendered identities, for both matter. Brand recollects being asked "how to decide which to be –Black or woman–and when [...] as if there were a moment I wasn't a woman and a moment I was not Black" (10-11). Brand's affirmation of the difficulties inherent in assuming her multiple identities resonates with Philip's

uneasiness about how this intersectional identity is being addressed. In "Ignoring Poetry," Philip strives to answer the question of "how does one write poetry from the twin realities of being Black and female in the last quarter of the twentieth century?" (*A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays* 123). Besides insisting that there is no separation between the "untwinned, subversive realities" of being black and female, Phillip challenges the discourses of feminism and male nationalism, for their lack of usefulness in integrating questions of gender as well as race:

> Sexism is to racism as feminism is to civil rights? Multiculturalism? Black Power? None of these suggestions is satisfactory, and the difficulty in finding the word that corresponds with feminism is linked to some of the difficulty around the concept of anti-racism. ("Gut Issues in Babylon" 219)

Philip also echoes Makeda Silvera, who outlines the failure of both feminist theory and postcolonial theory to encompass her multiply-articulated black female subjectivity. In discussing with Dionne Brand and other feminists of colour such as Himanni Bannerji and Prabha Khosla in *The Issue is 'Ism*, Silvera talks about the "day-to-day social rape" she is submitted to as a black woman: "we live in a racist society and I am reminded of that every day, every hour of my life" (16). More importantly, Silvera recollects her experience of being called "Bitch! Bitch!" by a drunken "big redneck" man on the street. Despite the presence of two other men, Silvera remembers feeling very frightened; for she was afraid the drunken man might physically assault her. A white woman who was standing next to Silvera immediately bonded and sided with her, faced with the misogynist charge: "we kind of look at each other in solidarity and I feel less scared because at least there is another woman." However, Silvera continues, when the man starts calling out "Nigger! Nigger!" looking directly at her, the bond she first identified with the woman immediately withdraws. She says, "that woman just looked right through me and there wasn't that kind of connection, that solidarity anymore. I was filled with rage, I wanted to attack the man, I wanted to cry, and suddenly I felt really embarrassed. I didn't know what to do" (10). As women, they are able to identify with each other against what they perceive to be a

misogynist aggression, but as racial others, the bonding is no longer possible. This real life situation that Silvera depicts in *The Issue is 'Ism* calls to mind a similar scene from Brand's *In Another Place Not Here*. In that scene, Verlia who is participating in an anti-fascist demonstration in Toronto encounters racism and hate from a man who is among those protesting the rally: "Go back to where you came from! Go back to the jungle, niggers!" (173). Beside that man, was standing a woman, whom Verlia identifies with on the spot, "counting on some old familiarity to set the world right" (173). Instead, Verlia finds nothing but a "matching hate, devout and dangerous," for the woman had the letters of the Ku Klux Klan branded on her breasts:

> She had not expected it engraved on her breast. She had not even expected it in a woman. A man's hate she might have been ready for but not a woman's and branded to the body. A kind of failure washes her, makes her turn away, the chant still going in her mouth, "Ban the Klan", drying... The woman's severe brown hair, the detail of mascaraed eyes which she took in and the terrible appliqué. Well, hate looks like it's sudden and splits. Late July and she feels cold already. (173-174)

After this telling scene, Verlia will have to reassess her prior assumption that women's solidarity and connection are innate and automatic, rather than being forged. By portraying such a powerful encounter between two women, Brand's intention is to show the pitfalls of assuming solidarity based solely on gender, for other factors such as race also have to be considered.

**Toward a Transnational Postmodern Narrative**

Brand's, Philip's, and Silvera's dilemma between the paradigms of gender and race, and sometimes also of sexuality, signals the need to go beyond these discourses that fail to respond to the simultaneity of their oppressions by only looking at one *or* the other. Since neither mainstream feminism nor masculinist versions of nationalism are encompassing enough to take into account their multiple identities, these writers are looking to other kinds of theories. For the diasporic woman, forced to navigate between patriarchy and imperialism in the ways in which patriarchal nationalism allies itself with global

multinationals to further oppress women, it has become imperative to explore new avenues, as well as new forms of subjectivities, different from both the Eurocentric imperialist one as well as the narrow and essentialist binaries of state nationalists. In this vein, transnational feminist theory is offered as my methodology, as the tool to bridge the gaps between hegemonic feminisms and oppressive nationalisms. I am indebted to Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal's formulation of transnationality in their amazing analysis of Gender and Postmodernity: *Scattered Hegemonies*. Really, contrary to mainstream feminism's tendency to examine the situation of women on the basis of gender alone, or a diasporic focus on race that subsumes all gender concerns under its agenda, a contemporary examination of gender in colonialist and postcolonialist literature should not, and cannot, be seen apart from the other factors of nation, sexuality, and class. As a feminist approach which takes into consideration the intersections among nationhood, race, gender, sexuality and economic exploitation on a world scale, in the context of neo-colonial imperialisms, the transnational feminist approach addresses how gender collides with race, national origin, and class, in order to compare "multiple, overlapping and discrete" forms of oppressions, as Grewal and Kaplan argue:

> We use the term "transnational" to problematize a purely locational politics of global-local or center-periphery in favour of what Mattelart sees as the lines cutting across them. As feminists who note the absence of gender issues in all of these world-systems theories, we have no choice but to challenge what we see as inadequate and inaccurate binary divisions. (13)

By investigating forms of feminist practices that can engender theories that resist or question modernity, and by asking how is it possible to avoid ahistorical universalization in apprehending women of colour's subjectivity, feminist transnational activism, contrary to a monolithic focus on gender, or an all-male perspective on race, allows a more encompassing way of seizing Caribbean women's specificity: one that aims to provide a path away from limited paradigms such as the binaries of male/female and

colonizer/colonized as identified in Chapter One. Using, then, transnational postcolonial feminist deconstructive approach as my methodological framework, I plan to examine the migrant texts of these diasporic Caribbean women based in Canada: Dionne Brand, Nourbese Philip, and Makeda Silvera. I have to say that these three writers do not necessarily represent the totality of the body of Caribbean Canadian women's writing, although it can be argued that their issues and themes encompass the concerns of the women in this body of literature, which is how the intersections of race, sex, class, and gender impacts one's place in society and one's life.

In addition to problematizing notions of universal sisterhood in mainstream feminism, transnational feminist studies also challenge the totalitarian and limited notions of belonging offered by masculinist notions of diaspora and nation formation. By challenging the oppressive national definitions of home, and by refusing the collapse between the citizen and the nation, transnational feminism undermines the nation-state by redefining the very concept of home. By also linking feminism and postmodern geography in ways that outline subjectivity and place as mutually constitutive, postmodern feminist geographers, such as Doreen Massey, introduce a revised concept of home, one which is multiple, dynamic, and at the same time, fluid. By showing that women's exile is not the same as men's exile, because it is just another form of displacement, Silvera, Brand, and Philip theorize that for the displaced Caribbean woman, home is nowhere. It has to be re-created as an "elsewhere home," to be reterritorialized. Thus, my reading of Philip, Silvera, and Brand draws from the transnational repositioning of home that advocates its creation away from the restrictiveness of the nation-state and global capitalism. By unsettling the stable notion of home as a safe place, and by rejecting the nostalgic and nationalist myth of home as a place to go back to, these writers enact a transnational feminist identity that repudiates simplistic notions of gender oppression, and at the same time challenge the masculinist notions of home. For them, a repositioning of home is a needed task, since home is never an unproblematic and comfortable place. In her interview with Pauline Butling, Brand says that home is "a place that needs to be problematized" because for

women like her, "home may not be a place where everything's going to be fine" (84). For these displaced writers then, homelessness becomes a metaphor, which Lianne Moyes has described as a "figure crucial for the writing of modernity" (117). Unequivocally, for Brand, Silvera, and Philip, as well as for in-between characters such as Elizete, in *In Another Place*, and Molly, in *The Heart Does not Bend*, their deterritorialization comes from an acute perception that home is merely an "illusion of coherence and safety" (Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty 196).

Besides challenging the oppressiveness of the paradigms of mainstream feminism and masculinist notions of decolonization, a feminist transnational reading can also highlight the ways in which patriarchy and capitalism interlock in the lives of Silvera's, Brand's, and Philip's characters. Mohanty's suggestion to track capitalism as it adapts and changes form is imperative to such an analysis as female migrant labor, for example. Makeda Silvera's *Silenced* – that I cross-read with Dionne Brand's *No Burden to Carry* – *underscores* the importance of undertaking such a dual analysis. As a matter of fact, in both of these oral narratives, Silvera and Brand draw our attention to how the past still informs the present by portraying how former acts of exploitation, such as slavery, mirror the contemporary abuses of their black female protagonists. Likewise, for Philip, if we are to find the origin of what accounts for the contemporary 'dis placement' of black women, we need to turn to slavery and colonial discourses, in order to comprehend how the former spatial tropes have written the raced and black body as a disposable commodity to use as deemed fit for both white and black men.

Situating, thus, their feminist project within the context of slavery and globalization, these writers have insisted, at various times, on the need to apprehend the extent to which the former constructs of black femininity and black womanhood allow for the contemporary displacement of their raced and sexed bodies. By paying close attention to capitalism's ability to mutate and re-invent itself, Brand, Silvera, and Philip argue that it is slavery that is the ancestor of today's globalization and imperialism. Through the use of oral story, they outline that the contemporary displacements that racialized and sexed

bodies like themselves and their characters experience are rooted in past displacements, and legalize their exploitation in today's globalization. Unmistakably, in their rewriting of black women's sexualities, all these writers outline the link between slavery and capitalism in the ways in which the commodification of the black female slave's body parallels and allows the contemporary exploitation of the female migrant's body. As it comes from Silvera's, Brand's, and Philip's texts, their identities as women and black people define their position in society, both socially and economically. In *Genealogy of Resistance*, Philip has forcibly made the link between the objectification of the female body capable to be sold and bought, as during the auction sales in slavery time, and contemporary capitalist exploitation of black women's bodies. In the same way, Dionne Brand has denounced the position of her characters under the yoke of capitalism: "This backward capitalist system wasn't made for the benefit of Black people, it was made to exploit us, wring the life blood out of us and eventually kill us" (*In Another Place Not Here* 170).

In both *In Another Place Not Here* and *The Heart Does not Bend*, the inability to stay home and mother their children, that the female migrant women experience, mirrors the slave mother's inability to keep her offspring during enslavement, as Philip depicts in *She Tries Her Tongue*. The same way the body was invaded during slavery, forfeiting its role as a mother, the transnational mother is also unable to mother her children, both cases producing motherless and displaced children. The historical construction of the black female slave body, that Philip depicts in her poem "...as a site of historical and discursive 'displacement'," in the ways in which the "master culture disrupted lineage, language and identity" (Kinnahan 115), parallels the inability of contemporary transnational mothers such as Glory in *The Heart Does not Bend*, to take care of their daughters. In both times, ancient and contemporary, the role of motherhood is jeopardized by capitalism which uses the body as an extraction site, and prevents it from being a mother. By drawing thus on the transnational focus on the link between subjectivity and place as mutually constitutive, my reading of these writers' texts reaffirms the need to historicize the social construction of the black female body as a way to account for their contemporary situation in postmodernity.

Therefore, I open the discussion of my writers' works by drawing on the theoretical framework informed by transnational, postcolonial feminist theorists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Karen Caplan, Inderpal Grewal, Adrienne Rich, and Susan Standford Friedman. Starting with Rich's image of the "geography the closest – in. The body"(9), these critics note how both modernity and the advent of postmodernity have given rise to unequal power relations that are most acutely inscribed in place. For both Friedman and Kaplan, the material and concrete urgency of displacement caused by postmodernity necessitates that feminists rethink the meaning of place and space, by investigating the idea that space is never unproblematic, but always and already the result of power relations. Each of these critics that I draw from forwards a "politics of location," which derives from Adrienne Rich's concept of location, to provide for the shortcomings and limitations of the "Global Sisterhood model" that has theorized a universal concept of gender oppression. By asking how "a place on the map" can also be "a place in history," Rich's politics of location constitutes a welcome break from the advocates of global feminism that presented a non-localised and ahistorical version of women's experiences, by producing a kind of agency that is "born of history and geography" (13). More than that, these critics also insist on how a politics of location can enable fluid and mobile forms of identity as opposed to the ossified notions of identity politics.

For example, in discussing issues of place with Brand, I go back to Susan Standford Friedman's new geography of identity, which offers a salutary move beyond the homogenization of forms of feminisms such as gynocriticism. Like Caren Kaplan, Friedman also links the predominance of spatial rhetoric in contemporary writing to the condition of postmodernity. However, if Kaplan's analysis is mainly centered on the abstractions and aestheticism of masculinist poststructuralism that has ignored the dire conditions of postmodernity, for Friedman, it is superficial modes of feminist analysis that she faulted with an evasion of the material conditions of postmodernism that are most acutely lived by refugees and immigrants, a great number of whom are women. Friedman then relies on various discourses such as feminism, postcolonial studies, multiculturalism,

and poststructuralism, to promote new ways of configuring identity that moved beyond the achievements of focusing on a single constituent of identity such as gender.[13] Hence, Friedman introduces the metaphorics of multipositionality as a way to deal with women's differences based on such factors as race, class, sexuality, religion, and national identity.

Using the encompassing framework that Friedman proposes, my methodology explores the multiple axes of Brand's female characters, by engaging what Friedman calls a geopolitical reading attentive to "power relations as they are embedded in the earth, in a given location, and as they migrate around the earth locally, regionally, nationally, and transnationally"(10). To test the efficacy of her newly forged feminist critical practice (26), Friedman challenges her readers to ask how these geographical domains of identity relate to narratives (153). Taking the example of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s protagonist Antoinette in Jean Rhys's rewriting of the story of Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Friedman underlines how in a gynocritical or gynetic reading framework, Antoinette's gender remains the only constituent of her identity that matters. However, read through the lens of her new geography of identity, it then becomes very possible to acknowledge the fluid interplay of race, class, sexuality, and national origin along with her gender identity (29).

Conversely, if I read Brand's female characters only through the lens of gender, my methodological approach will result in a fraught reading in the ways in which I have been unwilling to consider the other constituents of their identities. However, if I engage Friedman's rhetoric of multiple positionalities which posit identity as "an historically embedded site, a positionality, a standpoint, a terrain, an intersection, a web, a network, a crossroads of multiple situated knowledge" (19), I will be able to see how gender colludes with imperialism in the lives of Brand's protagonists. Indeed, whereas gynocriticism and gynesis only concentrate on gender, Friedman's new geography of identity "looks for traces

---

[13] See *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*, especially pages 17-35.

of all the circulating discourses of subjectivity and alterity" (29). As a result, where a gender-focused analysis of Brand's main female character Elizete in *In Another Place Not Here* would have only provided a glimpse into her domestic abuse, Friedman's rhetoric of multipositionality will allow me to map the various constituents of her identity: as an abused wife, a Third World cane cutter, an exploited illegal domestic worker in Canada, and a lesbian woman.

My project also argues that crucial to any understanding of a feminist transnational practice, is the cross-solidarity that ties women, as epitomized by the collaboration between Dionne Brand and Adrienne Rich. For me, in the search for non-hegemonic ways to build coalitions, the concept of Brand and Rich's collaboration is in itself exemplary of a successful collaborative work in which there is no notion of first and third world victim and savior. Furthermore, it demonstrates the transnational idea of linkage in that their collaboration enacts a shared context of struggle based on an imagined community of resistance (Mohanty, Russo and Torres 4). As Kaplan has theorized, "as a practice of affiliation, a politics of location identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities between women in diverse and asymmetrical relation, creating alternative histories, identities, and possibilities for alliance" (139). In my opinion, one sure way of avoiding the essentialism in mainstream feminism that my project criticizes, is resorting to transnational alliances such as Mohanty's notion of "imagined community. Rather than reifying identity politics, these transnational alliances are enabling, because they lead away from essentialist notions of Third World feminist struggles, "suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance" (*Feminism without Borders* 46). Indeed, within such alliances, it is not colour or sex that sustains the ground of such struggles, but rather, "the way we think about race, class, and gender" (46). This is also what Inderpal Grewal calls for by emphasizing the use of postmodern subjectivities in order to avoid resuscitating modernist binaries such as First World/Third World women. As Grewal reaffirms in her examination of Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, postmodern subjectivity is the "only viable Self" possible for diasporic

women positioned in diasporic settings. For although Suleri and Anzaldúa speak from differing locations such as South Asia and the United States, by privileging a "non-essentialist and contingent identity politics," it can be perfectly possible to bridge the gap of their difference by enacting "multiple-voiced subjectivity" such as that articulated by Norma Alarcon. Indeed, by working through a multiply "*placed*" and a multiply "*linked*" subjectivity, postmodern narratives from postcolonial subjects such as Suleri and Anzaldúa work to "fracture the designation of margin and center, that dualism that means power and privilege on one side and exploitation on the other" (235). In this vein, they confront and fracture "the self-other opposition in the name of inclusion, multiple identities, and diasporic subject positions" (235). As Grewal analyzes, contrary to those who believe that postmodern subjectivities are "similar in their difference," they are varied depending on their locations and conditions of emergence:

> A non-essentialist position does not imply a non-belonging to a group, nor does it imply loss of agency or of coalitions and solidarities[...].One may position oneself or be positioned in many different groups by gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and so on[...]. Such identities are enabling because they provide a mobility in solidarity that leads to a transnational participation in understanding and opposing multiple and global oppressions operating upon them; that is, these subject positions enable opposition in multiple locations. Multiple locations also enable valuable interventions precisely because the agendas of one group are brought to interrogate and empower those of another group. (234)

This possibility of being able to position oneself in more than one group is all the more appealing as in the example of Makeda Silvera and Dionne Brand, who as women, black, and lesbian all at the same time, the prospect of being able to belong to all these groups is very seductive. Besides being able to empower the agenda of feminism by taking into it the concerns of queer theory for instance, such potential alliances can also bridge the gap that could exist between Dionne Brand as an Afro-Caribbean Canadian writer, and Shani Mootoo for example, as an Indo-Caribbean Canadian writer as well, for they are both lesbian writers. If they could not relate directly through race, they can potentially share the same agenda that is their fight against the limitation of the heteronormative society.

The dissertation is divided into two main parts. The introduction outlines the parameters of the thesis and explains the rationale guiding the project, its underpinnings and scope. PART ONE works to situate the project by setting the terrain for the discussion of the writers' work; and it explores how competing and overlapping systems of domination and marginalization collude in black women's lives. As we will hear from their own voices, the writers discussed in this thesis have expressed their dissatisfaction with the existing theories.

Chapter One, *Non-Gendered and Non-Racialized Discourses*, surveys the elision of these writers in traditional paradigms such as the discourses of feminist aesthetics and black aesthetics, and maps the various trajectories these authors are writing from, as well as the alternative counter-discourses they have forged. The first subpart, *Feminist Aesthetics* discusses how the constitution of the western female subject is predicated upon the "benevolent" imperialist logic that appropriates the figure of the "other woman" as her very condition of possibility (Spivak, "Three Women's Texts" 267), as well as how, in its attempt to overcome phallogocentrism, feminist research has erased women's heterogeneity.

The second subpart, *Black Aesthetics*, traces the male-dominated critical discourse of the Negritude and pan-African/Caribbean movements of liberation and nationalism, which results in the complete erasure of the figure of the black woman. As many postcolonial feminists have theorized, engaged as they are with racial politics, when the black males of the liberation movements talk about the liberation of the black race, they mean the liberation of the "black man." Thus, in order to fully understand the scope of Caribbean women writing, it is necessary to also examine male theorists of creolization and nationalism such as C.L.R. James, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming or Derek Walcott, for example. Indeed, since female subjectivity "lies outside of the paradigm" of the phallocentric writings of these gentleman scholars, in their fashioning of a counter-discourse of what constitutes "Caribbean literary authority," Caribbean women writers are often obliged to redress and 'unsay' the patriarchal aspects in the writings of these male

authors, through their own intertextual references. Thus, even though diasporic discourses are quite important in formulating strategies of resistance against racism and ostracism, they nonetheless remain a contested narrative of resistance. In the same way the discourses of male nationalist movements have held in hostage, black women's sexualities by favouring symbolic conceptions of motherhood such as Mother Africa or Mother India, diasporic formulations also become totalizing and reductive formulations to be resisted. Brand, Philip, and Silvera have all put forward the need to break with this pattern, which is a slightly disguised manoeuvre to control black women's sexualities. Transnationality then, in my view, by not subsuming issues of sexualities and the female body, remains far better equipped than diasporic discourses, as far as apprehending black women's subjectivities is concerned.

Chapter Two, *Postmodern Subjectivities*, investigates other forms of feminist practices more suitable to the eclectic nature of the Caribbean Canadian women writers discussed in this thesis. Since these Caribbean women writers are positioned within a network of competing hegemonic discourse that seeks to erase their specificities, as the first chapter of this study introduces, by looking at either gendered *or* racial oppression, these writers are engaged in looking for other kinds of feminist practices that can "engender theories that resist or question modernity" (Grewal and Kaplan 3). In so doing, they articulate "migratory subjectivities," whose fluidity[14] allows them to resist being co-opted by these limited paradigms that fail to encompass the interlocking nature of Caribbean Canadian women's oppressions. The first part of this chapter traces the history of Caribbean women's' writing by historicizing the issue of voice through the uncovering and unearthing of erased and forgotten female foremothers who were never silent. This chapter also presents eclectic and diverse theoretical positions as encompassed by transnational feminist studies, as a way to map the heterogeneous and multiple positionalities of these writers. By insisting on a fluid and multiply positioned self, these writers enact a

[14] See Carole, Boyce Davies. *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject.* London; New York: Routledge, 1994.

transnational feminist identity that repudiates simplistic notions of gender oppression at the same time as it challenges the masculinist notions of home. For example, in their revision of home as the site of contradiction and unfulfilness for women, they embrace the transnational concept of a non-territorialized notion of home that unfixes the boundaries of home as residing within the nation-state.

PART TWO of the dissertation, *Uprising Textualities*, explores how these three writers, in their various locations, engage their racial, linguistic, spatial, and sexual displacements. This part has three chapters that do a close reading of the ways in which these writers are interspersed within hegemonic discourses of feminist theory and essentialist male paradigms. These chapters particularly discuss the salient issues of place, voice and the body in these writers' work: how the writers challenge and deconstruct hegemonic feminist and oppressive masculine paradigms, while simultaneously subscribing to Mohanty's transnational feminist anticapitalist urge that the present global situation necessitates that feminists organize themselves against capitalism.

Chapter Three on Dionne Brand contextualizes geography and cultural displacements, and their impact on migration, in the light of such factors as race, class, and gender. *In Another Place Not Here* explores the impact of global flows on bodies marked by gender, class, and race. It also focuses on the theme of modernity and the metropolis, particularly the labor conditions of female domestics. By portraying her heroine, Elizete, as an exotic black woman whose body predestines her to either domestic service or sexual exploitation, Brand not only points at how capitalist imperialism overlaps with patriarchy in order to compound the lives of these female domestic workers, but she also theorizes new strategies of resistance to deal with present day exploitation and inequalities as they play out in the context of female expatriation and labor in global cities.

Chapter Four on Marlene Nourbese Philip disputes the place of black womanhood in modernity, and the role of language in the construction of literature of modernity. In examining how Philip theorizes the black female body as a site of multiple displacements, I follow her journey back in history to transatlantic slavery, as she reads and interprets the

many silences of the black female body in order to show how these past displacements mirror their contemporary exploitations. For Philip it is the legacy of slavery that explains the place of black femininity in modernity, where the black woman has been "placed" by racist and patriarchal discourses. Undeniably, by developing specific constructs of black womanhood and femininity, geographical enslavement has territorialized the body of the black woman, as an "inhuman racial-sexual worker, and objectified body, a site through which violence, and reproduction can be imagined and enacted and as a captive human" (*Demonic Ground* xvii). Thus, writing about the multiple erasures of black female bodies in both ancient and contemporary times, Philip theorizes the black female body as a site of oppression and suffering, a territory mapped by slavery as a site of reproduction through which new slaves will be issued, as well as a capitalist extraction site, through which postmodernity sustains itself.

The last Chapter on Makeda Silvera is an exploration of the socio-economic and political constraints that define the experience of Caribbean female immigration in Canada. Here, too, a transnational concern with issues of class is useful. Indeed, the feminist transnational problematization of the idea of women being a universal exploited class, can illuminate how the community of women cannot be homogenized, since women's differences range from the cleaning lady to the executive woman who can afford to pay a surrogate mother to incubate her child (Bryson and Campling 58). Using the example of Caroline Ranazanoglu, many transnational feminists, reject the idea that we can understand women as a united sex class, a community in which some are "worked to death," some "directly exploited," some "much less clearly exploited," and some "clearly benefit at the expense of other women" (Ramazanoglu 104). In a community of women composed of Saudi Arabian 'princesses,' British 'immigrant' public toilet cleaners, African peasants, Wall Street executives, Turkish bank managers, white South African housewives, and Filipino servants," to argue for women being a "sex class" is just problematic (112). In this vein, *Silenced* espouses the transnational feminist idea that women can also be oppressors of other women. As Silvera claims, the binary male=oppressor and women=oppressed does

not work in the case of these migrant women. In this community in which one class of women can afford to buy the domestic labour of another class of women,[15] the power relations are no longer just situated at the nexus of capitalism and patriarchy, but among women themselves. In *Silenced*, Silvera bluntly contends, "no amount of sisterhood can erase the line between woman-as-mistress, and woman-as-servant" since housework stands between them. This chapter also outlines how the Caribbean Canadian authors like Silvera subvert the trope of sexuality and re-appropriate the black female body. I am primarily interested here, in the ways in which the body, which is usually the prime marker of discrimination, is re-appropriated by Silvera to counter hegemonic narrations of the nation.

"Geographies of Displacements: Theorizing Feminism, Migration, and Transnational Feminist Practices in Selected Black Caribbean Canadian Women's Texts" then seeks to investigate how these Caribbean Canadian women writers inhabit the liminal place that exists in-between patriarchy and imperialism, a place of marginality and deprivation as well as a space of resistance. Also, recalling the earlier argument that transnational feminist practice is presented as the means to bridge the gaps between hegemonic feminisms and oppressive nationalism, my project seeks to examine how feminist transnational sensibilities and strategies are deployed in the writing of Brand, Silvera, and Philip. By engaging both their critical and creative works, it seeks to analyze how these writers negotiate their silencing, and resist their erasure within the metanarratives of globalization, and ultimately, how they create agency, and envision transformation and healing.

[15] See Roxanne Rimstead, *Remnants of Nation : On Poverty Narratives by Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

# PART ONE: SETTING THE TERRAIN

# CHAPTER ONE: NON-GENDERED AND NON-RACIALIZED DISCOURSES

## Feminist Aesthetics

> One of the central principles of feminist criticism is that no account can ever be neutral. (Moi viii)

> Black, white and other third world women have very different histories with respect to the particular inheritance of post-fifteenth century Euro-American hegemony: the inheritance of slavery, forced migration, plantation, and indentured labour, colonialism, imperial conquest, and genocide... third world women have argued for the rewriting of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of colour and postcolonial peoples, and the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such people. (Mohanty, Russo and Torres 10)

Like Toril Moi's acute awareness of the amount of personal involvement that necessarily accompanies any feminist position or formulation, my perspective in this part is critical of the ways in which feminist theory and critique, from its early phases to contemporary theorizations of women's oppression, have sidelined factors other than gender in its agenda. As many feminist critics have so far theorised, by advancing the universal nature of women's oppression under patriarchy, feminist research often implicitly or explicitly posits that all women around the globe share the same oppression. Early feminist thought presents the social situation of white middle class women as universal, while overlooking working class concerns and failing to interrogate the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in the lives of women of colour. By only targeting issues of gender equality, it thereby leaves considerable variables out of the dialogue, such as racial oppression and imperial domination. As women who suffer from patriarchy as well as from imperialism and racism, women of colour resist the singular focus on the "male-female" problem, which is at the core of the feminist agenda. For them, feminist advocacy aimed solely at abolishing male supremacy, will not resolve other forms of domination, if it fails to consider the ways in which patriarchy and imperialism overlap and combine to further oppress women of colour. Filomena Steady asserts that feminism for black women and women of colour is "a complex manifestation of multiple oppressions based not only on gender but also on race, structural impoverishment of the majority, colonial domination as

well as unjust world economic order" (2). The trans-atlantic slave trade, colonial expansion, deportation, racial discrimination, internal colonialism, neo-colonialism, or more accurately coloniality, and the contemporary world system of global capitalist expansion, have had – and continue to have– detrimental effects on their lives. Although women of color are not a monolithic group, being internally differentiated by their respective social and geographical contexts, they nonetheless share a common denominator in being discriminated against, first as women, and then as "black" women, the added component of race being an additional burden to their gendered condition. It is then not surprising to me, that many black and other racialized women have largely denounced the women's movement as a white woman's movement, because of its tendency to speak on behalf of all women regardless of race, class or sexual orientations, and its tacit exclusion of racialized women in the process. As we see later on in this chapter, the writers discussed in this thesis have not refrained from expressing their discontent towards this essentializing form of feminist practice.

If we consider the ways in which the oversimplification and overgeneralization of pioneer feminists from the 1960s have shaped and are still shaping the nature of contemporary feminism, then it is my belief that the fact that feminism remains the subject of much debate and recrimination lies in the foundation of feminist critique itself. For undeniably, if it is a platitude to affirm that in shaping the foundation of feminism, early feminists only had in mind a specific group of women –white, middle-class, college-educated– the painful debates still raging today confirm that these biases continue to mar feminist theory. Yet, far from being negative, these debates have been necessary and proper ones, in serving to reconceptualize and remake earlier thoughts that were inadequate. Indeed, far from being sterile, the debates inside feminism have been necessary revisionary strategies that seek to decolonize feminist theory from its earlier ethnocentrist and homogenizing tendencies. More than that, these debates serve as correlatives to the feeling of alienation and exclusion that many women feel towards feminism. For example, in her article "The More Things Change [...] Rethinking Mainstream Feminism," Katerina

Deliovsky recalls a feeling of betrayal by the "universality" of feminist thought that does not account for her reality as a "Macedonian immigrant girl-child" in Canada. After reading the "so-called classics by White feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Mary Wollstonecraft," she could not help asking what they had to do with her life, her mother's or her grandmother's:

> Initially, I thought something was wrong with me for feeling alienated by and critical of this literature. As hard as I tried, I could not correlate my experiences with any of the readings. They certainly did not speak to my experiences as a Macedonian immigrant girl-child growing up in Canada and experiencing hostility from other school children. They did not capture the feelings of total unimportance and invisibility I experienced as a girl growing up in a patriarchal, immigrant, working-class home. And certainly, 'classical' White feminist literature did not capture my experiences as a Macedonian woman in an interracial relationship with an African-Jamaican man. I was left with the impression that the "woman" they were theorizing was neither me nor women like me. (Wane, Lawson and Deliovsky 55)

About to "give up on feminism," Deliovsky came across bell hooks' *Feminist Theory*, which made her realize that her feelings of alienation towards mainstream feminism were quite justified since most of feminist thinking and theorization have been "largely about and for White Anglo-Saxon straight middle-class women" (*Feminist Theory* 56). As she then realized, it is not acceptable to give up on feminism as a white woman's movement. Rather, analyzing its ethnocentrist bias and exclusionary nature is a worthwhile endeavour in order to transform it and envision new possibilities. Moreover, since feminism is a theory in the making and an ongoing process, analyzing the considerations that have given us the kind of feminism we have today is a necessary task if one is to work for a better encompassing feminist movement that can be representative of all women it purports to speak for. As bell hooks emphasizes, "we resist hegemonic dominance of feminist thought by insisting that it is a theory in the making, that we must necessarily criticize, question, re-examine, and explore new possibilities" (10).

In this section of my thesis titled "Feminist Aesthetics," I explore then how the early feminist movement was equally concerned with gender and racial concerns, because of its

links with the abolitionist movement. I then discuss how this trend was abandoned by subsequent moves in the feminist movement, because feminists distanced themselves from the abolitionist causes in the hope of gaining more votes, as the bourgeois ideology that started to undermine the feminist movement, had repercussions in feminist criticism. In this vein, I examine how, in their legitimate attempts to establish a female counter-canon that could fight the male literary tradition that has written women out of history and culture, early feminists have either reproduced the self/other binary of the same patriarchal logic they set out to challenge, or have constructed an essentialist category of woman that focuses on middle class educated white women, while glossing over the plight of black women and poor white women.

In my view, critiquing patriarchy without attacking imperialism does not seem to be a sound strategy for coming to terms with women's multiple oppressions. So, in distancing myself from the homogenizing theories of mainstream feminism that only tackle gender issues, I read imperialism and colonialism as discursive sites and practices that seek to appropriate women's discourse. This dissertation argues that the black woman's plight is not only the result of race, class, sex or homophobia, but the interconnection of all of them. The key strategy then, is to look at women's situations through both postcolonial and feminist perspectives. Looking at them through a postcolonial perspective allows us to measure the effects colonialism and imperialism have on black women. A feminist perspective helps us to see them in their specificities and localities, and no longer under the homogenizing trope of the "Third World woman".

**The Early Feminist Movement**

In Josephine Donovan's account of the women's rights movement, the idea of working on behalf of women's rights that feminists such as Sara Grimke, Elizabeth Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony undertook, arose partly because of the harassment these women activists met with when they set out to address racial discrimination (20). The

women's rights movement therefore had its origins in the anti-slavery movement.[16] Actually, as Donovan advances, the very idea of women's rights was born at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, where the women gathered to advance the abolitionist cause. However, when these women delegates arrived at the meeting, they were refused recognition, and were not allowed to sit with the other male delegates on the floor, but were relegated to the balcony (21). The women delegates returned to the United States and soon began an agitation which resulted in the first women's rights convention, the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. The declaration of sentiments that was drafted and made public was concerned with gender as well as racial oppressions. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony wrote thus:

> In times like these, every soul should do the work of a full-grown man. When I pass the gate of the celestials and good Saint Peter asks me where I wish to sit, I will say: "Anywhere, so that I am *neither a Negro nor a woman* (my emphasis). Confer on me, great angel, the glory of whole manhood, so that henceforth I may feel unlimited freedom. (57)[17]

This quotation indicates that nineteenth-century feminists like Stanton and Anthony were actively involved in campaigns against racism. In Nashoba, Tennessee, Frances Wright pursued a personal campaign against slavery by establishing a utopian community in which the races and the sexes had equal footing (Donovan 21). Indeed, as Toril Moi summarizes in *Sexual/Textual Politics*, these American feminists soon came to realize that the values and strategies used to keep women under the male order were the same as the ones used to keep black people under domination (21) and consequently, they united their causes with the abolitionist movement. The 1866 American Equal Rights Society was formed jointly by the Woman's Rights Society and the Anti-slavery Society, with the objective to "secure equal rights to all American citizens, especially the right of suffrage, irrespective of race, colour, or sex" (McCrimmon 58).

---

[16] *Feminist Theory: the Intellectual Tradition of American Feminism* (20)
[17] Qtd. in A.L. McCrimmon's *The Woman Movement*

Sojourner Truth, even though rarely mentioned as a pioneer of feminist theory, established the basis of black feminism with her legendary speech at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, when she cautioned black women of the danger inherent in liberating black men and not black women. She recognized that the abolitionist cause was all about the male slaves and not about the women slaves, and warned: "there is a great stir about men getting their rights, but not a word about coloured women." She added, "if coloured men get their rights, and not coloured women theirs, you see, the coloured men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before".[18] After giving her warning about the dangers of liberating black men and not black women, Sojourner Truth further implicates the particularity of black women, and distinguishes them from the ideal of femininity that applies only to white women:

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me over any best place. And ain't I a woman? ...Look at me! Look at my arm. She bared her right arm and flexed her powerful muscles. I have plowed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. And ain't I a woman? I could work as much, and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain't I a woman? (1851)

Likewise, in her important essay "Dis/Place: The Space Between," Philip juxtaposes ideals of white and black femininity: "black whole" and "white space," in order to outline how the spatial tropes had territorialized the body of the black woman, in order to justify her place in modernity. Echoing Sojourner Truth's famous "ain't I a woman," Philip berates:

> AIN'T I A WOMAN
>
> If the Black woman's inner space doing the same work as the white woman's inner space—making babies—ain't she a woman? But OUR ROYAL WILL AND PLEASURE saying the inner space of the Black woman nothing but a baby-making factory. Or, they saying she shouldn't be having no more children. Either way they trying to make her less of what

[18] Letter from Sojourner Truth to Mary Gale, February 25, 1894

> they say a woman is. And even if the Black woman working like a man in the outer space, they still not giving her rights and freedoms he having. But still an' all, ain't I a woman? (112)

Similar to Philip's, Truth's agonizing plea will not be heard, but was drowned amid fears that if the black woman slave's case were included with the agenda of the women's and abolitionists' causes, their issue would be doomed. As McCrimmon reports, "there were fears that the cry would be raised that the Negresses also were to be enfranchised, and thus the whole attempt to enfranchise the Negro would prove abortive" (59). These concerns contributed to the women's movement in the nineteenth century not sustaining its early concern about the black woman, and by the early twentieth century, women's suffrage organizations hoping to woo white southern support, effectively abandoned black women (23). As bell hooks indicates, with the acquisition of fame and prestige by more and more women as a result of feminist advocacy, the sentiments that echoed the early stages of the feminist movement became co-opted by the 'ruling capitalist patriarchy' (*Feminist Theory* 7). For hooks, the fact that feminism has been so easily co-opted "to serve the interests of the conservative and liberal feminist" is not accidental, since feminism in the United States has so far been a bourgeois ideology. This ideology that started to undermine the very premise of early feminism has been the target of much recrimination from black and other racialized feminists and also has repercussions in feminist literary criticism.

**Feminist Criticism(s)**

According to Shari Benstock, feminist literary criticism in the West, just like women's writing, started with Sappho in the mid-seventh century B.C (1). Sappho's lyrical endeavours: I took my lyre and said: /Come now, my heavenly/ Tortoise shell: become/A speaking instrument set the precondition for feminist criticism (1). For Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, however, feminist criticism in a sense has no beginnings if we consider that when in the 17$^{th}$ century Esther Sowernam and Bathusa Makin were pointing out that powerful deities and influential muses were women, they were uttering a feminist critique;

or when at the end of the 18th century Mary Wollstonecraft was condemning sentimental novels because of their propensity for encouraging women to see themselves as silly and helpless, she too, was practicing a form of feminist criticism (1). Despite the fact that the origin of literary criticism might or might not be traced back to Sappho, it did not blossom and start to flourish until the mid-twentieth century A.D, with the publication of two pioneering texts: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, which was issued in England in 1929, and Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, published in France in 1949. In these groundbreaking works, both Woolf and De Beauvoir set out to challenge the male-centred tradition of writing that has pushed them to the margins of history. Woolf, undeniably one of the founders of Modernism, has provided essays and novels that offer an insightful account of her personal life experiences as well as those of women at the beginning of the twentieth century. Woolf's most acclaimed work, however, is *A Room of One's Own* (1929), an extended essay based on Woolf's lectures at Cambridge University in 1928, in which she addresses the question of women and fiction in the first part of the essay: "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4).

In "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice," Caren Kaplan maintains that the classic exposition of modern Western feminism's claiming of a world space for women, derives from Virginia Woolf's oft-quoted sentence: "As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (*Scattered Hegemonies* 137). Kaplan states that in the decades following Woolf's statement, Western feminists have "extended them to justify the dream of a global sisterhood of women with shared values and aspirations," and by drawing upon Woolf's spatial metaphors, western feminists "have conceptually refurbished rooms and staked out worlds in the name of women everywhere" (137). Kaplan posits it this way:

> This claiming of a world space for women raises temporal as well as spatial considerations, questions of history as well as of place. Can such claims be imagined outside the conceptual parameters of modernity? Can worlds be claimed in the name of categories such as "woman" in all innocence and

> benevolence, or do these gestures mark the revival of a form of feminist cultural imperialism? (137)

According to Spivak, to sustain the idea that "worlds can be claimed in the name of "woman" in all innocence and benevolence," is to ignore the "planned epistemic violence of imperialism," for such a gesture embodies the same vision as that which informs the imperialist narratives of colonial discourse (Spivak "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism"). She cites the example of British attempts to outlaw Sati, the practice of widow burning in India. According to Spivak, this "benevolent" action which seeks to rescue the widow from her local oppressors, and which leads her to coin the controversial sentence "white men are saving brown women from brown men," is just a means of reinforcing the British as civilized and superior to both the object they are saving (the widow), and to her oppressors (Indian men) ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 296).

Certainly, the "benevolent claiming" of world space for women constitutes an interventionist act, which is not devoid of imperial connotation, but rather, deeply replicates the old imperial ideologies that informed important historical events that resulted in the forced displacement of black people. By failing to resist the authoritative Eurocentrism of the western hegemonic discourses on the "Other," thus supporting the agendas of modernity, early feminist practice relied on this binary determination of "us" and "them" and has constructed a homogenizing discourse which lumps all "third" world women into the category of "victims". This cultural imperialism, that Edward Said also names "Orientalism," is a critical discourse representing the culture whose autonomy it defends in its own dominant terms, and allows the so-called superiority of the West over the Orient to be promoted by a variety of discourses seeking to naturalize differences between the familiar "us" (Europe) and "them" (the Orient, the Other) (43).[19] Like Said, Frantz Fanon is

---

[19] In *Orientalism*, Said claims that the West represents the Orient as its 'other', and projects everything negative within western culture unto this 'Orient', and "Orientalism" is a western fantasy of the Orient, which is institutionalized through diverse forms of western media: "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them") Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

also concerned with how colonial discourse operates in the binary of the West/and its 'others', and in *Black Skin White Mask*, he examines how the category "white" depends for its stability on its negation of 'black': "'Good-Evil, Beauty-Ugliness, White-Black: such are the characteristic pairing of the phenomenon that, making use of an expression of Dide and Guiraud, we shall call 'manicheism delirium'" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 183). Colonial discourse binaries of self/other or colonizer/colonized, with underpinnings of western superiority over the rest of the world, have created a strong sense of alienation in the self-identity of non-white people. Yet, a binary categorization is sometimes necessary to clarify the discourse such as we see in *The Black Atlantic*, where Gilroy has drawn a parallel between modernity and slavery insisting that slavery is an unacknowledged part of modernity. If we briefly look at how the concept of modernity is coterminous with the emergence of Eurocentrism, and European expansion and acquisition of foreign lands, we might then argue that modernity is central to the emergence of colonial discourse simply by looking at the sense of superiority that animated the thoughts of the period. Europe was considered superior to the other nations by virtue of its science and rationality, and the prevalent assumption that in contrast to these foreign nations that are locked in their static and Pre-historic tradition, the West has a duty, a right, to bring civilization to those

---

Drawing from Freud, he affirms that by operating on two levels of representation, the orientalist representations that the West has constructed, work to reinforce colonial domination, by implying that western cultures and values are superior to the customs of the Orient. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said further develops his idea of imperialism as being the main component of western culture, by detecting inscriptions of imperialism not only in content or in representations as he did in Orientalism, but in narrative structures. In an analysis of the book, Benita Parry notes it offers a reading of culture as a material practice producing representations and languages that embody active forms of power (24).

Said has argued that with the ending of formal overseas empires, imperialism has shifted its power and mode of operation to the literary domain. Although criticized by the likes of Benita Parry, Chinua Achebe, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak for his over-valorization of the power of the European novel and his foreclosure of the possibility of resistance or "mimicry" of western hegemony, Said's formulations of western imperialism are very relevant to the resistance to colonial discourse. In "The World, the Text, and the Critic," he states that the "form" of the European novel inscribes a cultural mode, consolidating an authorship directed toward social power and governance, and therefore underwriting the status quo and consent for overseas (Qtd. in Parry 43). Of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, which Said regards as a colonial novel, he analyses how the comfort and wealth of the English house has been made possible by the exploitation of overseas colonies (87).

primitive people. Such so called-civilization missions are what Spivak sees as laying the foundation of the liberal humanist vision or even the anti-humanist visions of western thinkers such as Foucault, Deleuze, and Kristeva. Likewise, in "Managing the Unmanageable," Philip argues that the West creates a discourse of otherness and "primitivism," a colonial discourse which inscribes these others (women, Africans, Asians, and aboriginals) to embody "everything which the white male perceives himself not to be" (295). The figure of otherness thus becomes a conceptual tool that allows the modernist project to these outsiders: "European thought has traditionally designated certain groups not only as inferior but also, paradoxically, as threats to their order, systems, and traditions of knowledge" (295).

**Second Wave Criticism**

Caroline Ramazanoglu writes that the outburst of feminist theory and practice in the 1960s, differed from previous forms of feminism, in that it started with assertions of women's "common sisterhood in oppression" (3). By building upon Western Middle-class concerns and experiences, the second wave of Anglo-American feminist theory had developed a form of theorizing –'*Sisterhood is* Global'– "which assumes that those white concerns were the concerns of women everywhere" (Lewis and Mills 5). A landmark of Second Wave criticism is Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* which is still heralded as having paved the way for the contemporary feminist movement. In *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963, Betty Friedan set to expose the phallocratic nature of American society. Yet, for bell hooks, when Betty Friedan wrote her famous phrase, "the problem that has no name," she did not write it for the silent majority that comprises the women who are most victimized by sexist oppression, women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically, and spiritually, and who are powerless to change their condition in life. Friedan wrote that:

> It is urgent to understand how the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness in women...For women of ability, in America today, I am convinced that there is something

> about the housewife state itself that is dangerous. (Qted in hook's *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* 2)

Given the context, one can agree with hooks that Friedan refers to the plight of a select group of "college-educated, middle and upper class, married, white women housewives bored with leisure, with the home, with children, with buying products, who wanted more out of life" (3). She was arguing for these women to find careers, meaning activities outside of the private sphere of the house. Of Friedan, hooks comments that she

> did not discuss who would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home if more women like herself were freed from their house labour and given equal access with white men to the professions. She did not speak of the needs of women without men, without children, without homes. She ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women. (1-2)

By making her plight and the plight of white women like herself synonymous with a condition affecting all American women, Friedan, according to hooks, seemed oblivious to any other perspectives than those of white, middle- class, heterosexual, educated women who found the traditional roles of wife and mother unsatisfying. hooks' critique is shared by many feminists for whom Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* represents the severe limitations of liberal bourgeois feminism as the basis for political action.[20]

---

[20] Elizabeth Grosz has also challenged the essentialism of feminist criticism. In *Feminist Challenges, Social and Political Theory*, the anthology she co-edited with Carole Pateman, Grosz makes clear that in challenging phallocentrism, feminist theoreticians must also challenge the evasion of history and materiality so marked in theoretical tradition in the West. As she says, "Coupled with the anti-sexist project, feminism must thus also be involved in the positive task of experimenting with and creating alternatives to patriarchal theoretical norms," for, according to her, feminist theory should no longer be content with "adapting patriarchal theories so that they are capable of analysing woman," for this approach is in itself a phallocentric endeavour "that reduces women to theories and categories appropriated from masculine points of views."

Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross, *Feminist Challenges : Social and Political Theory* (Sydney ; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 196.

Likewise, Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn are making a similar claim by stating that the social construction of gender "takes place through the workings of ideologies" Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, *Making a Difference : Feminist Literary Criticism*, New Accents (London ; New York: Methuen, 1985) 2. According to Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, in feminist scholarship dual undertaking, which is on the one hand, the deconstructing of "predominantly male cultural paradigms," and on the other hand, the reconstructing of a "female perspective and experience," in their effort to change the tradition that has silenced and marginalized

So, if First Wave feminist criticism has been decried as being exclusionary because of its re-enactment of the patriarchal binary of self and other, Second Wave criticism has developed a form of theorizing – "Sisterhood is Global" – which assumes a commonality of oppression for all women. The slogan "Sisterhood is Global," as evidenced by Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Global: the International Women's Movement Anthology* advanced the universal nature of women's oppression under patriarchy. In this anthology, Robin Morgan argues that women share a "common condition" which is the suffering inflicted by a universal "patriarchal mentality" (1). In a chapter evocatively titled "A Place on the Map is also a Place in History," feminist postcolonial Chandra Talpade Mohanty warns us that to "see contemporary imperialism not only in terms of a patriarchal mentality, but also to articulate the 'operation of contemporary imperialism with the notion of an international women's movement based on global sisterhood'" can have serious political implications. Morgan's notion of universal sisterhood in both 'Sisterhood is Global,' and 'Planetary Feminism,' which Mohanty feels is predicated on the erasure of the history and effects of contemporary imperialism, can have dangerous effects for women "who do not and cannot speak from a location of white, Western, middle-class privilege" (*Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* 111). Even though we cannot underestimate the importance of Morgan's notion of global sisterhood, the unity she constructs among women is based on an individualized and ahistorical experience that erases women's differences around the globe, as Mohanty argues:

> The experience of struggle is thus defined as both personal and ahistorical. In other words, the political is limited to the personal and all conflicts among and within women are flattened, regardless of class, race, nation, and sexualities, the notion of experience is anchored firmly in the notion of the individual self, a determined and specifiable constituent of European modernity. (76)

---

women, feminists should be aware of the ideological implications of their assumptions, as well as to make sure they are not recuperating the ideology of the system they are repudiating.

By articulating her notion of global sisterhood through specific assumptions about women as a homogenous group with the same interests, Morgan's notion of universal sisterhood "does construct a unity" as Mohanty further argues, but it is a unity that has to be deconstructed because of its relying on the logic of appropriation and incorporation, and its denial of agency. And for Mohanty, if feminists wish to go beyond the limited bourgeois ideology of individualism, we need to self-consciously historicize this notion of the individual. Mohanty further advocates to stay away from the reductive utopian vision that Morgan constructs in her notion of global sisterhood, because of the ways in which it structures the world in Manichean terms "where women are always seen in opposition to men, patriarchy is always essentially the invariable phenomenon of male domination, and the religious, legal, economic and familial systems are implicitly assumed to be constructed by men" (75). Instead, Mohanty recommends, is it more useful to strive for "uncovering alternative, non-identical histories which challenge and disrupt the spatial and temporal location of a hegemonic history" (465).

In her chapter entitled "It Ain't Home No More": Rethinking Unity," Mohanty writes:

> But why focus on a temporality of struggle? And how do I define my place on the map? For me, the notion of a temporality of struggle defies and subverts the logic of European modernity and the 'law of identical temporality.' It suggests an insistent, simultaneous, non-synchronous process characterized by multiple locations, rather than a search for origin or endings, which, as Adrienne Rich says, 'seems a way of stopping time in its track. (*Feminism without Borders* 120)

In "Defining World Feminism: If this is Global, Where the hell are we?" Dionne Brand and Linda Carty set out to map the limit of global sisterhood, by directly responding to Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*. Brand and Carty critique Morgan's palliative feminism, which, by seeking to project her white middle-class feminism over the larger surface of the globe, creates the perpetual distrust of the movement by both working class women and women of colour. According to Brand

and Carty, Morgan's "tokenistic and reductive" formulations, besides homogenizing US feminism, shows little concern for the realities of daily survival of women in the third world and in more advanced capitalist societies:

> To say that Morgan has missed the point completely regarding women's oppression in the developing world is not an exaggeration. There is little recognition in the book of the objective conditions of daily survival which are the foci of their struggles. It is an historical necessity that women in these societies fight colonialism and imperialism which not only oppress them as women, but can also oppress them as members of a race and always as part of class. To deny or ignore the necessity of the national liberation struggles is to deny the importance of history, its role in the lives of Third World women and the importance of the role of these women in the construction of history. (43)

## Third Wave Criticism

> To come to terms with the circumscribing nature of (our) whiteness. Marginalized though we have been as women, as white and Western makers of theory, we also marginalize others because our lived experience is thoughtlessly white, because even our "women's cutures" are rooted in some Western tradition. Recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted — there is a confusion between our claims to the white and Western eye and the woman — seeing eye," fear of losing the centrality of the one even as we claim the other. (Adrienne Rich 452)

In light of the failure inherent in Second Wave feminism's homogenization and universalizing of women's experiences, Third Wave criticism began to take action in the mid 1980s. Recognizing the way in which earlier modes of feminism had been blind to the experiences of Blacks, working class and other women, Third Wave theory which usually encompasses queer theory, women-of-colour consciousness, post-colonial theory, critical race theory, transnationalism, ecofeminism, and new feminist theory has been created as a correlative to the limitation of western feminism analysis on the basis of gender alone. This Third Wave movement also calls attention to the multiple notions of subjectivity by privileging modes of analysis that consider factors such as race, national origin, class, sexuality and nationalism along with gender. Judith Butler, for example, in *Gender Trouble*, has denounced that just as the male phallocentric system has constructed women

as the 'Other' of men, excluded from culture as well as from the symbolic, Second Wave feminists, too, constructed a hegemonic category of woman that excludes race, sex and other determinant factors.

This Third Wave feminism also includes African feminism, with its various forms: "Africana/feminism," "Black feminism/s," "Stiwanism," "Motherism," "Femalism," or "Bintuism," which critics like Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, Leslie Molara Ogundipe and Ama Aidoo Ata address in their works. African feminism thus emerged as a specific concept, different from Western feminism, as a theory that would account for the multiple oppressions African women face in their daily lives. The main understanding is that African feminism should resist the "male-female" problem which is at the core of the feminist agenda, because other oppressions they need to deal with include totalitarianism, militarism, tribalism, poverty, ethnicism, problems with in-laws, women oppressing other women, and religious fundamentalism, to name only a few. "Africana Womanism," as defined by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi criticizes western feminisms for being gender-centred, and for speaking in the name of all women, without really being sufficiently informed about the situations of African women:

> What does a black woman novelist go through as she comes in contact with white feminist writing and realizes that Shakespeare's illustrious sisters belong to the second sex, a situation that has turned them into impotent eunuchs without rooms of their own in which to read and write their very own literature, so that they have become madwomen now emerging from the attic, determined to fight for their rights by engaging in the acrimonious politics of sex? (63)

Third Wave also includes Adrienne Rich's "politics of location," a term she coined in her book, *Blood Bread and Poetry*, in an effort to move away from the hegemonic theories of Western feminisms that presuppose a unified category of woman. Rich forwards a politics of location as "a radical materialist political stance that grounds feminist theory in accountability for the situatedness of knowledge production":

> As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country by condemning its government or by saying three times 'As a woman my country is the whole world.' Tribal loyalties aside, and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create. (448)

Indeed, for Rich, "white women should relinquish their "missionary" stance vis a vis other women," and should instead acknowledge the different priorities in women's agenda.[21] Yet, as Caren Kaplan warns in *Scattered Hegemonies*, even if "the notion of a politics of location has provided an opportunity to expand the ground of what counts as 'theory' and who can be considered a 'theorist,' it does not mean that a recourse to a politics of location will result in "a transformative feminist critical practice" (144). As Kaplan suggests, an adequate politics of location should be mostly concerned with "where we speak from and which voices are sanctioned," besides allowing us to acknowledge boundaries, not as mythic "differences" that cannot be "known" or "theorized," but as sites of historicized struggles" (149).[22] In chapter five, Silvera performs this transformative feminist critical practice by giving voice to sanctioned voices, such as those of the migrant women she interviewed. By accounting for the very materiality of displacement, and the impact of gender, class, and race in female migrancy, Silvera denounces the capitalist exploitation of the labour of poor people. Indeed, as a feminist approach which highlights the difference between *inter*national and *trans*national conceptions of feminism, and discards the former for the latter, transnational feminism pays attention to intersections among nationhood,

---

[21]Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Going Global : The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (New York: Garland, 2000) 9.

[22]As Kaplan writes: Only when we utilize the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities, can we recognize and work through the complex relationships between women in different parts of the world. A transnational feminist politics of location in the best sense of these terms refers us to the model of coalition or... affiliation. As a practice of affiliation, a politics of location identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities between women in diverse asymmetrical relations, creating alternative histories, identities and possibilities of alliances. (139)

race, gender, sexuality and economic exploitation on a world scale, in the context of emergent global capitalism. Transnational feminists such as Silvera, Philip and Brand, inquire into the social, political and economic conditions comprising imperialism; their connections to colonialism and nationalism; the role of gender, the state, race, class, and sexuality in the organization of dominant resistances of hegemonies in the making and unmaking of nation and 'other' bodies.

For when modernity takes shape as feminism, the yearning for the need to "practice feminism differently" (2) becomes legitimate. When modernity is disguised under terms such as global sisterhood, international feminism and so forth, it cannot take into account the contemporary global conditions we are living in now, as Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan argue in *Scattered Hegemonies*.

> If feminist political practices do not acknowledge transnational cultural flows, feminist movements will fail to understand the material conditions that structure women's lives in diverse locations. If feminist movements cannot understand the dynamics of these material conditions, they will be unable to construct an effective opposition to current economic and cultural hegemonies that are taking new global forms. Without an analysis of transnational scattered hegemonies that reveal themselves in gender relations, feminist movements will remain isolated and prone to reproducing the universalizing gesture of dominant Western cultures. (17)

Building upon these insightful theorizations of women's experience that do not privilege any mode of analysis over the other, but rather, "acknowledge the different forms that feminisms take and the different practices that can be seen as feminist movements," I posit transnational feminist practice as a corrective of the universalizing theories of global feminism, and as the means of bridging the gap between mainstream feminism and all the other feminisms, as well as a way to build coalitions and solidarity among feminists from divergent cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds.

## Male Aesthetics

The Caribbean tale... is anti-History" Edouard Glissant (85)

The challenge is thus: how can one re-create without re-circulating domination? Trinh Minh-Ha (15)

In the previous section, I articulated how Caribbean women writers do not fit within the hegemonic discourse of mainstream feminist theory. However, Caribbean women writers are also not at home within the male-biased discourses of decolonization that have come to symbolize the discursive fight against colonialism. This section titled "Male Aesthetics," examines the male-based movements of liberation such as postcolonial rhetoric, Negritude, and Pan/Caribbean nationalisms that also write the black woman out of the discourse. What follows in this section is first, how colonialism and colonial discourses have left a legacy that is still present, in the ways in which most postcolonial writing is a discursive "talk back" to the colonial representations. Important as they are, these postcolonial narratives nonetheless embody gaps and shortcomings, as the male critics left unchallenged aspects that do not directly pertain to their experience. Moreover, by seeking to dismantle the Manichean dichotomy between colonizers and colonized, these male writers merely reverse this binary, and do not challenge its ideological content, replicating, thus, the very colonial ideology they seek to debunk. Indeed, focus on the gender-race nexus is very rare since the male theorists of decolonization rely solely on conceptions of 'nation' and 'race,' and ignore, for example, the ways in which gender intersects with colonial oppression. As heterogeneous and diverse as they are what these male counter-discourses have in common is their elision of gender issues, in the ways in which they subsume gender specificity in the construction of postcolonial subjectivities. Therefore, it is these very gaps in the male discourse that postcolonial feminist theory seeks to address. Caribbean women writers, such as Brand, Silvera, and Philip intervene in this landscape of invisibility, in order to present their own erased identities and stories. This moving out of one's place, which involves pushing against boundaries such as the hegemonic discourses

of postcolonialism, informs one aspect of these writers' work, in their quest for voice and self-legitimization against the weight of metannarative such as these masculinist theories. Trinh Minh Ha's epigraph that eloquently raises the dilemma about how to recreate without reproducing domination outlines a very crucial aspect that male nationalists in the postcolonial field will have to face. It is therefore important to represent the colonial landscape that has given rise to postcolonial rhetoric and anti-colonial discourses such as the *Quarrel with History* in the Caribbean, which is often symbolized by the Caliban/Prospero trope.

Second, this section also addresses how, in response to the colonizers' sexualization of colonial conquest, postcolonial responses combine anti-colonialism with an erotic rhetoric: in the same way that the colonizers have represented women's bodies as lands to be invaded and conquered, Caribbean male authors, in their search of a literary authorship, have reproduced the same sexual metaphors. By representing the woman as the land to fight for, and as the symbol of rejection of western powers, Caribbean nationalist narratives reveal the extent to which women's sexuality and bodies have been mobilized in nationalist discourses. This eroticized nationalism, which equates national liberation with manhood, is as oppressive as the colonial domination it sought to eliminate.

**Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Masculinities**

In *De-Scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality*, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson state that "imperial relations may have been established by guns, guile and disease, but they were maintained in their interpolative phase largely by textuality, both institutionally...and informally" (3). As they affirm, colonialism, like its counterpart racism, is a formation of discourse, and as such, operates by inter-relating and incorporating colonial subjects into systems of representation. This problematic relationship between discursive practices and power has been largely brought to light by the work of Louis Althusser, and particularly Michel Foucault, who maintains that knowledge is never neutral, but always and already imbricated into the operations of power. Indeed,

colonialism not only involved the acquisition and invasion of foreign wealth and lands, but also implicated the psychic devaluation of colonized people in order to justify their exploitation. Systematically, theories of racial inferiority were invoked to validate the imperial enterprise. Even if, as Denis Judd notes, "no one can doubt that the desire for profitable trade, plunder and enrichment was the primary force that led to the establishment of the imperial structure"(3), it is also very true that colonization was a thing of "mind and representation," as Elleke Boehmer affirms in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (23). In the same vein, in his essay "Literature and Society: The Politics of the Canon," Ngugi Wa Thiong'o acknowledges that even if the primary goal of colonialism is to appropriate a people's land and what that land produces, it cannot achieve that goal until it destroys a significant part of the dominated people, that part being their culture and values (312) .

Unquestionably, this epistemic violence of colonial rule was a two-fold weapon. On the one hand, it allows the colonizers to escape the guilt of invading and exploiting other people's territories; for by representing the colonized people as lesser than human, as child-like primitives who need their guidance, the colonizers were then able to validate their imperial ambition: the derogation of the native culture thus functioning as the means to legitimate the violence of invading and exploiting other people's lands. On the other hand, by representing the colonized as inferior beings, by devaluing their culture and their beliefs through pejorative and racist stereotypes, the natives suffer from what Martiniquan writer Frantz Fanon has called "the inferiority complex," a feeling of being lesser than the colonizer, and thus being more receptive to his rule and domination. This 'epidermalization' of racial inferiority, is not so much about realizing who you are, but what you *represent* (my emphasis), leading the colonized to be "forever in combat with his own image" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 122).This inferior image of the native, functions as the primary active force in colonialist re-education, and that is what Fanon realizes when he states that "the most powerful tool in the hand of the oppressor is the minds of the oppressed" (194). We can see, then, that far from being mere sites of exploitation, the

colonies were also "laboratories of modernity,"[23] which helped consolidate the Empire's grip on its overseas territories.

The role of literature in this empirical expansion is critical. In her introduction to *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Elleke Boehmer makes a useful distinction between "colonial" and "colonialist" literatures. Colonial literature, which Boehmer considers as the more general term, encompasses writing concerned with colonial perceptions and experiences, during colonial times, and can be written by Metropolitans as well as by Creoles. Colonial literature, therefore, includes literature written in Britain as well as in the Empire. In contrast, colonialist literature is described by Boehmer as a literature which is primarily concerned with colonial expansion, "written by and for colonizing Europeans about non-European lands dominated by them" (3). Boehmer suggests that since colonialist literature embodies the imperialist point of view, in addition to being a body of work whose main feature is its "distinctive stereotyped language, geared to mediating the white man's relationship with colonized people," it is this very literature we must be concerned with, when we speak of Empire writing (3).

Colonial discourses, then, form the intersections where language and power meet.[24] As Fanon further states in *Black Skins, White Masks*, the role of language in this colonial domination is vital, for being colonized by a language "means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" as well as to espouse the colonizers' consciousness that identifies blackness with evil and sin (17-18). It is important to note that these imperial representations of colonized people also go hand-in-hand with racism, since imperialist discourse was indistinguishable from racism. Overtly colonialist novels, such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, subscribe to theories of

---

[23] See Ato Quayson's article "Feminism, Postcolonialism and the Contradictory Orders of Modernity" p 109 in Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism : Theory, Practice or Process?* (Malden, MA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

[24] See John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester [England] ; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

racial supremacy advanced by colonialism. Ania Loomba elaborates on this by advancing that scientific racism from the eighteenth century "calcified the assumption that race is responsible for cultural formation and historical development," and that nations were often classified or regarded "as the expression of biological and racial attributes" (102). This fact is not exceptional, however, considering that racism is part and parcel of imperial ideology. Furthermore, because literature is one of the "most effective ways by which a given ideology is passed on and received as the norm in the daily practices of our being," racism consequently finds its "rites of passage" in the whole field of literature. Or as Ngugi articulates in "Racism in Literature": "where there is racism, it will be reflected in the literature of that society" (*Writers in Politics* 127). Yet, as Edward Said contends in *Culture and Imperialism*, even mainstream realist novels "were *of* imperial domination, even if they were not *about* it" (Boehmer 24). Said's words echo Spivak's reminder that any reading of nineteenth-century British literature which does not take into account how imperialism was a crucial part of England's social mission is a fraught reading ("The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" 243). Due to this fact, no word of fiction written during that period, "no matter how inward-looking, esoteric or apolitical it announces itself to be" can remain uninflected by the colonial cadences (Loomba 73). Likewise, for Boehmer, even where the rest of the world was ignored in a novel, it was simply because "the rest, the non-West, was assumed to be marginal and secondary to the metropolis" (24). This cultural hegemony that Iris M. Young describes as *cultural imperialism* in works by universalizing a dominant group's experience, in this case the colonizers, while systematically marking the colonized as Other:

> As remarkable, deviant beings, the culturally imperialized are stamped with an essence...Just as everyone knows that the earth goes around the sun, so everyone knows that gay people are promiscuous, that Indians are alcoholics, and that women are good with children. White males, on the other hand, insofar as they escape group marking, can be individuals. ("Five Faces of Oppression" (12)

Cultural hegemony, in consequence, subtle or overt, is a pervasive aspect of the colonial enterprise, facilitating the colonizers' mission, which is to appropriate the native's wealth. Since this ideological colonization was largely based on textuality, on language and writing; accordingly, resistance to this ideological colonization also took place in the realms of textuality.

Psycho-cultural resistance to narratives of black inferiority takes form under the name of "Postcolonial literature," or "Commonwealth literature". Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson argue that,

> Just as fire can be fought with fire, textual control can be fought with with textuality...The postcolonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power that resides in discourse and textuality; its resistance, then, quite appropriately takes place in - and from - the domain of textuality, in (among other things) motivated acts of reading. The contestation of postcolonialism is a contest of representation. (10)

As a matter of fact, colonialism enables the very condition of its delegitimization, in the ways in which it provides "the terms of articulations for what it most thought to deny: the self-representation of subject or marginalized people" (Boehmer 100). Discursive feminization that represented the colonized as feminine and upheld the British gentleman as the male example to emulate was a central feature of colonial ideology. Therefore, much of the engagement of anti-colonial writing is to uncover these representations. The dismantling of the negative representations hence gave birth to rhetoric of self-determination that in turn, gave rise to movements such as Negritude, with its well-known leaders: Leopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal and Martinique-born Aimé Césaire, among others. These early nationalists, writing from the metropolis of Paris, felt impelled to label new positive self-images as a way of countering the depressing colonialist stereotypes. Appropriating the term 'negro,' they turned its negative connotation into beauty and pride, giving this formerly derogative term, a new positive meaning. According to Boehmer, these

negritude writers "glamorized that which has been downtrodden," giving new vitality to degrading stereotypes (101).

Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955) initiated the fight against colonialism. If Césaire's work on colonialism is undertaken under a poetic narrative form, combining both the properties of prose and poem, Frantz Fanon engaged a theoretical and psychological study of colonization, drawing upon his own experiences. *In Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon coined an anti-colonial revolutionary thought that sought to expose the Manichean allegory of the colonial system that associates whiteness with goodness and blackness with evil. Despite Césaire's and Fanon's work in the anti-colonial field, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, has often been considered to have inaugurated the field of postcolonial literature; in the ways in which Said, relying on Foucault's theories of discourse, shows the extent to which the idea of knowledge and construction of the Other is an ideological component of colonial powers. However, Said himself acknowledges Fanon and Césaire as his precursors as it shows from this quotation:

> Postcolonial criticism, which began under the combative spiritual aegis of Fanon and Césaire, went further than either of them in showing the existence of what in Culture and Imperialism I called 'overlapping territories' and 'intertwined histories'. Many of us who grew up in the colonial era were struck by the fact that even though a hard and fast line separated colonizer from colonized in matters of rule and authority (a native could never aspire to the condition of the white man), the experiences of ruler and ruled were not so easily disentangled.[25]

Besides acknowledging the work of his precursors, Said went further in analyzing how the Manichean allegory between the West and the Orient, serves the West's cause. Indeed, Said argues that the discourse of orientalism predates colonialism, and was established well in advance, in order to justify the exploitation and colonization of other

[25] Edward Said, *The London Review of Books* Available: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n06/said01_.html, Access 12 February 2009.

people: "To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact" (39). By outlining how the representation of other societies and peoples involved "an act of power by which images of them were in a sense created by the Western observer who constructed them as people and societies to be ruled and dominated" (12), Said entered a discursive terrain of counter-discourses that aim at proving the extent to which colonial textuality sustains Eurocentric knowledge.

Based on the arguments of Césaire, Fanon and Said, it seems that the role of postcolonial rhetoric is crucial, and it would be foolish to deny this, as many postcolonial critics such as Benita Parry and Neil Lazurus have suggested. However, one constant criticism Postcolonialism has to face is the ways in which critics focus on the discursive level at the expense of the material realities of postcolonial people. In fact, Ania Loomba recalls Ella Shohat's commentary that "one negative implication of the very acceptability of the term 'postcolonial' in the Western academy" is that it "serves to keep at bay more sharply political terms such as 'imperialism' or 'geopolitics'" (Qt in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* 3). Similarly, Loomba cites Terry Eagleton who states that "within 'postcolonial thought' one is "allowed to talk about cultural differences, but not, or not much, about economical exploitation'" (ibid). Undeniably, the very danger of relying on a textual level for interpreting the postcolonial condition is that discourses reduce the lived experience of the daily economies of colonialism, blurring the material reality and the ideological representation in the text (Boehmer 20). By relying on the discursive level, then, for interpreting the colonial realities of genocide and mass killing such as the experiences of South African people under the Apartheid regime, when state killings were done on a large scale to muffle any liberation attempts, critics may end up "aestheticizing colonialism, producing a radical chic version of raj nostalgia" (Dirks 5).

As true as the fact that colonialism was all about representation and ideology -as demonstrated above- it nevertheless shares a mutual relationship with capitalism:

> Colonialism was a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth and riches to Western nations through the economic exploitation of others. It was pursued for economic profit, reward, and riches. Hence, colonialism and capitalism share a mutually supportive relationship with each other. (McLeod *Beginning Postcolonialism* 7)

This is the very case, Ania Loomba is also making, by stating that it is Lenin's definition of imperialism as the 'highest' stage of capitalist development that "allows some people to argue that capitalism is the distinguishable feature between colonialism and nationalism" (5). Thus, the fact that colonialism and imperialism continue to be used interchangeably is misleading; for if, arguably, it can be advanced that colonialism is over, imperialism continues until today. It is this mercantile part of colonization that seems to have slipped out of the theorizations of high postcolonial thinkers such as Bhabha, or Said who focus most of the time on discursive and intellectual debates.

Another important criticism of Postcolonialism's failure to successfully address issues of materiality and class structure comes from Marxist thinker Aijaz Ahmad, who takes issues with what he terms 'capitalist modernity'. Unquestionably, for Ahmad, postcolonial theory is to blame for the contemporary global condition of inequality between the West and the rest of the world[26]. As McLeod analyzes, Ahmad indicts postcolonial theory as being entirely complicit with the "globalizing, transnational tendencies of contemporary capitalism" (256) that results in the fact that companies such as IBM or CNN are able to "electronically circumnavigate the globe," whereas other multinational companies are able to "come and go as they please in many of the poorest nations of the world, hiring cheap labour in one location only to move operations to other places if costs there are lower" (255). In her essay "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Postcolonialism," Anne McClintock develops the same argument against the term "postcolonial". Besides lamenting how the celebratory "post" in postcolonial erroneously

---

[26]See Ahmad's "*The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality* " Race & class 36: 33, 1-20, Sage, 1995

implies an ending of colonial domination, McClintock mostly outlines how this term also deflects attention away from its "neo-colonial" operations. McClintock's arguments are shared by Ella Shohat who argues that by implying the end of colonialism, the term Postcolonialism displaces the realities of the neo-colonial operations such as the unequal flow of European multinational capital, or the imperial nature of the United States that militarily threatens the sovereignty of the new nations. For Shohat, without doubt, the unequal relationships between the wealthy Western Nations and their poorest neighbours are a reality of colonialism's "political and cultural deformative traces in the present" ("Notes of the Postcolonial" 105). The term 'postcolonial' she says, when compared with the term 'neo-colonialism,'

> comes equipped with little vocation of contemporary power relations; it lacks a political content which can account for the eighties and nineties-style U.S. militaristic involvements in Grenada, Panama, and Kuwait-Iraq, and for the symbiotic links between U.S. political and economic interests and those of local elites. (105)

This lack of emphasis on economic perspectives suggests the crucial pitfall of theorizing Postcoloniality only with the locus of textuality and forgetting the material realities of postcolonial people. Thus, the focus on "colonization" and not on "imperialism," or the erroneous conflation of the two terms, will have a detrimental impact as far as gender issues in postcolonial settings are concerned, like the case of the women Silvera interviewed in *Silenced.*

Indeed, a second important failure inherent in Postcolonial theory is its male-centered focus. For instance, though important works of criticism, Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* only discuss a few female authors. If Fanon's analysis of colonialism does not miss its brutal nature as testified by his statement that "colonialism is a violent affair," his analysis of colonial damage on the psyche of colonial people is primarily aimed at the black male's body. His controversial sentence, "Those who grant our conclusions on the psycho-sexuality of the white woman may ask what we have to say

about the woman of colour. I know nothing of her" (179-80), is revealing enough about the masculine orientation of his decolonizing effort. Yet, according to Denise deCaires Narain, even if this erasure of the black woman is not "acceptable," it is nonetheless explainable. As she says, even if the invisibility inherent in Fanon's statement "is worrying," it is also a true recognition that in colonial representations of its others, it is the black *man* (emphasis on original) who is constructed as the real menace:

> The potency and danger associated with the black male body in colonial discourse, and the relentless pathologizing of this body, perhaps also explain the robustness of the challenges generated in response to such distortions and the tendency for the black woman's subjectivity to be consistently elided. (149)

Narain's statement has some value in it, even though it can be argued that in the time frame of nation formations, when the shadow of the colonizer's menace can be said to be "over," women nonetheless continue to be constantly erased and relegated to the symbolic realm. In the same manner postcolonial theory fails to integrate issues of ethnicity and gender; nationalism, is also, more often than not, a hindrance in women's lives. In the collection of poems *She Tries Her Tongue* that will be studied in the chapter with Philip, we will see how the prominence of masculinist discourses in postcolonialism and nation formation compete with imperial oppression in order to further silence the feminine voice. Indeed, part of Philip's struggle in that work is to attempt to interrupt the national tropes that have given her a second class citizen role. In the beginning of her essay "Displace," Philip has wondered how to get rid of the "the sentence of silence," which she imposed on herself by not challenging the primacy of the male voice in postcolonial revisions: "My own silence locked in my own words –silencing me. The sentence of silence! Césaire, Murray, Walcott, Pound– how they stride around my silence filled with their words...' (85). Consequently, in the same manner it is important to outline the gaps in postcolonial rhetoric, despite its important force as a counter-discourse, it is also essential that in

acknowledging anti-colonial nationalism's "enormous power and appeal," we take care not to over-celebrate nationalism by forgetting its exclusions[27].

In the following part, I intend to analyze how erasure and displacement of the female body is a "necessary component" of the canonical Caribbean revolutionary narratives for the male Caribbean to achieve literary authorship, as well as how the elision of the masculine with the national, renders women's position in the nationalist rhetoric of Negritude and Pan-Caribbean movements all the more problematic. The vigorous and robustly male poetics that have been articulated as a counter-discourse to the colonial encounter by Caribbean writers signals how sexuality is crucially implicated in nation formations, and how women's sexualities have been recuperated in the name of nationalism; this consequently confirms Lydia Lui's argument that nationalism came along as a "profoundly patriarchal ideology, that grant subject positions to men who fight over territories, possession, and the right to dominate" ("Female Body and Nationalist Discourse" 58). Besides outlining the link between colonialism and nationalism in the ways in which imperialism and patriarchy collude in women's lives, this eroticized nationalism also crucially reveals how women are precariously positioned within the competing discourse of both colonialism and patriarchy.

## Eroticized Nationalism

> In male writers' work like that of Jacques Roumain or Earl Lovelace or George Lamming the female body is either motherly or virgin, which amounts to the same thing - like land to be traversed or owned. Their descriptions are idylic, paeans, imaginary, and inescapable about territory, continent. *Brand (*Bread Out of Stone *35-35)*

Colonialism undeniably left an indelible effect on the lives of scholars from the Caribbean. As Fanon has elaborated in his essay "On National Culture," colonialism was not merely concerned with shaping the present of colonized people, but it also sought to destroy their future as well as, paradoxically, their past: "by a kind of perverted logic, it

[27] See E. Victor Morgan's "Challenging Colonialism" in Theory and Practice of Central Banking 1797-1913

turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 210). Left without any tangible or positive references, the contemporary black person, then, finds herself or himself impelled to rediscover their true history, as well as to reaffirm a positive black identity. Without doubt, it can be advanced that response to the devaluated stereotypes brought forward by colonization is the primary goal of the canonical writing of male Caribbean authors, as it shows from this statement from Edouard Glissant: "the Caribbean tale... is anti-History". Indeed, it can be argued that Caribbean literature in its totality is a response to colonialism and Eurocentric historicism, as also advanced by Clarisse Zimra:

> It has become a (quasi) cliché to assert that Caribbean literature is obsessed with history. Facing the Hegelian void, every writer has claimed the recreation of a collective memory as the imperative of authentic creation. Often, the collective dreamers have turned historians... Providing the black diasporas with counter heroes... This discovery of an essential Other has made of all writing in the Caribbean a meditation on history. ("Righting the Calabash" 144)

Surely, from such classic novels as V.S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* and Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*, to the critical discourses of C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* and Selwyn Cudjoe's *Resistance and Caribbean Literature*, Caribbean discourse has largely perceived itself as a revolutionary discourse, and a concern with narrativizing and deconstructing historical movements in the Caribbean. This literature ferociously scrutinizes the colonialist impressions that sustained colonization, by undercutting the discourses of racial hegemony and the myths of native inferiority that upheld the imperial project. The examples are numerous, and we can just think of J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) rewriting Daniel Defoe's 1719 *Robinson Crusoe*; Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso's Sea* (1966) which takes up the character Bertha Mason from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; or Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) with its rewriting of *The Odyssey*. In her anthology *Caribbean Women*, Veronica Marie Gregg apprehends the link between the theories of racial superiority and the constitution of a Caribbean literary authorship:

> That the belief about the Negro charged with deep ambivalence at best was a central feature of the originary moment of scribal Anglophone Caribbean literature often has been *overlooked*. The fictions of white supremacy and black inferiority, often, projected as human values, historical truth, and social realism, worked into the very constitution of West Indian literature, culture, and nationalism, even when it seems most radical. (My emphasis; 47)

However, the paradox inherent in this male Caribbean desire, which is to liberate a space of revolution and historical rewriting by shaping it to his image, is "tied to its corresponding impulse to 'erase' the symbolic body of the black woman," which Belinda Edmondson outlines in *Making Men* (107). Indeed, for Edmondson, erasure and replacement of the body of the black woman is a necessary component of the revolutionary narratives of texts authored by black Caribbean men, in order for them to be able to achieve literary authority, since Miranda, the white heroine in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, stands between the black Caribbean man and the black Caribbean woman. Hence, the absence of the black woman can be noted in the symbolic trope of Caliban/Prospero. A trope which, by reducing the colonial encounter between these two male protagonists: the male colonizer and the colonized male in a dual combat that revolves around the quest of the white woman, Miranda, deeply reveals the gendered nature of this colonial rewriting:

> Miranda effectively displaces the body of the black woman in the revolutionary script by becoming, in Jonathan Goldberg's words, the 'trope of ideal femininity, (the) fantasmatic female that secures male-male arrangements and an all-male history.'...*Unlike the possession of the black female body, the 'ownership" of Miranda is imbricated in the mastery of the English literary canon.* (My emphasis; 108)

Edmondson's link between male literary authorship and the erasure of the black woman's body has also been addressed by Madhu Dubey who argues that "in Black nationalist literature, the black woman is symbol of the undesirable slave past which has to be destroyed before the new black writer can articulate a new black revolutionary sensibility" (Qtd in Edmondson 99). As we can see, the quest for literary mastership is done via the

sacrifice of the body of the black woman, which becomes the altar through which the Caribbean man enters modernity.

Furthermore, by depicting the colonized through his sexuality, a deviant sexuality above all, with its potential threat of rape for the native as well as the European woman, colonial discourse constructs the colonized man as primitive and as closer to the bestial than the white man. The Caribbean counter-discourse that seeks to dismantle this hegemonic cultural colonization is equally replete with sexual metaphors. Indeed, by countering the feminization of the Caribbean man, and undermining the claim of English superiority, Caribbean male writers deploy the same argument in an effort to 'remasculate' themselves. If, on the one hand, for the colonizers, women are represented "as virginal territory to be penetrated and conquered" ( Boehmer 83), on the other hand, for the nationalists, the conflation of woman with the land functions as the "symbol of what is being fought for" (DeCaires Narain 151). By taking place through the body of the black woman, this remasculation process reveals the link between masculinity and revolutionary discourse, as bell hooks has also noted:

> The discourse of black resistance has almost equated freedom with manhood, the economic and material domination of black men with castration, emasculation. Accepting these sexual metaphors forged a bond between black men and their white male oppressors. They share the patriarchal belief that revolutionary struggle was really about the erect phallus. (Qtd in Reddock 13)

Granted, from Black diasporic literary conversations to the decolonization narratives up to the discussions of Negritude and nationalism, all use the discourse of gender to allegorize race relations. In *Nationalism and Sexualities*, the editors deplore this nationalist inclination to represent the nation as a "mother" in danger of being sexually invaded by foreigners, an image which would invariably prompt all the homeland "citizens and allies to rush to her defence" (6). As a result, "the nation as mother protected her son from colonial ravages, but was also ravaged by colonialism and in need of her son's protection" (Loomba 218). However, even if the past and the land embody for the new

nationalist elites, emblems of pride and authenticity, it is also important to note that in nation formation constructions, the land was, in more cases than not, pictured "as maternal, or as an abused and adored female body, while leadership was figured as masculine" (Boehmer 117). Regrettably, by countering the colonizers' sexualization of colonial conquests and the conflation of women with the land to invade and conquer, the nationalist responses have "naturally" come to rely on the same sexual metaphors of woman as the land, in order to reject western rule and hegemony, as also the epigraph from Dionne Brand demonstrates. Therefore, as a threat, the black woman must be "buried" in the new mediation between "colonizer and newly decolonized subject" (108), which is more readily represented in the binary Caliban/Prospero.

**The Caliban/Prospero Trope**

The best known example of Caribbean're-masculation' politics can be seen in the various rewritings of Shakespeare's famous 1611 play, *The Tempest*, the famous trope of colonial discourse master narrative, which has come to symbolize the Caribbean Quarrel with History. Indeed, from Césaire's rewriting of The *Tempest*, to the most contemporary revisioning such as Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, all these male Caribbean writers have taken a confrontational stance toward Shakespeare's play by contesting the dominant position of Prospero as the master of the land over the enslaved condition of Caliban. These rewritings of past colonial discourse narrativizing black inferiority and white superiority, as symbolized by the binary Prospero/Caliban, generally involves the reversing of that hierarchy: they give Caliban the attributes of the master, rather than that of the slave. As Roberto Fernandez Retamar argues ("Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America"), this adoption of Caliban as a revolutionary figure promotes a formulation that still views history as a Manichean power struggle between master and slave. In so doing, notwithstanding the fact that these male rewritings of Shakespeare's play erase the presence of the black woman in the story, they do no more than merely reverse the binary

of power, instead of dismantling it. (In this vein, in chapter three, I note intertextual interpolations of Derek Walcott by Dionne Brand about his male-centred focus.)

As Opal Palmer Adisa laments in her essay "De Language Reflect Dem Ethos," from Césaire to more recent re-evaluations of Caliban paradigm, women are conspicuously absent. Indeed, Adisa makes an important contribution by maintaining that if such celebrated Caribbean male writers such as George Lamming and Derek Walcott are "given voice" by engaging in critical anti-colonial discourse with Shakespeare's Caliban "who appears to be the model for the Caribbean man," it is particularly important to note that "it is out of this patriarchal structure, designed to make her an object, part of the landscape to be used and discarded as seen fit by the colonizer, that the Caribbean woman has emerged" (23). However, Adisa asks, if Caliban is the model for the Caribbean man, "who is his counterpart, the model for the Caribbean woman? Caliban's counterpart is noticeably absent; the Caribbean woman is rendered not only dumb, but invisible as well in this important play by Shakespeare" (23).

If Shakespeare's Caliban was criticized as a master narrative of colonial discourse in the ways in which the master, Prospero, comes to rescue his slave, Caliban, from the "dark backward and abysm of time," (*The Tempest* I.ii. 342-345) Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1950), will give the analogy between *The Tempest* and Colonization a deeper meaning. In his book, which recounts his personal experiences of 1947 colonial uprising in Madagascar, and the subsequent brutal French repression, Mannoni attempted an unsuccessful move to draw a theory of colonial mentality: whereas European people are "predestined" to become colonizers because of their impelled "infantile complexes which were not properly resolved in adolescence" (104), the colonized, on the other hand, are guilty of their own colonization, because of their display of a "dependency complex" which has led them to have "unconsciously expected—even desired" the coming of the colonizers (86).

Frantz Fanon in *Black Skins, White Masks*, was the first to challenge Mannoni's equation of colonization and psychology at the expense of the real motive that was at the heart of colonization: the pursuit of profit and gain. In an entire chapter entitled "The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized People," Fanon refutes the dependency complex outlined by Mannoni, and argues that it is rather a complex of superiority that animates the colonizer. Fanon, then, contradicts Mannoni's thesis that psychosis is a latent feature of the Malagasy people, brought to light by colonization. Rather, Fanon suggests, psychosis starts with the colonial encounter, and results in the subsequent alienation of the colonized people. In doing so, Fanon argues that Mannoni's theory of dependency veils a more crucial reality, the economic exploitation that comes with colonization, and which imposes an inferiority complex on the colonized, in the ways in which the colonized must submit to a constant devaluation of their culture and beliefs, and the concomitant valorization of white culture. So by arguing that the colonized traits do not predate colonization, but are rather caused by it, Fanon undercuts Mannoni's claims of the predestined roles of colonized and colonizers. Yet, perhaps because he relied on Mannoni's all male paradigms, as some critics have argued; Fanon's response is centered on men. As argued earlier, Fanon's project in countering the colonial devaluations are primarily aimed at the black male, as his controversial sentence dissociating himself from the plight of the black woman reveals.

In both *Notebook of a Return to my Native Land* and *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire, just like Fanon, takes issues with Manonni's "dependency complex." Taking Prospero's weapons in defence of Caliban, Césaire reduces Manonni's so-called psychology of colonization to that "same old paternalistic refrain," 'The-Negroes-are-big-children' before proceeding to qualify Mannoni as a "conjurer" who will:

> prove to you as clear as day that colonization is based on psychology, that they are groups of men, who for unknown reasons, suffer from what must be called a dependency complex...that these groups need dependence, that they crave it, ask it, demand it; that this the case with most of colonized people, and with the Madagascans in particular. (40)

However, if Césaire's rewriting of *The Tempest* recasts the land, the island, as the feminine, the body of the black woman symbolizes the object being fought for by both Prospero and Caliban. Even though Caliban's often quoted declaration, in which he claims ownership of the island: "This island mine by Sycorax my mother/which thou tak'st from me" (I.ii.333-4), has been held as a reclamation of both economic as well as linguistic and cultural legacies, the continual association that Caliban makes of the island and his mother Sycorax, or even the conflation he does between the two, casts the figure of the woman as the land in a problematic way we shall discuss later.

In a more recent light, George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* uses Caliban as the symbol of colonization. Incorporating a line from James Joyce's *Ulysses* as his epigraph: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken," Lamming strives to turn the trope of Caliban into a positive example for a Caribbean future:

> Caliban is Man and other than Man. Caliban is his convert, colonized by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile. (15)

In "Caliban Orders History," Lamming goes even further and makes use of *The Tempest* as a means of reading Toussaint as Caliban, following C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. In this vein, Caliban even becomes the symbol of Afro-Caribbean independence, allegorically then, representing the leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led the 1791 slave uprising that threw out the French forces in 1802, and established the sovereignty of the Haitian nation.

Other Caribbean writers such as Derek Walcott have also taken up Caliban as the symbol of the Caribbean. Unlike Naipaul's pessimistic perspective on the Caribbean, Walcott re-appropriates Caliban's legacy in support of a more optimistic future for the Caribbean. Refusing Naipaul's lack of confidence in a positive future for the Caribbean, as exemplified by his book, *The Middle Passage*, and his infamous sentence: "The history of these islands can never be satisfactorily told. Brutality is not the only difficulty. History is

built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies" (24), Walcott's subsequent effort to prove that something *was* created in the Caribbean, is in fact, rooted in a deep fear that Naipaul "may be right," as Edward Baugh analyzes (7). In consequence, Walcott's "studied attempt to answer" Naipaul has the same function:

> In the Caribbean, history is irrelevant, not because it is not being created, or because it was sordid; but because it has never mattered, what has mattered is the loss of history, the amnesia of the races, what has become necessary is imagination, imagination as necessity as invention. ("The Caribbean: *Culture or Mimicry?*" 6)

This same quest, which is the deep fear that Naipaul "may be right," perhaps leads Walcott to plot an "epic splendour" of Caribbean history *in Omeros*, which can erase Naipaul's "nothingness". Yet, in Walcott's predilection, the figure is a male hero, as we can see in his New World Adam figure, which clearly invokes an unequivocally male paradigm. Besides, even though Walcott's narratives cannot be faulted with erasing the feminine presence, nevertheless, more often than not, the female heroine is not a black woman, but a brown woman.

A more complete embrace of the black woman, as Narrain terms it, will come later with the Negritude movement, which conflates woman with the African continent. Just as Césaire did in his rewriting of *The Tempest* by outlining the crucial role of woman as the mother of the nation, Leopold Senghor, too, conflates the black woman with Mother Africa. This embrace of the black woman is still problematic, for it only works at the symbolic level. Besides reinforcing the role of men as the agents of change in nationalist discourse, this symbolic representation of women as the mother serves to reify stereotypes of the passive woman. By using women as mere icons of liberation, nationalism has often been accused of erasing women's agency and participation in decolonization movements. M.M. Adjarian writes that the mother figure virtually "haunts" the literary consciousness of Caribbean writers. However, if "synecdochial" reference to the maternal body that links her to the physical elements of nature has been claimed by men as their literary terrain, where

"flesh-and-blood" and reality and material contribution to the nation are concerned, both the mother, and her body, went largely ignored and uncelebrated until the 1980s when Caribbean women writers began to investigate the theme of the mother (2). In "Prose and Poetry," Senghor has maintained that the African woman does not need to be liberated "for she has been free for many thousands of years" (44), as the "source of the life-force and guardian of the house, that is to say, the depository of the clan's past and the guarantor of its future" (45) (Qtd in McLeod 83). Failing to associate women with public life, but instead situating her within the private sphere as the "guardian of the house," Senghor clearly delineates women's place in revolutionary movements. Negritude then, despite its force as an anti-colonial movement, remains a limited movement as far as women are concerned, in the ways in which its brand of nationalism traffics in chauvinistic representations of women. So, when black women are not erased in the Caribbean male narrative, the only place they can occupy is that of a mother like Sycorax, Caliban's mother. This examination of the woman's body in "maternal" terms is a strategy that Caribbean women's texts will remediate later. For if, as Dionne Brand argues, "in a world where Black women's bodies are so sexualized, avoiding the body as sexual is a strategy," and thus, when "representations of the 'non-maternal' woman's body are presented, it invariably signals anxiety and fear" (Qtd in Narrain 153). This has led Brand to the conclusion that "in male writers' work like that of Jacques Roumain or Earl Lovelace or George Lamming the female body is either motherly or virgin, which amounts to the same thing -like land to be traversed or owned. Their descriptions are idylic, paeans, imaginary, and inescapable about territory, continent" (*Bread out of Stone* 34-35).

**Engendering the Colonial Tale**

If male Caribbean rewritings content themselves with liberating Caliban from Prospero, the subsequent feminist take on the play does more than reverse the binary of power from colonizer to colonized. Going further than this debilitating binary, the feminist rewritings of the play attend to the sort of female protagonists of the play and their

foreclosure in the Manichean allegory of oppressor and oppressed. Where the male appropriation of *The Tempest* is only aimed at a destabilization of the racial binary of Prospero and Caliban, feminist revisionings of the play address not only the racism and ethnocentrism inherent in the play, but also the sexism inherent in the postcolonial rewritings of the play, as we will see with Philip's deeply gendered version of the colonial encounter. In her essay "The Miranda Complex," Laura Donaldson argues that contrary to the Caliban/Prospero relationship that has received numerous revisions from the Third World critics, the relationship between Miranda and Caliban has been virtually ignored:

> While the trope of Prospero and Caliban and its evocation of self and other, the West and the Rest of Us, the colonizer and the indigenous people, have received much critical attention, the relationship between Miranda and Caliban has been virtually ignored. (16)

Donaldson's "coupling of Miranda and Caliban," rather than the traditional binary Prospero/Caliban, serves to dismantle the continued absence of the black woman, a well as her intention to show that both Caliban and Miranda are victims of "colonialist Prosperity" (16), in the ways in which Prospero "dominates both "daughter and native". At the same time, Donaldson also outlines the sexist part of the play that has always managed to slip out of men's rewriting of *The Tempest*, by drawing attention to what she calls "Caliban's own quest for mastery through one of the patriarchal theatre's most "disastrous rehearsals of enforced heterosexuality," meaning Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda. By seeing Miranda only as a "distorted being of a woman," whose possession will allow him to take revenge on Prospero, and "people the island with little Calibans," Caliban falls in the trap of what Jeffner Allen calls "a monologue by men about an invisible woman," meaning the rape of a woman as the means to take revenge on another man's "property" (Qtd in Donaldson 17). This masculinist Caliban, who is simultaneously victim and victimizer, complicates the easy identification that the male Caribbean writers have made with him.

Sylvia Wynter, in her after/ward "Beyond Miranda's Meaning," provides an explanation for the Caribbean woman's absence that Adisa is putting forward. After

presenting Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a foundational and representative text of the new order of knowledge, Wynter argues that *The Tempest* illustrates the position of women and race in this new world order of knowledge as symbolized by the relationship between Miranda and Caliban. According to Wynter, the knowledge system represented in *The Tempest* erases women of colour or colonized women. For, if colonized men are represented in the figure of Caliban, this latter has no "mate" of his own, and "nowhere in Shakespeare's play....does Caliban's mate appear as an alternative sexual-erotic model of desire," the only visible woman is Miranda, "with her mode of physiognomic being, defined as the philogenically 'idealized' features of straight hair and thin lips" (360). Since Miranda is upheld and "canonized," as the "rational" object of desire for both Prospero and Caliban, she then becomes "the potential genetrix of a superior mode of human life, who foregrounds the "ontological absence" of Caliban's mate, who would just bear "another population of human, i.e., of a 'vile race' capable of all ills" (360):

> Caliban's women's absence is "ontological"– "one central to the new secularizing behavior-regulatory narrative schema" of modern Europe[...] To put it in more directly political terms, the absence of Caliban's woman, is an absence which is functional to the new secularizing schema by which the people of Western Europe legitimated their global expansion as well as their expropriation and/their marginalization of all the other population-groups of the globe. (362)

Therefore, just like Caliban's "over-determined participation in imperialism and masculinism" does not make an easy identification with him for Caribbean women, Miranda's own peculiar position, as "the sexual object of both the Anglo-European male and the native Other," as well as "the loyal daughter/wife who ultimately aligns herself with the benefits and protection offered by the colonizing father and husband" (*Decolonizing Feminism* 17), does not easily allow the Caribbean woman to identify with her. Both situations symbolize the precarious position of the black woman, displaced by both the subject of imperial feminism as well as black masculinism. Like the broken body of the cyclamen girl, in Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue*, or Elizete's invaded body in

Brand's *In Another Place Not Here*, intersecting and overlapping discourses collude in order to better achieve their oppression.

**Summary**

My purpose in this chapter was to outline the inappropriateness of traditional paradigms that Brand, Philip and Silvera are writing from. In the first section, I have analyzed how mainstream feminism cannot capture the specificity of these writers because of its main tendency to focus primarily on gender equality, at the expense of other important factors such as racial discrimination and imperial domination. At the same time, my analysis has also challenged, in the second section, the ways in which nationalist and diasporic discourses over-privilege race while subsuming gender and sexual concerns. Thus, in the same way women of color have challenged the color prejudices within mainstream western feminism, black movements of decolonization and nationalism have also been decried because of their gender-blindness. Just as feminist theory has "reproduced axioms of imperialism," (Spivak, 1985a) in the ways in which white female subjectivity is predicated upon the erasure of black female agency, similarly, in their anti-racist and anti-colonial rhetoric, male decolonizing and nationalist movements have overlooked the agency of black women. So this juncture, which is the crossroad at which Jane Eyre meets with "the silenced ground" of Caliban's absent mate, is the point of focalization of the coming chapter, which attempts to open a space for the black Caribbean woman. Drawing on Donaldson's trope of the "Miranda Complex," which highlights the absence of racial issues in feminist theory, and the foreclosure of gender agency in male postcolonial discourse, the second chapter engages a more encompassing way of apprehending Caribbean women's specificity. Indeed, an objective way of privileging women's specificity is one that does not prioritize race over gender, or vice versa, but one that recognizes the intersectionality of their oppressions. Accordingly, for those who were merely objects in the discourses of both hegemonic feminism and reifying male nationalisms, a quest for a full subject position, which acknowledges their multiple

locations as well as their plural and contradictory identities, is a necessary endeavor, in order to help dismantle oppressive binary constructs, such as those of colonized/colonizer, male/female, master/slave, center/periphery. In this light, engaging Postmodern and Transnational subjectivities that the next chapter intends to do sounds like a thrilling avenue.

## CHAPTER TWO: POSTMODERN SUBJECTIVITIES

I am a woman living in a patriarchal society,
I am a black living in a racist society,
And I am a lesbian living in a homophobic society.
I am a Caribbean born Jamaican with all the stereotypes.
These factors are intricately linked to who I am and occupy a large place in my work.
(Makeda Silvera, "Conversation" 25)

For the many like me, black and female, it is imperative that our writing begin to recreate our histories and our myths, as well as integrate that most painful of experiences -- loss of our history and our word. The reacquisition of power to create in one's own i-mage and to create one's own i-mage is vital to this process; it reaffirms for us that which we have always known, even in those most darkest of times which are still with us, when everything conspired to prove otherwise -- that we belong most certainly to the race of humans. (Marlene Nourbese Philip,"The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy"11)

...A woman who
thought she was human but got the message, female
and black and somehow those who gave it to her
were like family, mother and brother, spitting woman
at her, somehow they were the only place to return to
and this gushing river had already swallowed most of
her, the little girls drowned on its indifferent bank, the
river hardened like the centre of her, spinning chalk
stone of its frill, burden in their slow feet, they weeping
she, go home, in futility. (Dionne Brand, *No Language is Neutral* 27)

In Chapter One, I argued that positioned between homogenizing and imperializing western feminisms and essentialist movements of male nationalism, the postcolonial diasporic woman, in this case, the Caribbean woman writer, literally disappears between these two competing paradigms. Intersected within these paradigms that either negate their gender or their black selves, Caribbean Canadian women writers have had to carve their own discursive terrain into which to theorize their intersectional identities as both women and Black persons. As Dionne Brand has said in her memoir *Map to the Door of No Return*, the mapping of the bodily geography of black women who inhabited imperial as well as patriarchal landscapes, goes with the reclaiming of the black female body "from that

domesticated, captive, open space" (43). This reclaiming of agency that goes beyond the boundaries imposed by colonialism and imperialism is "the creative project always underway" (43). In so doing, Brand identifies marginal space within both repression and resistance. Brand's affirmation also resonates with Philip's epigraph, in the ways in which the mapping of Black women's "most painful of experiences -- loss of our history and our word" goes with a simultaneous project: "the reacquisition of power to create in one's own i-mage".

I begin this second chapter, then, by extending my critique of the erasure of Caribbean women within both feminist theory and postcolonial theory by drawing on Donaldson's trope of the "Miranda Complex" which highlights the absence of racial issues in feminist theory, and the foreclosure of gender agency in male postcolonial discourse. As I introduced in the beginning of the thesis, I posit transnational feminist practice as a corrective to the universalizing theories of global feminism, as well as the oppressive and totalizing inscriptions of male nationalist discourses. My discussion in this chapter will first deal with notions of Caribbean Female subjectivity, before engaging the body of writing that is Caribbean Women's Writing. I will thus set a methodological framework suitable to the eclectic nature of Caribbean Canadian women's writing, a theoretical bricolage that aims at seizing the multiple identities of the Caribbean Canadian women writers dealt with in this thesis.

## Caribbean Female Subjectivity

In this section, I will start, first, by evoking some notions of *African Canadian identities*, in the ways in which the writers' position under the shadow of *African American culture* influences how they are read. While it is not a problem for Brand, Philip and Silvera to be identified with African American culture, to read them only from that perspective results in a partial and fraught reading. Indeed, even though Brand, Philip and Silvera acknowledge the influence and mentoring of African American writers such as Toni Morrison, they have nonetheless developed a particular body of writing: *African Caribbean*

*Canadian feminism* with its own particularities, as argued by African Canadian critic Njoki Wane. One of the most sustained studies of Caribbean women's historiography and writing is Belinda Edmondson's *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative*, published in 1999. In this detailed account of Caribbean women's writing, Edmondson is not only concerned about making a link between Caribbean men's writing and Caribbean women's writing, but she is also anxious to establish a theory "of Caribbean female subjectivity." In her entire chapter dedicated to that issue: "Theorizing Caribbean Feminist Aesthetics," Edmondson raises issues of what "constitutes Caribbean female subjectivity," by first asking if we can speak of "a uniquely Caribbean female authorial voice," and how to construct a theory of Caribbean female writing that identifies an "essential Caribbean female subject?" (83). Opening this section with excerpts from Marlene Nourbese Philip and Jamaica Kincaid, Edmondson argues that their positionalities as writers doubly displaced by race and gender, allows them to find refuge in a strategic essentialism, which permits her to "lay a theoretical groundwork for Caribbean women's writing that finds its authority in the experience of being black and female in North America" (83).

Like Nourbese Philip, Kincaid was an avid reader, but unlike other male Caribbean writers such as V.S Naipaul or CLR James, Kincaid did not initially seek to write her own books; she only came to the realization that she could become a writer after she immigrated to the USA and worked there as a domestic labourer (82). Kincaid acknowledges in an epigraph: "I never wanted to be a writer because I didn't know that any such thing existed" (Qtd in Edmondston 81). Philip also declares that "books there were, but others wrote them. I read them" (ibid). In making reference to both these writers' commentaries, Edmondson notes that it is the very fact of "reading the canon (that) *prevented* such activity" (81). For if the only "serious" Anglophone Caribbean writer images available were presented as men "recast in the image of the Victorian gentleman," what imaginative possibilities were left available to the Caribbean woman so that she could recast herself as a writing subject, asks Edmondson (82). For Edmondson, both Philip and Kincaid had to

transcend their obstacles by transforming themselves from readers to authors, "from passive receptacles or objects of narratives to the subject/agent of narrative" (83). But this process entailed issues related to what constituted Caribbean female subjectivity: for, if by becoming a writer, the Caribbean woman's first task is to "undo" her labels and representations in master narratives, is writing for the Caribbean woman writer always and already a "scriptorial obedience," a "rewriting of already-written narratives- a treason to the body's reality?" (Edmondson 83). Using Mae Henderson's theory of the simultaneity of discourses, I respond that Caribbean women's writing goes beyond the "rewriting of already-written narratives," which "talk back" to dominant paradigms. As we shall see in the chapter with Marlene Nourbese Philip, taking into account the "interlocutory" and "dialogic" character of black women's writing, engaged not merely with a relationship with the "other(s)," but also with an "internal dialogue" with the plural aspects that constitute the matrix of female subjectivity, allowing the uncovering of the multi-layered aspects of Caribbean women's narratives ("Speaking in tongues" 18).

**In Search of Notions of African-Canadianity**

"How does a culture seeking to become independent of imperialism imagine it own past?"(*Culture and Imperialism* 214). This reflection, from Edward Said is emblematic of the debate raging among African-Canadian writers. It also haunts the discourse of African-Canadian literature, hence the recurring themes of resistance and of the construction of a cultural memory as a means of building an identity that takes into account the experience of colonialism as well as offering an alternative to the colonizing culture. In this respect, the notion of cultural memory becomes something crucial for African-Canadian writers because it constitutes a means of fighting the forced oblivion imposed by the Middle Passage, and the silencing of the Diaspora through the brutal living conditions these writers and others sharing a similar lineage, are still experiencing in today's economic globalization. In this problematic of past and present, cultural memory and the fight for identity, it is useful to take a step back and analyse the relations of the three spaces –

Africa, America and Canada – and the role they played in the building of what has come to be known as "African-Canadian literary blackness."

Since Dubois's concept of diasporic identity, it has become very common to relate to black identity under the notion of "double-consciousness". However in his essay "Contesting a Model Blackness," George Elliot Clarke refutes the idea that African Canadians are characterized by a "double-consciousness". Rather, Clarke argues for a "poly-consciousness" since African Canadians are not just black Canadians, but are also adherents to a region, speakers of an official language (either French or English), disciples of heterogeneous faiths and related to a particular ethnicity (or national group), all of which shape their identities (17). So at the core of the problem, resides the cultural confusion that arises from the fact of living a multicultural experience. Before being confronted with any racism, exclusion or any other external problems, African Canadians have to deal with personal issues of belonging and the resultant ambiguity that is therefore transposed in their literature. According to Clarke, African Canadian literature occurs in the contested space "between the Euro-Canadian reluctance to accept an African presence and the African American insistence on reading Canadian blackness as merely a lighter shade of its own" (12). To reframe Clarke, the dilemma is that African Canadian writers are so far from Africa, and so close to the United States that this being a neighbour to the United States becomes crucial in any articulation of African Canadian literature (2). Then, the main challenge for African Canadian literature is the Canadian reluctance to accept and recognize its specificity, because Canada denies the presence of African Canadians and reads everything through the American experience. As a matter of fact, until very recently, the literary and media establishments have not acknowledged the black culture in Canada and take any attempt at building a black nationalism as an "Americanization of Canada," something which Canadians have always been actively resisting (11). For them, African Canadian nationalism is nothing less than an "American phenomenon that has somehow crept north or an African one that has migrated" (11).

In his second essay "Must All Blackness Be American? Locating Canada in Borden's 'Tightrope Time,' or Nationalizing Gilroy's The Black Atlantic," Clarke further pursues his notion of Africanadianity outlined in "Contesting a Model Blackness". For Clarke, the dilemma in which African Canadian writers find themselves is that if they are still viewed by Euro-Canadians as "misplaced Americans." For the dominant African American cultural matrix, African Canadians are no more than a "bastard version of their own" (73). And yet to complicate things further, Caribbean Canadian writers, having to choose between the "gravitational attractiveness of Black America," and the "repellent force of frequently racist Anglo-American (and Quèbècois de souche) nationalism," often choose to define African Canadian experience via African American texts and historical-cultural icons. This, according to Clarke, can easily seduce people into believing that "no uniquely African Canadian perspective exits" (72). Yet, as even Clarke himself recognizes, African Canadian people cannot refrain from drawing from the African American context because of their commonality of experiences. As he acknowledges, both African Canada and American Canada were forged in the British enterprise of slave trade, the 1812 war, and the abolitionist agitations that forged the first major African Canadian population. Clarke also outlines the role of Pan-African movements that urge the Diaspora to adopt African American modes of discourses. In this vein, Clarke quotes Barbados novelist Cecil Foster who states having no problem whatsoever in laying claim to black icons from any place in the world: "I feel they are all common property and we can use them... Should I disown a Martin Luther King or a Malcolm X? Other cultures don't. English writers -even those who are living here in Canada- can deal with Chaucer and the pre-Chaucerian writers, and Shakespeare" (Qtd in Clarke73). Foster's claim is reminiscent of Dionne Brand, who similarly confesses to interviewer Nuzhat Abbas that her early writings were "very African American" since she fell in love with writers such as Nikki Giovanni and Don Lee, Amiri Baraka, and Paule Marshall. In the same way, Makeda Silvera also talks about the crucial role African American literature has played in her career:

> I read a lot of novels and short stories by American Black women who were being published in the United States. For Black Canadian women writers, Toronto was still like a vacant parking lot. When I discovered this source of writing just south of the border, which was closer to my new North American urban experience, I took to it like a duck to water. (*The Other Woman* 412)

Thus, as far as African Canadian writers like Brand and Silvera are concerned, the standing of African American discourse as the model blackness is not an issue, as they do not make any differentiation between African American and African Canadian agendas. And even though they actively resist the systematic tendency of their country to implicate all Black Nationalism with Americanism, for African Canadian writers the problem is not to dismiss the influence of African American discourse nor is it to contest its standing as the model blackness in the formation of literary black space in Canada, because of their sharing of the history of slavery, colonialism and racial segregation.

**Rooting the African American Feminist Narrative**

Due to a long history of fighting for racial and gender equality, African American women have succeeded in carving for themselves a place in scholarship and academia. Black feminist thought and womanist ideologies, which were forged in the fight against racism in the feminist movement, have become powerful standpoints around which many diasporic black women align themselves. By defining black feminism as an activism that is grounded in black women's common histories, such as colonialism, slavery, imperialism and neo-colonialism, African American women have carved for themselves a standpoint that takes into account the multiplicity and multidimensionality of their oppressions (Collins 2000, hooks 1992). Collins's alternative epistemology, for example, which simultaneously embodies notions of feminism and afro-centrism, has been attractive to many Black feminists who have been ostracized within mainstream feminism. Not surprisingly, Alice Walker's notion of womanism, which she develops in her 1983 collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden,* has also been "seized upon by black Third World feminist scholars in their quest for a theory that will allow them to speak

simultaneously of gender and national liberation issues" (*Making Men* 102). Indeed, by suggesting a recovery of the history and sites of cultural production of black women who have always been in the forefront of movements against sexual and racial oppression and yet have often been marginalized in history texts, the media, and mainstream feminist movements, womanism reflects a link with a history that includes African cultural heritage, enslavement in the United States, and a kinship with other women, especially women of colour. In addition, by stressing its commitment to the survival and wholeness of all people "*both men and women*" (emphasis mine), Walker succeeds in integrating into her agenda, the concerns of all people of colour, regardless of sex. This last part is very appealing to many black feminists, who do not want to isolate sexism from the larger economic forces that marginalize both women and men. For Belinda Edmondson, the only theoretical standpoint that has offered an alternative gateway from the oppressiveness of mainstream feminism and black male movements of liberation is African American feminism. Even though she is conscious that mainstream feminism and black male aesthetics are the paradigms that have dominated most of the discussion on gender and race, she finds neither of these methods alone useful for discussing the experience of these women. However the African American canon, by contrast,

> With its small but consistent tradition of women writers, must have appeared to be much more accessible to the black West Indian female reader....The African American paradigm of black female subjectivity outlined here thus provides a critical frame for Caribbean women writers to begin reconceptualizing an authoritative literary space for themselves that simulates neither black masculinist nor white feminist constructions of the oppositional subject. (103)

Indeed, many Caribbean Canadian women, in the example of Brand and Silvera, have recognized how they seek to fight their dissatisfaction within the feminist agenda and the male nationalist agenda, by turning to the African American model of feminist analysis, referred to above. However, as integrative a model as the African American standpoint seems to be, does this specifically African American-centred framework truly encompass the realities of black women living in Canada? What is the relevance of African American

theory faced with the visa status issues or deportation threats that black women face in Canada? This is why I find Edmondson's attempt to use African American feminist theory to "apprehend the Caribbean female-authored text" (101) very problematic. By analyzing the active forms of textual theorizing including the use of oral history, language, and memory, or more accurately counter-memory developed by African Caribbean Canadian women writers, such as Silvera, Brand and Philip, I argue, along with African Canadian critic Njoki Wane, that these women writers have subsequently come to develop a specific "African Caribbean Canadian feminism," –African Canadian Black feminist thought– a theory that is grounded in their historical as well as contemporary experiences and that enables them to create specifically gendered visions of Diaspora through which to theorize their female experience of migration and dislocation.

**Voicing an Afro-Caribbean Diasporic Feminism**

In "Black Feminist Thought: Tensions and Possibilities," Njoki Wane addresses the exclusion of Caribbean Canadian women from the Canadian academic environment by stating that the exclusion of Black women from the sphere of academia reveals their oppression through the Euro-patriarchal production and validation of knowledge (151). Since the Canadian environment, like most, is dominated by white male ideologies, this hierarchization in literature has created notions of minority literature that have relegated, as the second class female writers, most specifically those who are non-white writers (1). As Wane articulates, by challenging their male counterparts, white academic feminists have successfully carved out a niche for themselves in academia, but in so doing, they have only fought for gender equality for themselves, because they have overlooked the racial issues that marginalize non-white writers from mainstream Canadian literature. And since historically, Black women have been and still continue to be defined by the dominant culture, one way black women have to end this silencing is through the development of a feminist theory, a theory which, as with any oppositional discourse, would pose

fundamental challenges to unequal relations of power by questioning the long-standing assumption that black women ought to be the objects of knowledge (13).

In my view, what makes it possible to talk about shared perspectives on Black Canadian thought is the sharing of similar oppressions resulting from slavery, colonialism, racism and ongoing coloniality. Their specific locations and contexts differ, but what unites them is that they are all victims of racial and gendered biases, and their resistance strategies become their commonalities. Black women thus share differing histories and contexts, but their commonalities are that they have been racialized and gendered within patriarchal and imperialist systems, and have developed resistance strategies that are very similar, and out of which they can theorize. Fuelled by the lack of racialized voices in the discourse of mainstream feminisms, and by the lack of gendered bodies in the diasporic male discourses, Brand, Silvera, and Philip express an anti-colonialism which is closely linked to their feminism.

## Anthologies of Caribbean Canadian Women's Writing

> As we claim our history as women, feminism demands that we give attention not only to patriarchal misogyny, but also to the chauvinism of ethnicity and class and heterosexuality which prevent us from "seeing" whole groups of women. As long as we separate the history of white and middle-class women from the history of colored and poor women we are not only missing powerful lines of insight, we are perpetuating our own fragmentation" (Adrienne Rich,"Resisting Amnesia," *Blood, Bread and Poetry* 151)

It is not my intention in this thesis to prescribe a way of reading Caribbean women's writing, and more specifically, Caribbean Canadian women's writing, for such an attempt would be as tyrannical as the approaches deemed inadequate to apprehend Caribbean women's specificities. Nor is my objective to suggest that this body of writing –Caribbean Canadian Women's Writing– is "better" than its male counterpart or mainstream feminist writing. However, since neither a Caribbean feminist engagement, Anglo-American feminism, nor masculinist articulations of nationalism and diasporas, have been encompassing enough in their agendas to include the specificity of Caribbean Canadian women's concerns, looking for alternative methods seemed reasonably fair. Thus, it is

logical to review a number of anthologies dedicated to the body of writing, in order to apprehend what is hidden behind the term "Caribbean Women's Writing," and investigate how, in discussing the reception of Caribbean Canadian women writers, caught between the debilitating binary of politics and poetics that seems to reign in the academy, this thesis attempts to set a methodological framework suitable to the eclectic nature of Caribbean Canadian women's writing.

Myriam Chancy's "*Searching for Safe Space: Afro-Caribbean women writers in exile*" was instrumental in my decision to focus on Brand, Philip and Silvera, even though her analysis of Afro-Caribbean women writers has a diasporic focus. She examines Joan Riley and Beryl Gilroy from Britain; Makeda Silvera, Dionne Brand and Marlene Nourbese Philip from Canada; and Audre Lorde, Rosa Guy and Michelle Cliff from the United States. As in almost any comparative study, having to deal with a variety of contexts in a limited way has its pitfalls. Since I wanted to focus on the Canadian context, I realized that by focusing on Brand, Silvera, and Philip, I might be able to have enough space and explore other aspects of their work that Chancy did not approach. I feel that as important as Chancy's work is, her comparative approach did not allow her to deal with these African Caribbean Canadian women writers thoroughly. Also, while Chancy studied these African Caribbean women authors using a diasporic focus, I preferred to look for another framework such as transnationality. Indeed, as I have suggested earlier, transnationality remains far more equipped than diasporic discourses for apprehending Caribbean women's subjectivities. Nonetheless, I was alert to Chancy's argument that women writers from the Caribbean are "neither invisible nor voiceless," but that their texts have been excluded from classrooms and elite literary circles. Indeed, as Chancy strongly affirms, even though African Caribbean women have been very prolific, their history is still largely obscured and ignored. Following her insightful observation that Caribbean women's writing is neither "postcolonial" nor "a recent explosion" as sometimes referred to, but rather an extension of an established Caribbean literary tradition with "a long history of writing," I followed Chancy's path and looked for that history.

My first task was to interrogate the term "Caribbean Women Writers," to see what is hidden under this umbrella term. Who qualifies as a Caribbean woman writer? Who gets left out, in an attempt to inquire about the characteristics of the "archetypal Caribbean woman," as Denise deCaires Narain calls it in her book *Contemporary Caribbean Women's Poetry* (213). Through reading a number of anthologies dedicated to this body of writing, it comes out that the term "Caribbean Women Writers" is neither homogeneous nor monolithic; rather, Caribbean Women Writers is comprised of a body of writers who are "black and white and shades between," and who write in Creoles as well as in the dominant European languages (*Framing the Word* ix). Indeed, from the Western part of the chain of islands that form the Caribbean archipelago, to Trinidad and Tobago in the Eastern side, the community of Caribbean women encompasses the Amerindian and the Carib (the indigenous people of the Caribbean); the European colonizers; the African people brought there by the slave trade; the indentured Indian people originally from the South Asian Subcontinent; as well as the Asian commercial entrepreneurs. Besides revealing that the term "Caribbean Women Writers" is a heterogeneous category that encompasses women from diverse linguistic and racial backgrounds, the consultation of more recent anthologies confirms Chancy's assertion that Caribbean women's writing has a very long tradition.

*Engendering History, Caribbean Women in Historical Perspectives*, is a landmark in the history of women in the English speaking Caribbean. Resulting from a collection of essays published in 1995, *Engendering History* originated from an international symposium organized by Verene Shepherd in 1993. The notable contribution that the editors Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey brought forward is the need to produce a "gendered history" or a "historied gender". The editors challenged the existing methodologies and paradigms as well as the validity of existing canonical historical knowledge that not only left Caribbean women out of the historical books, but also resulted in "a distorted historical account which only partially represented the reality" (xii). Besides, they argue that feminist empirical approach which uses gender as an analytical tool with the historical discourse on the Caribbean, developed only in the 1960s and 1970s, for pre-1960

texts have often tended to trivialize and mask women's true contribution to Caribbean history. And in doing so, they call for new analytical perspectives which could be used in the reconstruction and redefinition of historical knowledge "to produce a gendered history" (xii). This creation of a "gendered history" is the first task that these Caribbean women must deal with, in order to counter the existing stereotypes surrounding the lives of Caribbean Canadian women.

*Engendering History* maps the beginning of Caribbean women's history with the publication of Lucille Mathrurin-Mair's Doctoral Dissertation "A historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1844" published in 1974 at the University of the West Indies. For the editors of *Engendering History*, Mathrurin-Mair charted the study of Caribbean women's issues and historiography because her dissertation is the first full-length study of women's history in the Caribbean. By being the first one to "explicitly raise issues about slavery and gender, and to ask if female slaves' historical experiences might have been significantly different from those of men," Lucille Mathrurin-Mair pioneered Caribbean women-centered historiography with her dissertation and her subsequent 1986 Goveai lecture, "Women Field Workers in Jamaica during Slavery" (*Gendered Realities* 132). In the same anthology, *Engendering History*, Patricia Mohammed's essay "Writing Gender into History" also constitutes an important contribution to the field of Caribbean women's history. By stressing the need to "write gender into history," Mohammed argues that the development of a gendered historiography demands both a theoretical understanding of gender as well as an accurate notion of how gender functions in history:

> The task of the feminist historian is not restricted to adding women, the sex whose history has been denied, to historical accounts of society. In order to engender history itself, the discipline must be challenged from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. To write gender into history, the historical construction of masculinity and femininity or the construction of gender identities must itself be posed as the problem. In this approach gender must be conceived of as another category of historical analysis in which the cadences in gender relations are juxtaposed and connected with the ongoing conflicts in society, especially the confrontations of class, race and ethnicity. (20)

As Philip will show in her collection of poems *She Tries her Tongue*, the questioning of history is a precondition to re-acquiring the silenced voices of black women. Most of the poems that comprise *She Tries* are critical inquiries into debates of the constructed history inherited both from the colonizers and the male discourse, and resonate strongly with Mohammed's urge to challenge mainstream history. Such a challenge to an all male history requires both the gendering and the racializing of history. Philip's use of anti-conformist forms in that work and her non-linear plot work to expose the artificiality of seamless narratives, through the incorporation of elements of orality. Like Mohammed, Susan Friedman has called upon women to reclaim history from its narrow confines, and to "re-visions 'history' into (her) story" (36).

> To reclaim "history," women poets have redefined it by breaking down the barriers between the "public" and the "private," the "political" and the "personal." They have historicized the personal and personalized the historical. Like Woolf in "Three Guineas," some women have shown that "the home"—the institution of family and sexuality—is no haven in a heartless world, but is rather a contested terrain whose patterns replicate the larger structures of society. What is outside is inside; what is inside is outside—the personal is political in a dynamic whereby no realm is privileged as most important, whereby no site is immune from history. Invisible in or objectified by conventional histories, women poets have devised a discourse of (her)story in which they (re)make "history"—both in the acting and in the telling". (23)

Apart from the establishment of a woman-centered historiography, the subsequent moves for the institution of Caribbean women's writing as a definable field is the recovering of the early voices of Caribbean women writers that have helped establish a literary presence. The uncovering of these literary foremothers who have gone unrecognized and uncelebrated is the concern of many anthologies such as *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature* (1990) edited by Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido. In this anthology, the editors were mostly concerned to stress that if Caribbean women's writing has taken a back seat to Caribbean male's writing, it was not because Caribbean women were not writing. On the contrary, there has been a long

tradition of women writing in the Caribbean; even though it is only through feminist re-visioning that these invisible writers are now being made visible (2). Indeed, in the early 20th century, Caribbean women such as Jean Rhys from Dominica, and Una Marson, Alice Durie and Eliot Bliss from Jamaica were already writing and publishing their fiction work. By the mid-century, writers such as Phyllis Shand Allfrey from Dominica, Rosa Guy from Trinidad, and Ada Quayle, Vera Bell and Cicely Waite-Smith from Jamaica emerged. They were followed later by writers such as Louise Bennet, Opal Palmer Adisa, Rosemary Brown, Lorna Goodison, Claire Harris, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Merle Hodge, Makeda Silvera, Afua Cooper, and Dionne Brand, among others.

In the introduction of the section "Woman Consciousness," Fido and Boyce Davies note that a majority of essays in this section take issue with "critical perceptions, at first colonialist and sexist, now neo-colonialist and sexist, which obliterate the existence of the woman, which fail to read the woman's text, which place negative values on women's issues, and which consequently marginalize or even erase women writers" (27). Clarisse Zimra's essay "Righting the Calabash: Writing History in the Female Francophone Narrative," par takes of the fact that, in the discourse of Caribbean history, the "intolerable absence of the original Father hides the silent presence of a Mother not yet fully understood" (143). In this essay, Zimra posits that even if Guadeloupian writer Maryse Condé is generally held to be the path-breaker whose early work in the 1980s effectively "throws the fake fathers out of Caribbean history" (146), there have been precursors (145). For as early as 1957, a full three years before Césaire's *Toussaint*, Marie Chauvet had written her book: *La Danse sur le Volcan*, preceded by *Fille d' Haiti* in 1954. In Zimra's view, the fact that Césaire's *Toussaint* has been given prominence over the work of these women writers will continue, unless African Caribbean women "write/right their own origin," by discarding the "Logos of the Father for the Silent Song of the Mother" (156). As long as they will not step in to write their own history, Caribbean women writers "will stay in the belly of the beast," like their unknown literary mothers (156).

For Fido and Boyce, the Caribbean women's texts that are in the process of being "rewritten" make of Caribbean women's writing a "literature in the process of becoming" (2); and that it is out of that voicelessness and absence that contemporary Caribbean women writers are boldly finding their creative expression by "responding personally to this enforced silence"(2). Taking Marlene Nourbese Philip as the example of Caribbean women who personally respond to these challenges by "discarding the logos of the Father for the silent song of the Mother," Fido and Davies champion Philip as the writer who, having witnessed the absence of woman in either colonial or male Caribbean fictions, "recasts the African as woman":

> In identifying this absence, Marlene Nourbese Philip's unquestioning acceptance of the female pronouns "she" and "her" in the identification of the African becomes a critical subversion of masculinist linguistic processes and an inscription of woman in Caribbean (literary) history where the "sexual/textual politics" accepts her absence. (3)

This creation of a "textual space" that Philip undertakes in her gendering of Caribbean history, has also been praised by Susheila Nasta who argues for the necessity of retrieving an "ancestral and present-day" voice and presence for the Caribbean Canadian women writers (xxi). Published in 1991, Susheila Nasta's collection of essays, *Motherlands* opens with Marlene Nourbese Philip's "Discourse on the Logic of Language". By prefacing her collection with Philip's essay, Nasta's aim in that groundbreaking work is to chart the discovering strategies that women writers use to remap and rewrite "herstory". By excavating ancestral foremothers who prove that Caribbean women were never silent, this feminist revisionist project uses strategies of "retrieval" in order to combat the "unreliable past narrations" that have written them out of the margins of history (xxi). By first outlining how black women are caught under both imperialism and patriarchy, this collection presents women writers who "reclaim the right to 'speak their texts' in ways that resist an easy assimilation into another's system" in the example of Marlene Nourbese Philip (xxii).

In the Canadian context, the collection of essays *We are Rooted Here: They Can't Pull Us Up* developed out of the vacuum due to the fact that the history of Black people in

Canada, and Black women in particular, is missing from the pages of mainstream Canadian history. In this collection of essays the six women coordinators, Dionne Brand, Peggy Bristow, Linda Carty, Sylvia Hamilton, Afua Cooper, and Adrienne Shadd voice the concern that the history of Black people in Canada and of Black women in particular is missing from mainstream Canadian history. However, by acknowledging the work of twelve black Canadian women who have published books on the history of blacks in Canada, the collection intends to show that despite the vacuum of black women's experiences in Canadian mainstream literature, black women have always been prolific. Another anthology, *Returning the Gaze,* also stresses the fact that there is a "silencing" and not a "silence" of non-white writers in Canadian mainstream literature. And that in spite of their status of "visible minorities," Non-white women are rendered invisible by Canadian multiculturalism. The writers included in this book fight to write themselves back into mainstream Canadian literature in which they are "present absent," as Himani Bannerji argues in her introduction:

> [a]n absence, then, as much as a presence, is a good point for a beginning. And when any situation is replete with both--where a pervasive absence signifies an absent presence, and a fleeting presence itself signals to a hidden imperative of invisibility, then that is precisely where work of inquiry and description must begin. We begin with what we have -- our invisibility. (xiii)

As Bannerji further analyzes, the terms "silencing," "absence," invisibility," "exclusion," or "non-representation" have come to be considered as clichéd or rhetorical in the discourses of feminists of colour, but their importance will remain "undiminished" for anyone engaged in research about a critical voice of non-white women, or anyone trying to put together a syllabus on gender, race and class with the Canadian context. What confronts such a researcher or a teacher is an absence of books, token presence in anthologies, or "ephemeral or rare apparition in theme issues women's journals" (x). For Bannerji, the invisibility of non-white women in Canada is such that until recently, many readers or scholars from elsewhere might:

> Justifiably conclude from published evidence that: a) Canada does not or did not have a significant non-white population; or b) if they at all existed, women (or men) among them were/are incapable of writing or are not significant enough to be written about; and c) understanding Canadian society is possible without any consideration of colonialism and (sexist) racism. The situation becomes even more puzzling when small signals of other lives erupt in current mainstream (white) feminist texts, which, in hurried anxiety and soft murmurs, speak of entities such as "visible minority women" or "women of colour," or recite the formula of "gender, race, and class" without concretely substantiating either the content of the context....suddenly racism and "women of colour" appear as phrases or topics thrown into books as chapters, producing tight little breathless paragraphs or footnotes. (xiv)

Being convinced that the issue surrounding Caribbean women in Canada is about their "invisibility" and not their "voicelessness," Caribbean Canadian women writers such as Brand, Silvera, and Philip take to task this very notion of invisibility, by fighting to make visible their hidden lives, as revealed in this statement from Makeda Silvera: "as a Black feminist engaged in research I have become more aware of the neglect of the contributions to the Canadian society of people of colour and in particular black women." In *No Burden to Carry*, Dionne Brand is voicing the same thought: "If Black life in Canada as a whole has been absent from the works of Canadian scholars, or inadequately served by them, Black women's lives have been doubly hidden" (*No Burden to Carry* 12). In another article: "A Working Paper on Black Women in Toronto: Gender, Race, and Class," Brand pursues her analysis of black women's invisibility in Canada by stressing the fact that apart from Makeda Silvera's oral history *Silenced*, there was no other "serious attempt" to analyze the role of black women in "migration, settlement, and the labour force, or in the struggles against racism which mark the everyday lives of Black people in Canada" (270). For Brand, the dearth of literature about black women living in Canada has greatly contributed to their invisibility within the feminist project (270). If on the one hand, black women's struggles have been rendered invisible by inaccurate multicultural policies; their lives have been further displaced by Black male history. Brand states:

> Indeed by virtue of gender, the history of Black women is not the same as the history of Black men, and if we were to return to that most significant point in history for Black people in the Americas, slavery, we would find that the underpinnings of sexism and patriarchy structured that institution as to exploit women and men in different ways. With Black history this point was until recently more often than not blurred, obfuscated not only because men wrote history but because in our case race dominates and writes history and race writes gender outside and beyond history. (*No Burden to Carry* 13)

So for Brand, since Black women's history has been displaced by Black history in general, there is the need to recover Black women as historical actors in order to not only "clarify" the historical record, but also to "recover" a revolutionary method for both feminist struggle and Black struggle (13) For her, it is her erasure in both feminist and black male histories that leads her to rely on oral history as her methodology, in order to uncover the forgotten voices of black women:

> If we were to ask Black women themselves how they lived, what they thought about this or that, what would they say? My purpose is to unchain these histories from the genderless bundle of information and misinformation on "Black," both by outside groups, (whites) and inside groups (Blacks). (30)

In *Bread out of Stone*, Brand elaborates in this: "How was it for you? In the Black gauze of our history how was it for you? Your face might appear if I asked this. I would ask you this whatever the price. I am not afraid of your voice. How was it for you?" (18). By excavating ancestral foremothers who prove that Caribbean women were never silent, this feminist revisionist project uses strategies of "retrieval" in order to combat the "unreliable past narrations" that have written them out of the margins of history (xxi).

**Reception of Caribbean Women's Writing**

In spite of Philip's, Brand's, and Silvera's extensive literary contributions and the various genres they have produced over the course of their careers, the critical reception and response to their work has been severely limited. Indeed, the forced theorization of the awkwardness of black women operating within the intersections of racism and patriarchy

has made it a common practice for most critics to analyze black women's writing under the mantra of race, class and sex or some combination of the three. Such a reading, which is at best a token recognition of the interconnectedness of race and gender in the lives of black women, is no more than a quick acknowledgment of these factors, a superficial analysis that levels down all black women's writing to this "[un]holy" trinity. I argue that despite the richness and complexity of Caribbean Canadian women's work, its critical reception is still fraught with preconceived notions that marginalize their work in the narrow confines of "minor literature" largely defined by issues of "hyphenated and hybrid identities" or "double consciousness". These overly conventionalized and clichéd readings that Black Caribbean Canadian women's works have inspired, either "reduce the writers to the status of sociologists," or "bleach their work of aesthetic value," as George Elliot Clarke provocatively claims in his essay "Harris, Philip, Brand: Three authors in Search of Literate Criticism". Indeed as far as Brand, Philip, and Makeda Silvera are concerned, critical commentary has tended to categorize their work around issues of "bridge-building between races," driven primarily by issues of homelessness, double consciousness, alienation and loneliness. In an interview with Rinaldo Walcott and Leslie Sanders, Brand states:

> All black writers are expected to make signs for other people that will identify black bodies and code them...I don't want the job of addressing, or signing 'black behaviour.'...You wish that your work might be looked at with a literary eye. Rather than this assigning of all black writing to an anthropological space or a sociological space. (25)

Like Brand, who deplores how she tends "to get reviewed sociologically, or anthropologically, as ethnography,"[28] Philip and Silvera have also vehemently resisted this reductive view of their work. However, if on the one hand Caribbean women writers like Philip, Brand, and Silvera have been critically read as "sociologists" or "ethnographers," on the other hand, they are only viewed as "creative writers," as Himmani Bannerji argues in the introduction of *Returning the Gaze*. According to Bannerji, there is a misperception about the critical abilities of so-called Third World people who have traditionally been

[28] "In the Company of my Work" 371

represented as "natural" and more prompted to emotionality and physicality than reason (xi). Yet, for Bannerji, if all Third World people suffer from this misperception, it is particularly Third World women who are most targeted by this stereotype:

> This situation gives rise to a misperception about our critical abilities and politics and intensifies the historical and existing racist common sense which imputes non-intellectuality to Third World people in general and women in particular. It matches racist notions about our difference..... It also ramifies into projections of non-white women as beasts of burden, mindless nurturers, and seductresses. (xi)

The work of non-white women therefore suffers from this stereotype of "non-intellectuality" attributed to Third World women, which accounts for their "one-sided visibility as creative writers" (xi). In fact, the texts of Third World women themselves participate in this stereotype, by being more often than not, creative writings or oral histories. Indeed, according to Bannerji, non-white women's experiences of "difference" need form and expression that are best represented by creative writing and oral histories, which are crucial to pinning down these experiences. However, by systematically targeting the creative works of non-white women and ignoring the critical work that is simultaneously being done, the Canadian intellectual and publishing establishments reinforce the myth of non-intellectuality of non-white women:

> The lack of this elaboration is not due to any absence of intellectual-critical abilities of non-white women; rather, the intellectual and publishing establishments of Canada, including the universities, have put neither time nor money towards creating any space to promote our support, especially non-fictional. This situation of racism by omission creates a vicious cycle both in terms of output and image. Less produces less, and reproduces the myths of stereotypes of our uncriticality contributing to the ongoing racism. (Bannerji xii-xiii)

The impetus to put together a book or critical writings by non-white women, such as *Returning the Gaze*, participates in the need to counter the existing stereotypes about non-white women. For as Bannerji firmly maintains, the first task for overcoming such myths is

to create "a critical space," so that the reading of works by non-white women come to no longer be viewed only one-sidedly.

If I consider the arguments of both Clarke and Bannerji about the reception and reading of works of non-white women, particularly Caribbean women writers for Clarke, their considerations are at polar ends. For Clarke, Caribbean women writers are reviewed only critically, denying their work any creative or aesthetics merits, whereas for Bannerji it is totally the opposite. Why such a gap? This ambivalence and non-resolution about the reception of non-white women's work in general and Caribbean Canadian women writers' in particular has been primordial in my choice of Brand, Philip and Silvera as the writers to focus on for my dissertation. I think that these three women writers' work –as a combination of both creative and critical texts in the forms of novels, poetry, oral narratives, short stories, essays, documentaries, films, and sociological texts– are the best way of countering both the myth of non-intellectuality Bannerji was complaining about, as well as to ease the tension of what Clarke was describing as a lack of aesthetic capacities.

## Theoretical Bricolage

As implied in the introduction of the thesis, and as I will develop in this part, the singular position of these Caribbean Canadian women, begs for a theoretical bricolage in order to capture the complexity of their situation. As I have argued throughout Chapter One, Brand's, Silvera's, and Philip's dilemma, between the limiting paradigms of feminist aesthetics and male aesthetics, signals the need to go beyond these discourses that fail to respond to the simultaneity of their oppression. My contention, therefore, is that the multilayered nature of the identities of the writers requires that we approach their work using a theoretical bricolage. The incorporation, in transnational feminist practices, of multiple and interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches such as feminism, Marxism, Postcolonialism, and Poststructuralism, among others, will allow me to pay attention to the various and discrete forms that hegemony can take. By looking at what Mohanty terms "overtly non-gendered and non-racialized" discourses of Postcoloniality

and Postmodernity ("Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles" 510), I will be able to perform a transnational feminist anti-capitalist reading, which will offer the possibility of unravelling the multiple forms that domination can take.

My choice to read my writers transnationally requires a "geopolitical literacy" such as that developed by Susan Stanford Friedman. Friedman's "polyvocal and often contradictory new geography of identity," which reflects the shift from temporal to spatial rhetoric, in ways in which a locational feminism "acknowledges the historically and geographically specific forms in which feminism emerges, takes root, changes, travels, translates, and transplants in different spacio/temporal contexts," is highly relevant to my project. Her description of "locational feminism" is worth quoting at length:

> In defining the geopolitical for feminists in this way, I am not suggesting a return to the much-critiqued category of "global feminism." The contemporary geopolitical rhetoric of feminism has to a large extent repudiated notions of monolithic patriarchy and sisterhood in favor of locational heterogeneity and idiomatic particularity in transnational contexts. This is what Spivak means in her advocacy of "transnational literacy," which assumes multiple agencies and heterogeneities in all locations[...] This is also what Indepal Grewal and Caren Kaplan call for in their seminal collection, *Scattered Hegemonies*, where they theorize the necessity of moving beyond the binaries of center/periphery, local/global, and First World/Third World. ("Locational Feminism, Gender, Cultural Geographies, and Geopolitical Literacy" 25-26)

This necessity of moving beyond the binaries of center/periphery, local/global, and First World/Third World, and male/female, colonizer/colonized that the first part of this second chapter dealt with, led me to engage in a theoretical bricolage that seeks to use many theories at the same time, but only by selecting what is useful for my purpose: which is to capture the multiply–articulated nature of these Caribbean Canadian women writers. As announced in the introduction, all three writers have expressed their distrust with theories that either look at gender or racial concern. That is why by relying on transnational feminist multiple theories and perspectives, my intention is to look at these writers' texts,

using a kind of assemblage of theories that aims to seize the multiply-articulated subjectivity of these Caribbean Canadian writers. As Isobel Hoving has argued for in *In Praise of New Travelers*, the extraordinary position of Caribbean migrant women's writing "asks for an extraordinary theoretical approach" (6). This approach has also been argued for by Evelyn O'Callaghan who, in her influential book, *Woman Version*, talks about the need to approach this body of writing through the creation of new analytical tools. Her framework, which she calls the "dub version," remixes and rewrites the traditional paradigms that have written out these Caribbean Women. O'Callaghan describes her model as a:

> Kind of remix or dub version, which utilizes elements from the 'master tape' of Caribbean literary discourse (combining, stretching, modifying them in new ways); announces a gendered perspective; adds individual styles of 'talk over'; enhances or omits tracks depending on desired effect; and generally alters by recontextalization to create a unique literary entity. (11)

O'Callaghan's framework is similar to Boyce Davies' "visitor theory," which is a "kind of *critical relationality* in which various theoretical positions are interrogated for their specific applicability to Black women's experiences and textualities" (46). Both call for a certain "eclecticism" similar to Chela Sandoval's metaphor of "the car clutch" which she defined as "differential consciousness" and which, like the mechanism of a car clutch, allows the driver to:

> select, engage, disengage gears in a system of the transmission of power....differential consciousness...functions as the medium through which the "equal rights," "revolutionary," "supremacist," and "separatist" modes of oppositional consciousness became effectively transformed out of their hegemonic versions. Each is now ideological and tactical weaponry (tactical subjectivity) for confronting the shifting currents of power. ("US Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of 14)

Sandoval's notion of "differential oppositional" by mutating to fit the logic of the shifting currents of power allows one to negotiate a variety of identities and theoretical positions, without falling prey to binary thinking that dismisses one dynamic to privilege another. My

project moves into this direction, by opening up spaces for the expression of a multiplicity of perspectives and literary poetics.

Another factor that led me to rely on a transnational feminist approach instead of a diasporic one, for example, is the issue of place and displacement such as in the portrayal of home in most masculinist theorizations of diasporas. Brand's straightforward outburst...

> I don't want no fucking country, here
>
> or there and all the ways back, I don't like it, none of it,
>
> easy as that. (*Land to Light On* 48)

...is unequivocally clear about her intention to challenge the idealized and romanticized articulation of home and nationhood in diasporic discourses. Contrary to the diasporic moorings in which home becomes an essentialist and nativist locus, Caribbean women writers like Brand, Philip and Silvera complicate this very notion of home. In their narratives, home is often portrayed as the place women have to run from, in search of a better place. In their fictions as well as in their non-fiction works, the first kind of alienation their women characters, (or they themselves) encounter, comes from their family and their home. The very notion of the nationalistic "myth of unitary origin" finds itself then disrupted and reversed in the writing of Caribbean Women writers, as Carole Boyce Davies contends. Although I have preferred the idea of transnationality to a diasporic focus, and have made that the frame for my thesis, Carole Boyce Davies's articulation of a specifically gendered notion of Diaspora remains an unparalleled study of Caribbean women's writing. Her theory of Gendered Diasporas is highly important to my discussion of this rewriting of the notion of nationhood and family. Indeed, the most important contribution Davies brings to the discussion of black women's subjectivity is the critical link she makes between the rewriting of home and the articulation of identities. For Davies, the construction of home as a problematic space, calls into question the notions of stable and continuous identities advanced by the proponents of diasporic discourses. She notes that any articulation of the critique of home as undertaken by these black women, has to begin with the examination of

the totalizing nature of pan-African diasporic discourses that cannot tolerate any articulation of difference, while operating from the premise of "a singularly monolithic construction of African theoretical homeland which asks for the submergence and silencing of gender, sexuality or any ideological stance or identity position which is not subsumed under Black/African nationalism" (49). Brand, Philip and Silvera all follow this logic in their narratives, and their portrayal of home is often one of displacement and oppression.

Besides disqualifying mainstream feminism and diasporic conversations for their usefulness in analysing black women's subjectivity, I also do not champion the kinds of responses brought to the oppressiveness of these paradigms. For, although I critique the colour prejudices inherent in hegemonic feminist discourse as well as the gender-blindness of male rhetoric of decolonization and nation formation, my project also critiques the responses brought to these two paradigms. Definitely, besides asserting that black and/or colonized women are "doubly oppressed," many critiques of white feminism and patriarchal nationalisms remain mutually intensifying categories, which, even though important for having cleared a space for an accurate understanding of how race and gender oppression are related, do not go beyond that. So, by critiquing the discourse of feminist theory and male nationalist movements, my intention is not to remain within this binary critique, but rather, to clear a space so that the writers whose work I am examining can be subjects in both discourses, instead of the usual erect binary stratification undertaken by the critics of the discourses of feminism and male nationalism. My main argument is that since neither mainstream feminism nor diasporic formulations can encompass their multiple identities, African Caribbean women such as Dionne Brand are engaged at looking for other kinds of feminist practices that can "engender theories that resist or question modernity," as Caren Kaplan has suggested. For, discourses framed in binary stratifications such as male/female, colonized/colonizer, cannot provide us with a viable critique of modernity:

> Models predicated upon binary oppositions cannot move us out of the paradigms of colonial discourse, nor can they provide us with accurate maps

> of social relations in postmodernity. Examining the key terms "postcolonial" and "transnational" provides a framework for moving beyond center-periphery models in the postmodern critique of modernity. (9)

Undeniably, given the contemporary global conditions, only a thorough questioning of modernity and its related institutions can lead to a viable transnational feminist practice, and shed light on considerations such as: "the place of women in the nation-state, the revivals of "tradition," the complex issue of fundamentalism, the situation of workers in multinational corporations, and the relationship between gender, the nation-state, and mobile, transnational capital" (20; 22; 21; 28).

## "Bodily Geography": Making Visible Ungeographic Lives

While using Susan Friedman's notion of multipositionality in my reading of Dionne Brand's work, my project also simulteneously draws from Katherine McKittrick's book *Demonic Ground Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, in order to theorize how writers like Brand, have situated themselves in a world "that profits from their specific displacement of difference":

> (...) if practices of subjugation are also spatial acts, then the ways in which black women think, write and negotiate their surroundings are intermingled with place-based critiques, or respatializations. I suggest, then, that one way to contend with unjust and uneven human/inhuman categorization is to think about, and perhaps employ the alternative geographical formulations that subaltern communities advance. (xix)

McKittrick's approach is important because of the important links she draws between blackness and geography: how corporal differences shape and influence external geographies, which in turn requires the need to draw the line between spatial construction of black womanhood and femininity. By advancing that racism and sexism were not simply bodily or identity-based, but were also 'spatial acts" able to illustrate the interplay between black women's "geographies of domination" such as the transatlantic slave trade and subsequent racial-sexual displacements and "black women's geographies," that is their knowledge, negotiations, and experiences, McKittrick was able to illustrate how black

women are both shaped by, and challenge these geographical arrangements (xvi). By suggesting that past and present spatial organization is connected with black femininity in an ongoing geographical struggle, McKittrick suggests an interesting way of analyzing black women's lives: one which does not overlook the "profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories and lands (x), while at the same time placing agency in the hands of these women, by making visible social lives which were often "displaced, rendered ungeographic" (x).

By engaging the crucial link McKittrick makes between black femininity and geography, we are better able to uncover the geographic stories and the alternative spatial narratives that these writers disclose in their works. While not assuming that the legacy of slavery is an unchanged, unopposed phenomenon, McKittrick signals how these racial displacements of differences get recycled in the future, and resonate with Brand's affirmation about how the legacy of slavery, and the displacement of difference affects her life and her contemporary position in society, in which she is expected to live a second class existence:

> I believe that history and the history of the people that I come from, is important, and that it is important to rewrite that history in a way that saves our humanity. Black people and women have to make their humanity every goddamned day, because every day we are faced with the unmaking of us. Sometimes any words I throw at this feel like pebbles. But the purpose in throwing them is to keep, to save, my humanity, and that is my responsibility. And also as a woman, and a lesbian, I have to redeem my life every day, in a society that thinks that I should lead an existence that's second class. Every day I get to say, no way. (Daurio Interview 14)

These living effects that Brand is experiencing today signal the unresolved nature of the legacy of slavery that still shapes black women's lives. Since this legacy is carried through the body, we can see the importance of the interpenetration of identity and place, as the corporeal difference that Brand carries with her, that is her black body, shapes the external geography that in turn determines how and where she should live. For McKittrick, not only has this legacy of displacement leaked through the future to reveal Brand's experience, but

it also functions to explain the place of black women in modernity. McKittrick maintains that the social production of space naturalizes identity, by "repetitively spatializing difference," that is by "placing" the world within an ideological order "unevenly" (xiii). It is only by taking issue with this spatialization of difference that we will be able to grasp the place of black femininity, for example. Indeed, despite the obvious link between slavery and capitalism that we can read from the constructs of black femininity and black womanhood, in the ways in which the theories of racial inferiority are mobilized in order to justify economic exploitation of the female body, the "racial-sexual" classification has a deeper meaning, that is, to place the black woman within modernity, in order to define what others are: "not her, not black, not black and female" (226). Thus, by engaging this crucial link that McKittrick makes between black femininity and geography in my reading of Brand, I similarly analyze how she challenges the social production of space and its influence on identity, in the ways in which the classificatory racial body of the black woman determines her whereabouts in relation to her humanity (*Demonic Grounds* xvii).

**Postmodern Spacialization: "Feminist Geopolitical Rhetoric"**

Caren Kaplan acknowledges how the advent of postmodernism has resulted in a proliferation of notions of location that extensively draw on metaphors of travel. Likewise, Friedman also links the predominance of spatial rhetoric in contemporary writing to the condition of postmodernity and contends, "Border talk is everywhere" (*Mappings* 3). While also acknowledging that the explosion of spatial rhetorics in feminist studies is part and parcel of the Global Age, Friedman relies on various discourses such as feminism, postcolonial studies, multiculturalism, and poststructuralism, to promote new ways of configuring identity that moved beyond the achievements of focusing on a single constituent of identity such as gender (17). This "polyvocal and often contradictory" new geography of identity, has been called by our condition of postmodernity, "for which the issues of travel, nomadism, diaspora, and the cultural hybridity produced by movement through space have a material reality and political urgency as well as figurative cogency"

(*Mappings* 19). Starting with Adrienne Rich's notion of the 'Politics of Location' in 1984 with her two most influential essays: "When We Dead Awaken" from 1971 and "Notes toward a Politics of Location," the move from temporal rhetoric of awakening has shifted into spatial location. Unmistakably, for Susan Friedman, when Adrienne Rich declares "I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist, I am created and trying to create. Beginning, though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in – The body" (212), this emphasis on embodiment, on the body as geography, requires a "spatial literacy" as also suggested by Spivak,[29] for according to Friedman, any given embodiment of feminism is, necessarily "inflected with the overdetermined conditions of its history and geography" ("Locational Feminism" 16). Reminding us with Michel Foucault's observation in 1967 that "The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history," Friedman also notes Foucault's subsequent argument that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space[30]:

> Space serves as the predominant source of metaphor for feminist rhetoric of identity in the Third Wave. Where the temporal rhetoric of awakening tends to focus on gender in isolation from other systems of stratification, the spatial rhetoric of location emphasizes the interaction of gender with other forms of power relations based on such cultural categories as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, national origin, age, and so forth. (20)

Accordingly, to reflect this shift from temporal to spatial rhetoric, Friedman has called the feminism of the Third Wave "locational feminism," as a move to distance herself from the earlier modes of "gynocriticism and gynesis" feminism with their exclusive focus on gender (*Mappings* 25). Then by linking gender with other determinant factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and national origin, Friedman not only transcends the

---

[29] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Cultural Studies." *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), 255-84.

[30] Michel Foucault. "Of Other Spaces" (1967, 1984). *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 22.

limitations of earlier modes of feminism, but she also offers a way out of the "difference impasse" within which feminism found itself with the advent of new and more historicized forms of feminisms(10). Definitely, even though these new forms of feminism confront the evasion of history and materiality into a mainstream feminist agenda, they have also resulted in bipolar analyses such as: "us and them, white and other, first and third, men and women, oppressor and oppressed, fixity and fluidity" (4). Notwithstanding the unidirectional hegemony inherent to such binaries in the ways in which the West (always and already) dominates the rest of the world, the caveat with such a binary thinking is that this narrative rests "mirrored in the eurocentrism it deplores," besides ignoring the heterogeneity of both the West and the rest of the world (6). That is what Spivak has also denounced by stating that she is not "that moved by arguments for homogenization in both sides" (Qtd in Kaplan 6). To remedy this unproductive situation, Friedman posits "dialogical negotiation" as the condition of survival for a future feminism by suggesting the abandonment of the past pluralization of feminism for a return to a singular feminism: "locational feminism" (18). Indeed, for Friedman, the need to avoid gender as an exclusive category of analysis will involve a move toward developing more "geographical ways of thinking identity" (10). According to Friedman, this spatial way of pinning down identity has been pioneered "by people of colour and by people from non-Western countries," those who, in Friedman's opinion, are at stake for forging new ways of configuring identity; because their daily survival often depends on understanding identity as the product of complex intersections and locations, rather than as being constituted by gender only. This "newly spatialized" form of feminism is not only "geographically inflected" but also global in its scope "without the erasure of difference" (156). Capable to shift and adapt itself with the changing cultural formations, this "migratory feminism" assumes a fluidity that resists static and fixed definitions in order to emphasize changing historical and geographical specificities.

**Critiques of Postmodern Subjectivities**

In "Autobiographical Subjects," Grewal maintains that the imperative situating of the female subject, in spite of postmodernism's campaign against the sovereign self, is a necessity. Kaplan and Grewal argue that even if critics dismiss postmodernism, they fail to enter "postmodernity". Caught between what they call critiques of modernity and assertions of authentic identities, they regret that many writers do not see postmodern methodologies as "viable feminist practice" (7). By focusing only on postmodernism's aesthetics of ambivalence and decentred subject, critics often fail to "take issue with the conditions of postmodernity" (21). I think that dismissing postmodern aesthetics may be an option, but the cultural and economic implications of postmodernity should not be overlooked. Indeed, for people who were mostly objects in both female and male discourse, claiming a subject position is vital, despite the current suspicion in regard to subjecthood, like Nancy Hartsock who argues

> Why is it exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? ("Rethinking Modernism" 196)

Indeed, subjectivity matters. Especially for those who were merely objects in the discourses of both hegemonic feminism and reifying nationalisms, this quest for a full subject position can be accomplished through the help of postmodernism, which, even with its foreclosure of the possibility of a full embodied subject, can be mobilized because of its potential to disrupt oppressive binary constructs such as colonized/colonizer, male/female, master/slave, center/periphery. Even though Hartsock's critique is aimed at Michel Foucault's conception of modern power, which Hartsock believes, forecloses "the possibility of liberatory knowledge," Foucault's theory of the body and sexuality has been espoused by feminist critics and writers such as Philip. In her analysis of female sexuality and slavery, Philip draws on Foucault's notion of biopower and female sexuality, precisely from this passage in *The History of Sexuality*, in which Foucault explains that:

> The purpose of the present study is in fact to show how deployments of power are directly connected to the body -to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another ... but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective. Hence I do not envisage a 'history of mentalities' that would take account of bodies only through the manner in which they have been perceived and given meaning and value; but a 'history of bodies' and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested. (151-2)

Many other critics such as bell hooks also emphasize the need to engage postmodernist and other psycho-analytic theories, which because of their sense of rupture and destabilization, challenge hegemonic assumptions of a unified, self-subject, or to engage other border crossing theories such as Judith Butler's "performative theory of gender" or Donna Haraway's "Concept of the Cyborg"; for such hybridized and postmodern theories serve as effective correctives to the universalizing tendencies of mainstream feminist research. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of "borderlands" which also expresses the "multiple discourses and political positions that subjects occupy or resist in a variety of given situations," (6) has given birth to the "New Mestiza Consciousness," which permits "the perpetual transition of plural personality which resists unitary paradigms and dualistic thinking" (77-91). This recalls Minh-Ha's concept of re-departure in which identity becomes a way of "re-departing," allowing one to start again "with different re-departures, different pauses, different arrivals" ("Cotton and Iron" 328).

Moreover, hooks insists that postmodernism cannot just be discarded as the "apolitical celebration of Western popular culture,"[31] even though she cautions that any attempt at deconstructing feminism using postmodernism, which does not start with deconstructing postmodernism first, is a risky enterprise. Reaffirming the relevance of

[31] Scattered Hegemonies 7

postmodernism for 'black folks,' hooks define "radical postmodernism" in the following terms:

> Radical postmodernism calls attention to thoses sensibilities which are shared across the boundaries of class, gender, and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy—ties what promote recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition. ("Postmodern Blackness" 27)

hook's "radical postmodernism" that posits the possibility of challenging modernity, recalls Teresa Ebert's notion of "resistance postmodernism". In "Ludic Feminism, the Body, Performance and Labor," Ebert offers "resistance postmodernism" as an "oppositional political practice: an interventionist and transformative critique of American culture under the sign of late capitalism" ("Political Semiosis" 114). This "resistance postmodernism" allows for the recreation of meaning and the pushing forward of new forms of languages. hooks also echoes Boyce Davies, who also advocates the possibility to raise some of the same questions postmodernism raises, while at the same time challenging any totalizing gesture posed by that theoretical approach. This stance can be translated in Davies's own approach which she calls "going a piece of the way with them," in the ways in which one can engage postmodernism, but not totally:

> "Going a piece of the way with them" is a pretext which engages the intent of what are now postmodernist discourses for their sense of rupture and destabilization, but accepts the need to read ways in which these disruptions already exist in non-Western/woman-centered cultures". (55)

This "going a piece of the way with them," which Davies borrows from Zora Neale Hurston, is an apt way of conceptualizing what is already being done in the work of black women writers; Davies implies that the notion of "homelessness," articulated in postmodernist discourses, already exists in black women's experience of conflict with "home." For as Davies makes it clear, unless one is willing to reactivate a more "transcultural conception of home," the rejection of the essentialized and nativist identities and the resistance to "theoretical homelands" often results in a "theoretical homelessness" (49). Many critics have suggested that Philip's juxtaposition of different discourses in her

texts, the collage of mixed genres, and her mimicry of religious and scientific discourses might be read through the prism of postmodernism. Among them, is Carole Boyce Davies, who argues that Caribbean women writers such as Philip use postmodern strategies to challenge their representation in hegemonic discourses:

> I am asserting consistently that all the postmodernist questions of redefinition of the meaning of identity, of home, of linear history, the metanarratives of the self and identity are destabilized in the writing of black women's experiences. For the Caribbean woman, confronting racial discrimination and foreign bias, Caribbean male phallicism and American imperialism, the relationship to Caribbean identity has to be problematized. It cannot be a flat, unidimensional relationship or experience. (116)

Davies relies on this supposition to argue for the use of postmodernism in conjunction with feminism to apprehend the specificity of black women's identities. Davies's affirmation that postmodernism was already being articulated by black women well before the rise of postmodernism, echoes Philip's statement that the Caribbean was postmodern long before the advent of the term postmodernism. Commenting on how her concern with historical relations, materiality, and corporeality has been read through the lens of poststructuralist theory, Philip's answer follows like this:

> I'm not saying that my work can't be read or analyzed in terms of [...] postmodernism, but if one only sees it in that way, one loses [...] sight of the Caribbean and the New World [...] the historical and social matrix from which my writing is partly coming ("Writing" 229-30).

In addition arguing for the necessity of using postmodernism in conjunction with feminism, Davies's "visitor theory" approach also offers a technique of interaction similar to the intention of "multiple articulations":

> In using this formulation, then, I want to engage all these theories as visitors. This comes from the recognition that going all the way home with many of these theoretical positions -feminism, post-modernism, nationalism, Afrocentrism, Marxism, etc.- means taking a route cluttered with skeletons, enslavements, new dominations, unresolved tensions, and contradictions. Following many of the theories/theorists "all the way home" inevitably places me in the "homes" of people where, I, as a Black woman, will have to

> function either as maid or exotic, silenced courtesan, but definitely not as a theoretical equal. Going all the ways home with them means being installed in a distant place from my communities. (46)

Challenging their representations as either "maid or exotic, silenced courtesan" Brand, Philip and Silvera underline in their works, transnational, postmodern mechanisms, that go beyond the Manichean binaries of modernity, in order to resolve the tensions of what it means "to be black and female". In doing so, they heed, or even anticipate Ella Shohat's transnational call that feminists need to re-narrate feminist history and anti-colonial history towards a more "polycentric multicultural way" (Shohat 32)

In one of her most influential works, *Looking for Livingstone,* Philip uses postmodern techniques of parody and irony to undermine the grand narrative of the discoverer David Livingstone by exaggerating his power in order to empower the poet's silence:

> HE – LIVINGSTONE—AND I COPULATE LIKE TWO BEASTS – HE RIDES ME—HIS WORDS SLIPPING IN AND OUT OF THE WET MOIST OF MY SILENCE—I TAKE HIS WORD—STRONG AND THRUSTING – THAT WILL NOT REST, WILL NOT BE DENIED IN ITS SEARCH TO FILL EVERY CREVICE OF MY SILENCE—I TAKE IT INTO THE SILENCE OF MY MOUTH – AND IN A CLEARING IN A FOREST HE SITS AND WEEPS AS STANLEY COMFORTS HIM-
>
> 'I SAY, OLD CHAP, WHAT'S THE MATTER?'
>
> 'MY WORD, MY WORD IS IMPOTENT.'
>
> 'FUCK THE WORD, LIVINGSTONE.'
>
> 'THAT'S WHAT I AM TRYING TO TELL YOU, OLD CHAP—'(25).

This reversal of the colonial tale, which favours the African woman version, ridicules the powerful explorer that was David Livingstone, by turning him into a weeping and impotent "old chap". Philip's use of mimicry and subversion of the colonial language can be attributed to Homi K. Bhabha's notion of "mimicry" of the "English book." In "Signs Taken For Wonders," Bhabha argues that even though the English book is "a fetishized

sign that glorifies the epistemological centrality and permanence of European dominance," it nonetheless embodies an emblem of "colonial ambivalence," which suggests the weakness of colonial discourse and its susceptibility to "mimetic" subversion:

> The discovery of the English book establishes both a measure of mimesis and a mode of civil authority and order. If these scenes, as I have narrated them, suggest the triumph of the writing of colonialist power, then it must be conceded that the wily letter of the law inscribes a much more ambivalent text of authority. For it is in between the edict of Englishness and the assault of the dark unruly spaces of the earth, through an act of repetition, that the colonial text emerges uncertainly[...]consequently, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. (107)

By using postcolonial devices such as irony, mimicry and parody, or the notion of "hybridity," which Bhabha describes as being: "at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance" (120), Philip, thus, "undoes" the very discourses of colonialism by "overdoing" it (*Contemporary* 205). Thus, even though I criticized postcolonial formulations for being too male-centred, I simultaneously use this theory in my reading of Philip, whilst sharing Boyce's concern about postcolonialism's high masculinist traits, and its dubious relationship with postmodernism. Indeed, in Black Women, Writing, and Identity, Carole Boyce Davies raises a very legitimate concern about postcolonial theory:

> post-coloniality represents a misnaming of current realities, it is too premature a formulation, it is too totalizing, it erroneously contains decolonizing discourses, it re-males and recenters resistant discourses by women and attempts to submerge a host of uprising textualities, it has to be historicized and placed in the context of a variety of historical resistances to colonialism, it reveals the malaise of some Western intellectuals caught behind the posts and unable to move to new and/or more promising re-/articulations. (*Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migration of the Subject* 81)

However, even if postcolonialism is caught within the transnational operations and movements of global capitalism, as John McLeod argues, does that mean that we must necessarily condemn it "to *total* complicity?" (257). My answer is no. I believe that as imperfect a theory as it might be, just like mainstream feminist theory, postcolonial theory

is too broad and important to be dismissed. Therefore, in the Chapter on Philip, my reading of her work draws on postcolonial theory as devised by male writers such as Bhabha.

## Becoming Nomads, Postmodern exiles

In her book *Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan acknowledges how the advent of postmodernism has resulted in a proliferation of notions of location that extensively draw on metaphors of travel. Analyzing the ways in which transnational capital has deconstructed traditional modern borders while simultaneously creating new ones, Kaplan recognizes that many of us now "have locations in the plural" (7), like the writers discusses in this thesis, who are both Caribbean and Canadian. Yet if postmodernism has created new forms of discourses as evidenced by the abundance of rhetoric of travel within contemporary theory, it is also important to note that these discourses remain ambiguously linked to "its temporal progenitor, modernism" (8). Investigating a wide range of writers, including Paul Fussell, Edward Said, James Clifford, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Soja, Doreen Massey, Chandra Mohanty, and Adrienne Rich, Kaplan demonstrates that symbols and metaphors of travel are used in ways that obscure key differences of power between nationalities, classes, races, and genders, before putting forward a feminist postmodern approach to issues of displacement and travel that are more attuned to the material and concrete conditions of postmodernity.

To start with, Kaplan explores seemingly liberatory metaphors such as Deleuze's and Guattari's concepts of nomadology and the rhizome link, rather than separate modernism and postmodernism. Kaplan's contention is that even if in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of both mainstream psychoanalysis humanism and the liberal philosophical tradition seems to perform a radical theory of postmodern subjectivities or to embody alternative political practices, there is nonetheless, a "deeply modernist strain" running through their texts (86).While conceding that Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of deterritorialization and rhizome can be credited for attempting to theorize alternative modes of dwelling susceptible to undermine the fixity of

the nation-state, Kaplan further criticizes their notion of the nomad, which, according to her, provides a less desirable ahistorical notion that collapses the nomad with other forms of postmodern displacements:

> In their study of Kafka's poetics of alterity, Deleuze and Guattari make repeated reference to the desert as border or margin, linked to "underdevelopment," "*patois*," and a "third world". Similarly, the nomad is likened to the "immigrant" and the "gypsy". In all these allusions, modernity and postmodernity collapse into undifferentiated cultures; Euro-American (or even solely European) culture structures the point of view, erasing temporal and spatial differentiations. European gypsies and Third World immigrants share the same theoretical spaces not through structural relations of historically specific diasporas but through a kind of generalized poetics of displacement. (88)

Rather than providing a radical break with modernity, the concepts developed by Deleuze and Guattari, thus, participate in the deployment of colonial discourses by recycling orientalist tropes through their metaphors of the desert and the nomad. In doing so, Deleuze and Guattari not only demonstrate a "theoretical tourism" that borders on nostalgia, but they are also guilty of Eurocentrism. Undeniably, for Kaplan, when they admonize: "write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency" (Qtd in Kaplan 89), Deleuze and Guattari were not only roaming into modernity's colonial discourses, they were also deploying a form of imperialist deterritorialiation that "*colonizes*, appropriates, even raids *other spaces*" (89; her emphasis). Deterritorization, then, in the light of such modernist tropes, cannot escape the logic of colonial discourse, as Kaplan explains:

> Construction binaries between major and minor, between developed and undeveloped, or center and periphery, in Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative texts modernity provides borders and zones of alterity to tempt the subversive bourgeois/intellectual. Becoming minor, a utopian process of letting go of privileged identities and practices, requires emulating the ways and modes of modernity's 'others.' Yet, like all imperialist discourses, these spaces and identities are produced through their imagining; that is, the production of sites of escape of decolonisation for the colonizers signals a

> kind of theoretical tourism... Here colonial space must symbolize the imperialist past as a zone of utter alert as well as the site of liberation of the Euro-American subjects. 'Becoming minor' refers to the center-periphery geopolitics of modernity rather than the complex, transnational circuits of capital and power in postmodernity. (88)

Refusing to tie the figure of the nomad to the material and concrete urgency of displacement experienced by the gypsies or the immigrants, and to collapse various forms of displacement into an undifferentiated aesthetics of travel, Kaplan then asks how mystified metaphors of travel might be avoided (2-3). Discarding the "Western high theory" that writers such as Deleuze and Guattari deploy as a postmodern game of styles and aestheticism that borders on Eurocentrism, Kaplan posits the need to engage the political and economical urgency of postmodernity, which she describes as "a set of economic and cultural relationships that produce specific discourses of space, time and subjectivity in a particular time period and in relation to multiple locations" (11). This is exactly Makeda Silvera's project in *Silenced*, where she utterly differentiates between masculinist privileged exiles and female migrancies engendered by dire conditions of postmodernity Kaplan is referring to in *Questions of Travel*. In this work, Silvera draws our attention to how the past still informs the present, by portraying how former exploitation such as slavery mirrors the contemporary abuses of the black female protagonists.

Silvera's work also fits Mohanty's analytic perspective, which is grounded in historical materialism, besides being an important transnational feminist methodology in making power visible in overtly "non-gendered, non-racialized discourses" of globalization. She writes that even though her central commitment is the building of linkages and connection "between feminist scholarship and political organizing," and that her own present-day analytic framework remains does not repudiate her earliest critique of Eurocentrism, she now considers the politics and economics of capitalism "as a far more urgent locus of struggle":

> My focus now is on what I have chosen to call an anti-capitalist transnational feminist practice - and on the possibilities, indeed on the necessities, of

cross-national feminist solidarity and organizing against capitalism. ("Under Western Eyes Revisited" 230)

# PART TWO: "UPRISING TEXTUALITIES"[32]

[32] I am indebted to Carole Boyce Davies for this formulation.

## Introduction: Writing the In-between Place

> Black female subjectivity then can be conceived not primarily in terms of domination, subordination or 'subalternization' but in terms of slipperiness, elsewhereness. Migratory subjects suggest that Black women's writing cannot be located and framed in terms of one specific place, but exist/s in myriad places and times constantly eluding the terms of the discussion. In the same way as diaspora assumes expansiveness and elsewhereness, migrations of the Black female subject pursue the path of movement outside the terms of dominant discourses. (Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women and Identity* 36-7)

In this thesis, to be able to delegitimize the binary of male/female, colonizer/colonized, center/periphery, First/Third World that I raised in Chapter One is an important consideration for me. Consequently, my engagement with my writers' work is aimed at showing how they transcend the limitations imposed by the existing paradigms, mainly mainstream feminist theory and black male's articulation of nationhood. As shown in my discussion of hegemonic feminisms and diasporic masculinist theories, the paradigms these writers are writing from are inadequate to account for their multiple selves, hence their need to turn to more encompassing theories such as feminist transnational studies, as my second chapter outlined. Indeed, their multiple locationalites: as woman, black and sometimes lesbian, express multiple displacements. As Philip writes, she refuses to conform to the place set for her by these limiting colonial and patriarchal paradigms: "in *She Tries Her Tongue*, I set out to be unmanageable. I refused to 'know my place,' the place set apart for the managed peoples of the world" ("Managing" 296). This moving "out of one's place," which involves pushing against the boundaries set by race, class, gender, and sexuality, informs the in-between place these writers and their characters dwell in, as they negotiate their positionalities against these hegemonic paradigms. Therefore, they have no other choice than to carve their own space, a space that can fit their multiple identities. Usually, these spaces are lesbian spaces for Silvera and Brand, or diasporically female-centered spaces in which the mother-daughter relationship is central, like in Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue*.

Linking the first and the second chapters, this second part intends to analyze how Brand, Silvera, and Philip theorize the in-between space they have carved out for themselves. This place of marginality they dwell in is both a place of deprivation as well as a space of resistance, as bell hooks describes it. Indeed as Brand, Philip and Silvera affirm, this liminal subject position that they find themselves in, becomes the heart of their work, as it allows them to create a "discursive space" through which to expose and reject the feminist, colonial and patriarchal stereotypes and myths attached to them, as well as to create alternative and more positive renderings of their experiences. These revisionary narratives, which "talk back" to various discourses, invert the dominant discourses, while appropriating and shaping language in new ways, in order to reenact and rewrite history.

Apart from the issues of voice and place, the body also occupies a central place in these writers' texts. In order to replace themselves as agents of discourse and no longer be the spoken objects of both mainstream feminism and male discourses of nationhood, these writers also enter into a battle of subjectivity, an embodied subjectivity since the whole matter revolves around the body. At the same time they are colouring the body in mainstream feminist theory by outlining that the body is not just female, but also Black, they are also simultaneously feminizing the genderless body in diasporas' nationalist theory by stating that this body is not just Black but also female. Thus, these are the main issues I will deal with in my reading of these women's texts: how to give the body a voice, how to wrench it from the hegemonic definitions ascribed to it, how to rescue it from prescribed normative sexuality, and also, how to theorize a body which is not only female, not only black, but female *and* black, and sometimes lesbian too.

## CHAPTER THREE - DIONNE BRAND

## Dionne Brand: The Revolutionary Writer

Like Philip, Brand did not initially see writing as a career. As she candidly confesses to interviewer Pauline Butling, she did not yet see writing as part of her share of the revolutionary work she felt compelled to accomplish, for as she says: "other ways of being in a liberation struggle are necessary sometimes... I didn't see writing as a career. I saw its role as making itself available to the liberation" (*Poets Talk* 79). But unlike Philip, if Brand is shying away from the prospective of a writing career, it is not for lack of writing opportunity, or for lack of role models and mentors, as Philip has been confronted with. Indeed, in another interview with Nuzhat Abbas[33] Brand talks about the great influence she received from revolutionary movements such as the 1950 pro-independence movements, the 1960 Black Power and Civil Rights movements in the United States, as well as the African liberation struggles in Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe (18), and also the influence of Black poets of the 60s, and other writers such as Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Don E. Lee, Amiri Baraka: "I'm lucky, when I was born, and when I grew up, the world was open, so I could hear those sounds from Sonia Sanchez, and I could hear from Kamau Braithwaite, or I could hear Aimé Césaire. I had come out of a great murmur of voices" (18). Brand also mentions the great influence Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* had on her, and how it suggested to her just how much could be said in terms of poetry: "I saw such possibilities for speech, how you could move in and out of an idea as well as in and out of various voices. I remember reading it and thinking I could write anything" (80). So Brand's sense of writing as "useless", her deeming it not worth pursing career-wise, is not due to any lack of writing opportunity or mentors, but was highly linked to her sense that revolution should come before writing. Even after she became a writer, when asked by Abbas what she would be if she were not a writer, her

[33] Abbas, Nuzhas. Dionne's Brand of Writing. *Herizons* 13.3 (1999): 18-22.

response follows like this: "An urban guerrilla in a clandestine cell red-eyed and *calculating"!*

In her essay "On Poetry," Brand even goes as far as to characterize poetry as "useless" because sometimes, the life of her people seems so overwhelming to her that she can find "no reason whatsoever to write poetry" (*Bread Out of Stone* 182). Brand's ambivalence about the efficacy of writing thus borders on despair, as she comes to think that it is sometimes more important to figure out how a paperless woman with a child facing the threat of deportation might live without being caught in Toronto, or going out to demonstrate in front of a police station at Bay and College Streets:

> I am here (Playa del Este, Cuba) because I've decided that writing is not enough. Black liberation needs more than that. How, I ask myself, can writing help in the revolution? You need your bare hands for this. I drink my beer over my open diary and face this dilemma. (12)

The tensions of Brand's ambivalence about writing and her highly revolutionized character can be seen in her early involvements in local as well as international activist and revolutionist movements, before being resolved later in her work, in which she tries to reconcile the two. Her greatest revolutionary engagement was when she travelled to Grenada to work as an information Officer for the Caribbean People's Development Agencies and the Agency for Rural Transformation in Grenada, and witnessed the American invasion of the island on October 25th, 1983. Her collection of poetry *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* results from that Grenadian experience. After that experience, Brand realized that all her early revolutionary endeavours in Toronto were nothing more than her being some "dilettante" playing about revolution. For when the reality of Grenada hit, with the planes flying above her head, and the earth beneath her just "deceiving" and "leaving" her, she realized that revolution was much more than just arguing about whether Marx was right or wrong (81).

So even if *Winter Epigrams* (1983) and *Primitive Offensive* (1982) were written before Brand's experience of the Grenadian revolution, Brand comes to consider herself a

writer only after that experience. Her ambivalence about writing resolved itself when she understood her powerlessness, faced with the American planes throwing bombs over their heads. As she comes to realize, revolutions need poets too. In "Nothing of Egypt," an essay she wrote just after the U.S. invasion of Grenada, Brand writes that she does not believe in magic anymore, because her ancestors have failed her "with all their chants and potions":

> I wanted a day when the enemy would be so overwhelmed by the sound of my ancestors dragging their chains that they would be killed by the clamour. I wanted a day when they would be compelled by that same spell that enveloped me, and their weapons would seize up or they would run away with screams in their heads. And at least if that did not happen I wanted to die. But this is why I had to find a theory instead of a powder because I didn't die and the ancestors only have mouth for me, not for American bombers. (*Bread Out of Stone* 132)

Her response to Grenada becomes *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun*, as she confides to Pauline Butling in *Poets Talk* (79). Without doubt one of her most politically-engaged pieces of writing, *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* is divided into three sections, meaningfully titled "Languages," "Sieges," and "Military Occupations"; and most of the pieces, such as "Amelia" (24-5), or "October 19th, 1983" (40-1), deal with Brand's experience in Grenada: "I am sick of writing history/ I'm sick of scribbling dates/ of particular tortures/ I'm sick of feeling the boot/ of the world on my breast" (65).

Interestingly, besides revealing to Brand the potentiality of writing "I had to find a theory instead of a powder," Grenada also enables Brand's coming out as a lesbian. Her poem "I am not that strong woman" included in *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* abruptly talks about her renunciation of her heterosexuality: "I want no husband/ I want nothing inside of me/ that hates me/... I want nothing that enters me/ screaming / claiming to be history (26). So like Michelle Cliff, who came out as a lesbian after her experience in Nicaragua, Brand also realized her lesbian identity just after she recovers from the American bombs. The opening poem of *No language is Neutral*, "this is you girl," is her "first visceral recognition of (her) sexuality, (her) lesbian identity" (*Poets Talk* 80):

> This is you girl, this cut of road up
> To blanchiseuse, this every turn a piece
> Of blue and earth carrying on, beating, rock and
> Ocean, this wearing away, smoothing the insides
> Pearl of shell and coral. (6)

Thus besides allowing her to come out as a lesbian, Grenada finally enables Brand to bridge the gap between writing and revolution, and to ease her prior ambivalence about the efficacy of poetry. As she tells Butling, it is the relationship between "activism and writing" that produces the form of her work. That is why her poems, even though they retain a certain lyricism in them, are nonetheless poems that document "something social, something historic" (*In the Company of My Work* 366). So even if revolution still retains its primacy in Brand's dedication,[34] there is nevertheless room for writing, "writing that is significant, honest, necessary—making Bread Out of Stone - so that stone becomes pliant under the hands" (23). And what about poetry and its place in revolution? As Brand tells us, it is not that far, for it just takes a second: "Shaking the gravel from my shoes. Poetry is here, just *here*" (183; her emphasis).

## "Where is This?" - Historicizing the Geography of Space

> I need to know how a place on the map is also a place in history *Adrienne Rich (*Blood Bread and Poetry *112)*

> I have to think again what it means that I am here, what it means that this, harsh as it is a without a name, can swallow me up *Dionne Brand (*Land to Light On *9)*

> After unmasking the norms of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, where can we turn but to space itself, to that named and unnamable anchor that seems to moor both nations and bodies in place? *Patricia Yeager (*The Geography of Identity *13)*

When Dionne Brand confides in *Map to the Door of No Return* that one is misled "when one looks at the sails and majesty of tall ships instead of their cargo" (85), she is revealing the need to complicate space, any space, in order to ask questions such as: "where

[34] As she says in *Bread Out of Stone*, "heading for a revolution, is heading toward your true self" (141)

is this?" "What are we doing here?" or "what does this ship represent as a mobile space?" (McKittrick 118). In recognizing the ugliness that this tall and majestic ship holds in its entrails –unwilling bodies being forcibly transported to their place of bondage– Brand seems to be challenging us to take the first step toward problematizing and historicizing space. Questions related to our location in and by space connect its importance to our geography and history, and lends meaning to Michael Keith and Steve Pile's notion of space as an active component of hegemonic power, and in which they see resistance to power as providing insights into the contested nature of space through time, and into the experience of rebellion against oppression.

Geography, on the other hand, traditionally only acknowledges the material aspects of space such as physical landscapes and infrastructures, or the cartographic, imperialistic, and Eurocentric way of mapping, exploring and conquering new worlds. This approach does not force us to seek answers to where we are; or to envision that which anchors our being and moors our bodies and sense of belonging to our past. Brand therefore provides an alternative geographic story, one that takes into consideration the discursive spatial project of the history of our social relationships (*Demonic Ground*). She inquires beyond the place presented as the majestic reverie occupied by the tall ship and seeks to discover its past, and peer into the journey that brought it to this place, and unearth the stories that lay deep inside its belly. Indeed, Katherine McKittrick proposes in *Demonic Ground*, that we need to resist the seductive and comforting lure of the idea that "geography *just is*", and instead, historicize geography (McKittrick xi). By setting out to discover the history embedded in space, Brand then rejects the temptation to be seduced by the notion of geography as "just is," in order to provide us with a geographic story that is different. Sylvester notes for instance, that the Caribbean, the land that lays claim to Brand, is geographically-speaking, a region of tropical islands between North and South America (*Language of Dissent* 3). Yet to historicize this geography would unearth a place where space intersects race (McKittrick), a land of powerful geographical shifts, forced displacement, slavery and the suppression of mother tongues, a gendered history of oppression, repression and resistance.

At the beginning of her memoir, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Dionne Brand writes: "We were not from the place where we lived ... and we could not remember where we were from or who we were" (5). Again, in the epigraph, she notes: "I have to think again what it means that I am here today" (5). This writing, and these words, suggests Brand is trying to come to terms with existentialist notions, not based on the usual inquiry of "Who am I," but instead, she is asking "Where is This?" As a black woman and native of Trinidad, who came to live and study in Canada, she does not equate her physical space with who she is. By trying to access her identity through her geographical origin, Brand is unequivocally orienting us to the spatial nature of her quest. Engaging in this epistemic adventure of self-awareness, Brand appears to be signalling her intention to historicize geography, fulfilling the very need to engage what Katherine McKittrick describes as "the imperative geographic struggle that lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice" (*Demonic Ground* xvi). Geography for Brand, then, does not only entail the physicality and concreteness of space, but also: "rooms full of weeping, exhausted countries, a house that is only as safe as flesh" (ix). In a sense, it seems to me to be a human geography that Brand enacts in her work, in order to convey how geography is "always human and humanness is always geographic" (ix), how where we came from explains much of who we are. By bringing forward the "sayability" of geography, as McKittrick terms it, Brand thus engages a transnational imperative about the need to politicize geography, in order to disclose hidden histories of exploitation and struggles. Furthermore, as Mohanty claims, geography and demography also carry the weight of history (Mohanty and Biddy 196).

Therefore, starting from the premise of loss and displacement, in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand charts the extent to which a lost origin, "a rupture in history," can also be a "rupture in geography" (5). She appears to be looking back at herself through the mirror of her character Bola, who pleads: "I would like one single line of ancestry, Mama. One line from you to me and farther back, but a line I can trace" (*At the Full and Change of the Moon* 246). Like Bola's pleading, Brand is drawn to map out her own ancestry. But though she keeps pestering her grandfather, his memory obstinately fails him:

> My grandfather said he knew what people we came from. I reeled off all the names I knew. Yoruba? Ibo? Ashanti? Mandingo? He said no to all of them, saying he would know it if he heard it. I was thirteen. I was anxious for him to remember. (*Map* 5-3)

Despite Brand's weekly interrogatories, her grandfather never remembered where they came from. He could not summon up a vision of a landscape or of a people to tie up to a name. For the young Brand, that appears to be the end of all traceable beginnings. This loss of spatial memory, induced by the forced displacement ensuing from the slave trade, comes with a loss of territory and national identity, thereby causing confusion and making self-location problematic, a condition Danielle Schaub analyzes in her collection of essays *Mapping Canadian Cultural Space* (xiii). Indeed, the loss of origin experienced by Brand in her grandfather's inability to recall where they are from, follows her in her adulthood and becomes transposed in her work, in which a search for origin often supercedes a feeling of belonging. Therefore, on many occasions in her writings, Brand declares her lack of interest in belonging. In her memoir, she writes: "Belonging does not interest me. I had once thought that it did ... until I examined the underpinnings" (85). Yet, ambivalently, and perhaps paradoxically, Brand's longing to trace her origin may also be interpreted as an unconscious move towards belonging. In either case, since Brand is unable to trace her history through memory, she acutely posits the need to historicize the place she finds herself in, in an attempt to come to terms with her lost ancestry. The loss and displacement she feels is bound up in the secrets of tall ships and the fear of being swallowed up by what has caused her to be in this space, but it has not defeated the spirit of her search for her origin. In doing so, Brand reclaims her own history, which is always represented from the masculinist perspective, as if women did not experience the devastating experience of enslavement: "Listen," she writes, "I am a Black woman whose ancestors were brought to a new world laying [sic] tightly packed in ships. Fifteen million of them survived the voyage, five million of them women; millions among them died, were killed, committed suicide in the Middle Passage" (*Bread out of Stone* 21).

The uprooted effect of dislocation and loss that Brand charts in *A Map to the Door of No Return* appears to inform much of her work, in which she seems to attempt the representation of the extent to which, temporal and spatial ruptures also lead to fractured and split identities. She struggles in

her activism with issues of race and the suppression of Blacks in their history. In fact, when McKittrick explicitly announces that "black matters *are* (my emphasis) spatial matters" (xii), there is a tacit reference to the loss of identity induced by forced displacement, and at the same time, concurrence with Brand's affirmation in *A Map* that: "I need to know how a place on the map is also a place in history."[35] By consciously trying to remember the history of what accounts for her being "here today," Brand therefore sets out through the expressions of her writings to map the conflicts of resistance and discovery that she seems to experience within.

## Home is always in Another Place, Not Here

> Imagining our ancestors stepping through these portals, one senses people stepping out into nothing; one senses a surreal space, an inexplicable space. One imagines people so stunned by their circumstances, so heartbroken as to refuse reality. Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space (Brand, *Map* 20)

The notion of "finding out where you are," is a resistant attitude toward place and space, and involves more than one activity since it entails "finding out about the discourses of region and nation; researching the histories, myths and legends of the place..." as well as "paying attention to how the writer and others are constituted by and within all those discourses" (Pauline Butling "*Poetry and Place*" 19). Butling credits Daphne Marlatt with an ability to resist and undermine the "monarch-of-all-I-survey position," that assumes that what one sees is "all there is, and that the landscape is intended to be viewed from where [one] has emerged upon it" (20). Butling therefore eschews the traditional notion of the geography of space as physical and static reality. She argues for an inquiry of the discourse of being, and the search for the history of place. Brand, too, complicates the very idea that geography "just is" by deconstructing the seductive landscapes of geography and engaging with the terrible ugliness that is its history. She appears to have located her ancestry in space, by realizing that her ancestors' displacement was, in fact, involuntary:

---

[35] Brand is quoting the very lines Adrienne Rich expressed in her essay "Politics of Location" when she says: "I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create a place in a map is also a place in history" (112).

> They had not come here willingly looking for food or water or liking the way the place set off against the sky or even for hunger. They had not come because the hunting was good or the ground moist for planting. They had not come moving into the forest just after the rainy season. They had not come because they saw the great cities foreshadowed in the horizon or rum shops sprawling with their dancing and laughter. Not because shape overtook them in geometry or because after observing speeding clouds they coveted a new landfall. They had been taken. Plain. Hard. Rough. (*In Another Place* 41)

Since leaving was never voluntary nor welcomed because her ancestors had been captured and sold, and since forgetting has also been part of the experience in the ways in which Brand's grandfather cannot retrace their origin, the mapping of place that she attempts in *A Map* appears to come as compensation for not being able to name her origin. Implicit in her writing is a longing for a connection to a place she could come to know as 'home', and yet this place where she finds herself represents the spatial rupture of dislocation, and therefore home is not here. For as Brand notes: "having no name to call on was having no past" *(A Map* 5), which she found profoundly disturbing, and which she likened to a place that had been cut off, a place without history. From here, then, seems to arise Brand's need to historicize places.

Paradoxically though, as far and inaccessible as this history might seem to her, the past still informs her very existence, in fact, the daily realities of Black people throughout the Diaspora, with its legacy of bondage and captivity. Bina Toledo Freiwald meaningfully asks of those who have been exiled from colonial history: "Where is home...? Where is the future to be found when the living ghosts of a violent past continue to haunt the space of the present?" ("Cartographies of Be/longing" 38). For the characters Brand creates, history hovers over them "whether they want to or not, whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not" (*A Map* 24). For all these characters in her stories, always and already displaced by their ancestral history, the search for a home in which to locate the self has not been presented as an easy task; Brand even makes it impossible at times. Their bodies carry with them the legacy of a harsh and cruel past, one that she weaves in a tale that, no matter what they would do, "history is already seated in the chair in the empty room," waiting for

them (*A Map* 25). As Philip does in *She Tries Her Tongue*, Brand wants to stress the interpenetration between place and identity, in the ways in which the blackness they carry influences their existence. It is as if she is saying that this people, taken from the places they knew as home, deprived through the suppression of their culture, forbidden to speak their language, and condemned by the evils of racism and oppression, remain shackled by the scars of the journey that brought them to the place they find themselves in. Therefore, this place here does not look like home, will never feel like home ... is not home.

## "Elizete, beckoned" and "Verlia, flying"

Being concerned to root her diasporic tale of displacement around the lives of female characters, while displaying such versatility as taking the freedom to establish linkages with the works of male writers, Brand is able to borrow the title of her collection of poems, *No Language is Neutral*, from an intertextual reading of Derek Walcott's *Midsummer* and at the same time honour her commitment to the oppression experienced by women. As Susan Gingell observes, unlike Walcott's "bowing and scraping," Brand places her story within the context of its history and the conditions framing its production and emotions. Unlike Walcott, Brand is prepared to examine the concept of language and advocate the conflicted nature of the emergence of expression that others treat as neutral:

> Walcott felt he could not take sides, that he could avoid taking sides. The corollary of the recognition that 'no language is neutral' for Brand is that each speech or writing act is necessarily marked by race, gender, the historical moment of its articulation, the emotional and material condition in which it is produced, and by the audience to which it is addressed. (Gingell 51)

Therefore, in her fiction work, *In Another Place Not Here*, Brand performs a transgressive gendered writing of history that goes beyond the male-centered concerns of diasporic discourses such as Walcott's. Like Silvera who refuses to collapse the dire migrancy of the female domestic workers she interviewed in *Silenced* with male exile, Brand, too, wants to outline how diasporic experience is impacted by gender. She continues her exploration of

the geography of space by shouldering the resistance of women, once enslaved, displaced and oppressed by colonial imperialism, and again enslaved and oppressed by a patriarchy that renders itself blind to its complicity in the hardships and abuse endured by women. Brand herself articulates about the acquiescence of Walcott, in the resistance to a language as alien to her ancestors as the belly of the ships that corralled them:

> Walcott and I come from different generations and different genders; that English language that he wants to claim is not the same one that I want to claim. The one that I want contains the resistance to how that language was made, because that language was made through imperialism, through the oppression of women. As women and people of colour we write against that language. ("Writing It" 37)

It is in this work –*In Another Place Not Here*– that Brand captures the spatial metaphor of female agency in the migrant displacement of women. Gaining insights from the important feminist rhetorics of geopolitics and spatiality by Friedman, McKittrick, and Rich, my reading of Brand offers a theorization of identity and place that takes into account the multiple facets of the characters in her novel. Her beautiful prose develops around the interwoven histories of two women in a rather simple and uncomplicated plot: Verlia, who leaves the Caribbean for Toronto when she turns seventeen, returns fifteen years later to help organize the sugar cane workers; and Elizete, one of the workers whom Verlia organizes. The two fall in love, and after Verlia dies, Elizete travels to Toronto to look for Verlia's previous lover Abena, to share her grief with her. Brand's narrative does not follow the events in a chronological way. Rather, she divides her book into two sections, namely: "Elizete, beckoned" and "Verlia, flying". Brand's discourse is distinctly oriented to the spatial underpinnings of not just femininity, but "black womanhood and femininity". Similar to the approach of McKittrick, Brand uses the narrative of Elizete and the story of Verlia to illustrate how black women's lives have been shaped historically by what McKittrick terms "geographies of domination" and racial-sexual displacement. One cannot help but notice the connection throughout much of Brand's writing, of her own yearning for belonging and her struggles with the geographical arrangements of her history, with the

voices of the characters she creates. The failure of her grandfather's memory may have dampened her desire to belong but it has not extinguished the flame of inquiry, the search for origin, of how she came to be here. Yet, Brand uses her characters to show how resistance, in whatever form, has led to female agency even while being objectified. Such then is the implied message of *In Another Place Not Here*, and the journeys of Elizete and Verlia.

In the first section, we are made to follow Elizete, voicing her own story as a peasant woman who has known nothing but hardship in her life, and whose dreams of running to another place are impeded by the blunt realization that she is nothing more than the property of a man. Very early on, the storyline sets the tone about how contemporary displacements experienced by protagonists such as Elizete are mainly related to history and place. Completely split from her past, Elizete does not claim any lineage. Very much like Brand, who cannot trace her origin, Elizete also does not know where she comes from, nor does she know who her parents were. Her Grandfather's failed memory robbed the young Brand of a real sense of origin, and here, Elizete voices her own sense of loss of all beginnings. She has no fond memories of her mother, just recollections of spending much of her childhood under a samaan tree, waiting and playing in the dirt. All she thinks of, knows, is that she seems to have fallen from this samaan tree:

> Under the samaan tree is where I grow up. It was wide and high and the light between what it leave of the sky was soft and it look like a woman with hands it the air. A samaan is a tree with majesty and I think of this samaan as my mother. She wave from far and the sun pass through she, and she was my keeper. Until the woman I was given to come home from the field the samaan was my mother. I wait there the whole day under the tree and I play in the dirt. (17)

On another occasion, Elizete believes that she just woke up "one day under Isaiah," her abusive husband, that she was "given to" after the woman who took care of her died:

> I was big woman and the devil was riding me. How I reach here is one skill I learn hard. The skill of forgetfulness. So I shovel in this pit from morning till

> night, cut cane when it in season and lie down under this man at night [...]. (13)

Like Molly in The *Heart Does Not Bend*, Elizete is motherless. But unlike Molly who has lost her mother to migration, Elizete does not even remember whether she did have a mother. When the woman she was given to asks about her identity, and the place she was coming from, Elizete quietly answers "Me en't know" (31). In fact, Elizete had been abandoned by her mother, who gave her to another woman. Meaningfully, Brand leaves unnamed the woman with whom Elizete has been left. Throughout the narration, she remains "the woman Elizete has been given to". Like Adela, who refused to mother her eight children: "their face as bad luck and grudge them the milk from her breast. She eat paw-paw seed until it make them sick in she womb" (19), the woman Elizete has been given to also rejects motherhood because she made sure she drank enough "brackish water" and cassava tea in order to tie her womb (31). Here, then, just as we will see with Philip and Silvera, mothering is jeopardized by the oppression these women experience since the maternal body that is already invaded by capitalist exploitation, does not have any milk for her child. The woman "with breast that look like money and whose hands grow fat yam" (38) is only able to produce food; she cannot, does not want to feed. Also, in the same way Adela refused to belong in the Caribbean, the woman Elizete has been given to also refuses her location, as she told Elizete: "I don't belong here" (36). Unable to accept this place as a home, she finds herself unable to offer a home to Elizete. When Elizete has been dropped in front of her house, the woman unwillingly offers her food and a place to put her bundle and sleep, but she offers no home to the little orphan: "Ragtail girl child, as if we don't suffer enough. I don't have nothing for you. I only have for me. I say I was the end of that woman, but they come and drop this child staring at me with she face. Look at my cross. Turn your face, turn your face to the wall when I come in this room" (31). By historicizing Elizete's displacement, then, Brand seems to be conveying, just like Philip and Silvera, how this loss and dislocation that characters such as Elizete experience, is linked to their past, and therefore, to questions of "where is this?" and "what are we doing here?" This in

turn, requires an inquiry into the history that brought us here, into the past. Though brutal, the knowledge created might bring with it meaning, a rediscovered origin, sense of identity, and the connection to a place they can finally call home.

## Displaced and Oppressed The Caribbean is not Home

At the start of Brand's narrative, we witness Elizete extenuated by the four o'clock afternoon sun, still busy cutting cane in the Oliviere plantation, just as her "great-great-great ma" Adela had done generations before her. So from the very beginning, Brand starts out by blurring the distinction between the global and the local in her narrative, by showing how Elizete's local place of dwelling, the Caribbean, is invaded by the reach of global capitalism, represented by the cane field and its back breaking labour. In this way, Brand shows that Elizete's domination reaches back to link with the past represented by Adela and the irreverence of the harsh forcible displacement to this land. Moreover, Brand also undertakes a transhistorical study of capitalism, in the ways in which slavery's exploitation of the Black female body forced to work in the cocoa fields, parallels the contemporary neo-colonial exploitation of black female labour in the Caribbean sugarcane plantations. Indisputably, it seems, for Brand, there is a continuum from slavery to present day exploitation in our global world, for as she affirms, "one is born into history, one isn't born into a void" (82). And the history into which Elizete is born is a history of dispossession, a "transgenerational haunting" with its legacy of slavery and trauma. For the black body, Brand writes, it is "as if its first appearance through the Door of No Return, dressed in its new habit of captive and therefore slave, is embedded in all its subsequent and contemporary appearances" (*A Map* 37):

> The body is the place of captivity. The Black body is situated as a sign of particular cultural and political meanings in the Diaspora. All of these meanings return to the Door of No Return – as if those leaping bodies, those prostrate bodies, those bodies made to dance and then to work, those bodies curdling under the singing of whips, those bodies cursed, those bodies valued, those bodies remain curved in these attitudes. They remain fixed in the ether of history. They leap onto the backs of the contemporary – they

> cleave not only to the collective and acquired memories of their descendants but also to the collective and acquired memories of the other. We all enter those bodies. (*A Map* 35)

Indeed, just as Adela has been forcibly brought to the Caribbean as a slave, the property of her 'owner,' Elizete is also the property of a man, Isaiah Ferdinand, and her work in the sugarcane plantation is no different from the work Adela was forced to submit to during her captivity. In this vein, through Elizete's personal history of displacement and loss, Brand manages to weave the historical narrative of slavery, in the ways in which Elizete's experience is modelled through that of her ancestor. This layering of voices, in the manner in which Elizete and Adela's voices echo each other, meet, and sometimes, overlap, is Brand's strategy of drawing a parallel between slavery and neo-colonial forms of exploitation through this interweaving of past and present experiences. It is the same capitalist principle that enslaved them both and raped their bodies and souls. But through it all these women resisted with their minds, their inner strength, to yearn for a place away from this bondage. Many times in the narrative, Brand deliberately mixes the voices of Adela and Elizete in the ways in which Elizete stumbles with the pronouns "she" and "I":

> "Now this time...she... dreamless, she... I done imagining. Leave is all I could think to do. My hand don't follow me, every piece of she have a mind by itself. I ... she say is so things is. (...) I don't belong here, but even where I... she belong I cannot remember after a while." (36)

By outlining the extent to which the past still informs the present in the ways in which transatlantic slavery mirrors the present-day exploitation of her characters, Brand locates the Caribbean as a local field in which the macro system of the global, such as the exploitation of the cane cutters and the American invasion of Grenada, intertwine. Moreover, the very lack of remembering, the inability to retrace one's past that Brand suffered as a child, is the very confusion both Elizete and Adela are experiencing. And like Adela before them, both Brand and Elizete have been unable to feel any sense of belonging at home. Since the ability to belong depends on one's capacity to name and to recognize

things around us, by being unable to name their past, Brand and Elizete are completely homeless in the Caribbean, in the same way their ancestor Adela was.

When Adela was forcibly brought as a slave, she refused to belong in the Caribbean by refusing to name it. On her way to the plantation, Adela was forced to lie down in the cart because every minute she wanted to jump out (21). And from the moment she was taken captive until her arrival to the Caribbean, Adela was trying to hold in her memory her way back home. But since the road was not only "solid ground" but also "water," Adela's memory fails her, which initiated her loss of everything:

> Everything after the narrow passage to the new world, the tunnel to the ship where only one body could pass, everything after the opening, the orange rim of dirt, jutting at her eye, which was the rest and first of what she was, she lose. Her power come small and she done breathe right here. All her maps fade from her head, washing off form zinnia to pale ink, the paper of ways, what she stitch and stick with saliva and breath, rinse as the sky in June come watery; the blue of Guinea, her mark for horizon wash out [...] She could not hold on to the turquoise sea what bring she here. Everything pour out of she eyes in a dry, dry river. Everything turn to lime and sharp bones, and she didn't catch sheself until it was her true name slipping away. (22)

Adela cannot make sense of her presence in her new surroundings, and so her heart "just shut" in her inability to accept her imprisonment (22). And after she was done "calculating the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decide that this place was nowhere and so she call it Nowhere" (18). Indeed, when she compares this place to where she comes from, Adela understands that nothing has a name here. It is just a place of suffering and oppression where she is kept against her own will. In accordance, Adela never names any of her eight children, and even goes so far as trying to prevent their births.

Elizete, Adela's descendant, suffers from the legacy of slavery, because of the very way Adela refused to name her location. Because of that, Elizete lost all beginnings; she inherits from nothing. This explains for her how she does not know the names of things, even though she knows their faces (19). As Elizete says, "I think deep about how a place

name Nowhere could make sense and I discover that Adela had to make her mind empty to conceive it. The place she miss must have been full and living and take every corner in she mind so when she reach, there was no room for Here" (20). Determined to fight her feeling of non-belonging, Elizete turns to the land for comfort. Since Adela refused to name this place, she is going to name it herself, in order to give a sense to her existence. Wondering what Adela would call things had she not decided to call this place "nowhere," Elizete takes it as her responsibility to name things for Adela (20). Out of nowhere, Elizete starts making up names: "Tear up cloth flowers, stinking fruit tree, draw blood bush, monkey face flowers (...) Slippery throat peas, wet sea fern (...) idle whistle bird, have no time bird (...) busy wing, better walking, come by chance, wait and see" (23-24), in an attempt to bring back Adela's memory. As Elizete tries to convince herself, by naming things for Adela, she would perhaps not feel lonely for something she does not remember (24). Conflating her ancestor and the samaan tree that was her surrogate mother, Elizete becomes able to feel some sense of belonging in her actual place of location, in this part of the Caribbean in a place called Moriah: "Adela, the samaan was my mother. She spread and weave and grow thicker. Is you I must thank for that. Where you see nowhere I must see everything. Where you leave all that emptiness I must fill up" (24). Determined to love the land and "never to leave," Elizete was then, temporarily, able to turn this nowhere place into a home place, however insecure it might be. But Elizete will eventually leave, because her status as a cane cutter and a wife, read servant to Isaiah, renders the notion of home a very precarious one. As Brand has repeatedly affirmed and theorized, a sense of belonging does not suffice in order to feel at home, because, as evidenced in the fragility of Elizete's everyday securing of home, the politics of imperialism overlap with patriarchy in order to confine her in the margins.

## "Where is Home?" Through the Lens of Generational Displacement

Applying, thus, the transnational refusal to collapse home with the place of dwelling, Brand disputes the concept of home as a comfortable place, by portraying how

Elizete is already in exile in her own country, in a place called Moriah, regardless of all her endeavours to root herself in that place: "I look up saying to myself, how many more days these poor feet of mine can take this field, these blades of cane like razor, this sun like coal pot. Long as you have to eat, girl" (93). This is the concept Carole Boyce Davies has defined, when she argues that home can be "ambiguous and ironic," and even "sarcastic" at times, producing the notion of "Strangers at Home" (114). Here, then, Brand enacts the feminist transnational refusal to romanticize home, by portraying it as a locus of alienation and exploitation for women. Indeed, the motive of the flight is recurrent throughout the novel; in many passages, Elizete thinks obsessively about escaping, about fleeing her job as a cane cutter and her husband, Isaiah. In this real home, as opposed to the nationalist myths of home as a safe and idyllic place, patriarchy and imperialism overlap and determine Elizete's fate, which is "to clean Isaiah's house and work the cane" (5). Brand must also have embraced a transnational imagery, in her refusal to root the subjugation of Elizete to a single constituent such as patriarchy alone, as seen in the ways she deliberately parallels Elizete's sexual abuse as Isaiah's wife with her economic exploitation in the sugar plantation. In fact, Brand seems eager to convey the fact that in the same way Isaiah's whip cuts Elizete's legs, the cane does too: "all over from one thing and another, one time or another, is how Isaiah whip them for running, is how he wanted to break me from bad habit. Whip. 'Don't move.' Whip. 'Don't move.' Whip. 'Run you want to run! Don't move.' Is how the cane cut them from working. Same rhythm" (55). With this dual analysis of how patriarchy colludes with imperialism, we see how Elizete's body becomes a territory, occupied both by patriarchy (Isaiah) and imperialism (the cane fields), and both complicit in becoming what Sidonie Smith has called "our most material site of potential homelessness" (267). Relinquishing the nostalgic notion of home, therefore, Brand writes instead about a home in which imperialism competes with patriarchy in exhausted female bodies such as Elizete's, and by portraying Moriah as such a place where a woman's only option is "to work the cane in the day and let a man beat against she body at night" (5). In this way, Brand turns the table on the nationalist notions of home as a safe site. This

manner in which Brand acknowledges the multiple axes of Elizete's oppression and subjugation, partakes of what Susan Friedman has called a geopolitical reading that involves "the realization of the ways in which the local and the global are always already interlocking and complicitous" (110). Indeed contrary to a gynocritical reading that might only have focused on Elizete's domestic abuse, or a masculinist postcolonial reading that would only have concerned itself with the imperialist exploitation of the cane field, such a "global/local" analysis as Friedman's, acknowledges the global reach of imperialism and its collusion with local forms of patriarchy such as Elizete's mistreatment at the hands of Isaiah.

As the characters shift spaces from the generational displacement of Adela and Elizete, the narrative also shifts tones when it follows the immigrant women to Toronto. This change of space also allows Brand to explore the dimensions of race and gender in relation to urban space, and to analyze the extent to which pervasive racism and economic exploitation impact these women's belonging and appropriation of Toronto. Indeed, far from the idyllist notions of masculinist exiles, Elizete's move merely constitutes another geographical displacement, in the ways in which her travel to Toronto continues the search for belonging but reads more like a tale of survival and escape.

## "I have Nowhere in Mind Except Not Here"

> ...if there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism it is the primacy of the geographical in it. Imperialism is after all an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. (E. W. Said *Culture and Imperialism* 226)

> How do I know that this is love and not legitimation of capitalist relations of production in advanced patriarchy? (Brand *Winter Epigrams: & Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia* 24)

The second section of *In Another Place Not Here*, is a third person account of Verlia's life. It starts first in the Caribbean, which constitutes a place to escape from because of the limited possibilities it offers women. Unlike Elizete, who grew up in the Caribbean as a peasant and illiterate woman, Verlia is a middle class intellectual. Even

though Verlia can afford to attend school, she nevertheless longs to escape this place and her family, whose resignation and lack of undertaking she cannot stand. In the island, Verlia does not recall ever sleeping "soundly or without fear" (121). She would only fall into dreams when she was tired from fighting her sleep, and when she does fall to sleep, it is with the hope of waking up in another place (129). Verlia's story seems to mirror Brand's own rendering of her experience growing up in the Caribbean, when she used to haunt the beach at Guaya, "the taste of leaving was already on [her] tongue" (*No Language is Neutral* 22). In the same way, Verlia waits and waits, unable to sleep until the day she can escape to another place. As soon as she turns seventeen, she flees to Toronto where she becomes a radical socialist by joining the city's Black power movement; very much like the young Brand, Verlia arrives in Canada from Trinidad in the early 1970s and immerses herself in the struggle for civil rights, while coming out as a lesbian.

If home is not in the Caribbean because of the scars of slavery and the persistence of neo-colonial forms of exploitation, forced displacement, and a gendered history of oppression and resistance, home is also not in Canada despite the misleading way Brand first presents Toronto: as an idealistic place for the Caribbean women immigrants fleeing the hardships of the Caribbean. This unrealistic vision makes the city of Toronto an imaginary place with its deceiving promise of freedom and financial liberation. An alluring, seductive geography, the "just is," which Katherine McKittrick warned against in *Demonic Ground* (xi), and that Brand herself rejects. Yet, it is this alluring perspective that we are told first attracted Verlia in her impulse to escape the suffocating atmosphere of her childhood island. But unlike Elizete who will take a long time before recognizing that she is not going to find a home in Toronto, Verlia realizes from early on that Toronto is not becoming a home for her, and she does not misread the confrontation and hostility lurking behind the seemingly polite indifference of the city. In fact, the way Toronto stands against her, "plainly and right in her face," does not deceive Verlia, as she is acutely conscious that Toronto is "against her from the beginning" (163). As Brand writes,

> They were Third World people going to the white man country. That in itself lowered them in their own estimation; they could not hope to look forward to being treated right. Already what affected them was getting an inhuman quality: 'they felt each morning as someone trundling a wheel-barrow and pulling a donkey as sleek cars whipped by' (61).

Then, as Verlia recognizes, she is only using Toronto as a "not home" space, which offers her the possibility of being somewhere else: "it does not matter that it's a country named Canada. Right now that is incidental, and this city and this country will have to fit themselves into her dream" (159). Unlike her relatives, who are passive and hopeless, Verlia "never learn to take the world as it is. She never wants to make do with what there was" (23), that is why she soon joined the underground movement of Black solidarity in Toronto. Contrary to Elizete's unlawful life in Canada, Verlia is able to lead a middle class life, which affords her the possibility to invest much time for the revolution. For a while, her involvement in "the struggle" gives a sense to her life, and she feels that Toronto was the space she was waiting to live in, that she will never go back (184). Yet, fifteen years later, Verlia started a slow mental and bodily detachment, as she started to lose both her mind and parts of her body. And little by little, the need to go to another place sinks in. In fact, this desire became more a necessity than anything else, because Verlia felt the urgent need "to collect herself again," to bring her "mind back from wherever the pieces had gone skittering" (95). In living in Toronto for fifteen years, she has become like her fellow immigrants, who are reduced to live "outside of themselves, watching other people live" (59).

Thus, Verlia left Toronto and the movement, and travelled back to the Caribbean to start a socialist revolution on the Oliviere plantation. There, she was faced again with what she, fifteen years earlier, called a "fucking life sentence": "Call it what we want – colonialism, imperialism—it's a fucking life sentence" (215). Verlia finds only misery and exploitation, as the Oliviere plantation, in which Adela used to work, has mutated to a capitalist production site; there the workers' conditions stubbornly remind her of Adela's condition during her enslavement. There, she also meets Elizete, and becomes more than

just her lover. In her, Elizete finds all that she was missing: "I take her for everybody--my mother, the samaan and Isiah and the woman they give me to" (76). As Elizete muses about Verlia, "She open me up like any morning" (5):

> and when Verl come along I see my chance out of what ordinary, out of the plenty day when all it have for a woman to do is lie down and let a man beat against she body, and work cane and chop up she foot and make children and choke on the dryness in she chest and have only one road in and the same road out and know what she tied to the ground and can never lift up. (4)

Yet, Brand does not allow this romantic relationship to override the imperialism of the cane field, by narrating their love making and relationship always in the background of the material reality of the plantation. For example, Brand always juxtaposes images of water, which symbolizes their love,[36] with images of subjugation, such as Elizete's scars from the cane blades, or the blood erupting from her foot when she carelessly cuts herself instead of the cane while she was busy admiring Verlia's body: "Verlia is my grace... I take it sweet like sugar... I see she. Hot, cool and wet" (3). But immediately, Elizete cuts her foot and blood rushes: "I sink the machete in ... she sweet like sugar" (3-4). By juxtaposing sugar with blood, then the grounding of Elizete's encounter with Verlia with capitalist materiality, Brand seems intent on wanting to outline how sugar is produced in the Caribbean. In so doing, Verlia asks: "sugar... you know how much of your people buried under this field?" (83-84)

*In Another Place Not Here* is also projected against a backdrop of the Grenadian revolution. Grenada became independent from Britain in 1974 under then Prime Minister Eric Gairy. Four years later, Maurice Bishop overthrew Gairy and became the Prime Minister. Under his leadership, the country became aligned with Cuban president Fidel Castro. When Bishop was assassinated in October, 19, 1983, the United States, not liking Grenada's increasing rapprochement with Cuba, decided to intervene. Thus, in October, 25, 1983, "Operation Urgent Fury" was launched, and the Ronald Reagan led

---

[36] She make me wet... she skin black as water..." (5)

government invaded the island of Grenada, with the help of small contingents of troops from Barbados, Antigua, Dominica, Jamaica, St Lucia, Grenadine, and St Vincent.[37] This is the historical event that Brand narrates in *In Another Place Not Here*, where she draws on her own personal account having been in Grenada working for an agency during the time when the Americans attacked the island. In her poem "hard against the soul," Brand reveals how her experience of the Grenadian revolution has affected her, besides also allowing her to come to a lesbian consciousness:

> I came
> Back from Grenada and went crazy for two years, that
> Time when I could hear anything and my skin was flaming like a
> nerve and the walls were like paper
> and my eyes could not close. I suddenly sensed you
> at the end of my room waiting. I saw your back arched
> against this city we inhabit like guerrillas, I brushed my
> hand conscious, against your soft belly, waking up.
> "hard against the soul" (*No Language is Neutral* 46)

Whereas Brand was able to survive the American's bombs, Verlia did not. Verlia died at Fort Rupert on the night of October, 19, 1983, when she and her companions were corralled to their death over a precipice (*In Another Place* 246). By ending the story not with the triumph of the revolution but with its very failure, as seen in the death of Verlia and her companions, Brand acknowledges the defeat of the revolutionary movement undertaken by Verlia. As Lianne Moyes argues, insofar as characters such as Verlia are homeless, there is no space within "the contemporary contexts for their projects, and for their revolutions" (*Adjacencies* 171). Here, thus, arises the signification of Verlia's failed revolution. As Brand plainly states in her poem "October 25th, 1983," the only possible way

---

[37] R. A. Burrowes, *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada: An Account of the Us-Caribbean Invasion* (Greenwood Press, 1988).

to fight foreign intervention is with "the silence of your dead body," like Verlia's ("Hard Against the Soul" 40-43).

## Homeless and Silenced - "Besieged in a black woman body"

Unlike Verlia, Elizete is looking for a place to mother her, in the very way the Caribbean fails to do. Nevertheless, when she moves to Canada, Elizete is not only unable to find a home in Toronto, but she becomes geographically and linguistically deterritorialized, in a more acute sense than she had been back in Moriah. If Adela and those of her ancestors had their language and expressions brutally suppressed, Elizete has been just as silenced, not by those she can name, but by this place in which she finds no voice. Having only been able to come to terms with her existence in the Caribbean through naming things, Elizete becomes utterly lost in Toronto because, whenever she tries to name the city, "the words would not come" (69). And it is not for lack of trying. However despite all her endeavours, the city just refuses to be known and remains a place she cannot integrate. After endless attempts, Elizete still cannot get used to the new rhythms of the city in which all she can hear is the traffic starting each morning and dying down each night (68). And after months during which she saw "no birds to speak of," no river, no mountains, no grass and no ocean or sea, Elizete becomes totally lost, since "this was how she knew the signs of things" (68).[38] She experiences the induced "speechlessness" of the city in its use of Standard English, a language incapable of articulating beyond urban homogenous experiences and therefore foreign and hostile to a Caribbean black female of African descent, what Philip has termed the "anguish that is english". Yet, not only is Elizete geographically and linguistically estranged, but she is also economically deterritorialized, since her black body predestines her to race-bound domestic labour. Because she carries a body female and black, nobody told Elizete about Yonge Street,

[38] Here, Elizete's sense of estrangement and perplexity mirrors Brand's own that she expressed in a short poem entitled AFRO WEST INDIAN IMMIGRANT in "foreday morning": I feel like a palm tree at the corner of Bloor and Yonge /In a wild snow storm./Scared, surprised,/Trying desperately to appear unperplexed. (25)

Avenue Road or Yorkville. Instead, Elizete has been introduced to "kitchen and toilets and floors and sewing machines and cuffs and rubber and paint spray and even been offered some sidewalks but nobody told her about any place she wouldn't fit in" (49). Searching for a safe space of belonging and understanding she confronts the worst kinds of racism, abuse and oppression. Having thus to live in the margins that Toronto has set for women like her, Elizete undertakes an underground life that involves a constant hiding from the police, and taking unlawful jobs with the inherent risk of having her bosses call Immigration officers on paydays.

Still, the ultimate consequence of living in a "Nowhere" space without landing papers is epitomized through Elizete's rape. It is very meaningful to consider that it is as a domestic servant that Elizete has been raped, as Brand willingly conveys the extent to which other factors such as labour also collide with the female body. Much like Silvera in her exploration of female migrant work, Brand wants to outline how the lack of status renders the Caribbean woman vulnerable to discrimination. Because she has no legal status, being not only homeless, but also "countryless, landless, nameless" (48), Elizete's rape goes unnoticed as if it had never happened. When Elizete left the house in which her employer had raped her,

> She knows that in the house she just left the man has not moved. He is sitting on the velveteen sofa or perhaps looking at sand out his window. He does not fear her, he knows that she will not tell anyone...he knows that she will not go to a hospital. He knows that she will not go to a police station. She knows that she cannot go to the sewing factory. She won't tell anyone. Not even Jocelyn. Perhaps she will move. (92)

The fact that Elizete will not tell anybody, not even her friend Jocelyn, reveals the extent to which she is silenced. Like Hyacinthe, in *Silenced*, who has been raped by her employer, the only option she has is to move. Elizete and Hyacinthe's ordeals are most acutely lived in their body, which itself becomes a besieged ground. In her essay "Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space," Kathleen Komar defines rape in spatial terms, by seeing it as "the ultimate usurpation of female space" (92). For Komar, the image of "the violated

space of the female womb" abounds in women's contemporary texts, as evidence of patriarchal violence upon women's personal spatial site: the body (92). By being a spatial site liable to forced invasion, what Brand refers to as the "exposed, betrayed, valiant, and violated female self, the vulnerable and fearful, the woman waiting for the probable invasion" (*Bread Out of Stone* 101), Elizete's body thus becomes a territory, a geography of its own: what Adrienne Rich has called the "geography closest in—the body" (212).

Elizete's rape is by no means an isolated incident, as Verlia's former lover, Abena, informs Elizete: "Look this is a land where a white man stabs your black woman body eleven times and goes back to work the next morning; down east it happened, calmly" (109). The danger of living such a life, as Abena subsequently adds, is that "you cannot last". Here, Brand denounces the systematic violence against black women, which is neither isolated nor exceptional, but happens on a regular basis. As Brand deplores, mainstream white culture is not concerned with male brutality, particularly when it is unleashed against black women; on the contrary, they support and condone that male violence by refusing to address its severity. The real danger is the gradual wearing away of the self, and the ultimate risk of waking up one day full of self-hatred. Abena recalls the experience of her mother's generation which became full of self-hatred because of the devastating effects of racism in North America:

> Self-hatred they had learned from the white people whose toilets they have cleaned, whose asses they have wiped, whose kitchen they have scrubbed, whose hatred they have swallowed, and when they sent for us, they hated us because they saw their reflection in us, they saw their hands swollen with water, muscular with lifting and pulling, they saw their souls assaulted and irrecoverable, wounded from insult and the sheer nastiness of white words and they beat us abused us terrorized us as they have been terrorized and beaten and abused; they saw nothing good in us because they saw nothing good in themselves. (231)

Abena reveals the pervasive effect of racism and the extent to which it destroyed these women's self-image in the ways in which they reproduce the same abuses on their daughters, calling them "niggers" just like some white people do. That is why she advises

Elizete to go home. Yet, what Abena does not know is that for those seeking refuge from "the weight of place and the burden of history," home is a "mere illusion of safety and cohesion" (Biddy and Mohanty 196). So when Abena advises Elizete to go home because Toronto is no home for a Black woman like her, Elizete wonders: "Go home, it's not a place for us...She know anything about cane, anything about Isaiah, anything about Verlia flying off a cliff" (110). As Bino Freiwald analyzes, Elizete "knows better" when she thought to herself: "Go home my ass anyway. She think anything simple like that?", because for the "cast-out child and the abused woman, for exiled slaves and their descendants, for families separated by economic necessity, for exploited workers and persecuted minorities," there is no home to go back to. Realizing that Toronto is perhaps no better than Moriah, Elizete is utterly displaced:

> Intention. Intention is what she could not make out. She could not get her mind to recognize this place. Jesus, she was making so many mistakes not being here, in her mind. Only her body reacted—ran from the police, ate food when it had to, walked, walked and kept moving. What was this? A room, a station, a clearing, a road. If she could just recognize something it would be all right. (66)

Notwithstanding the racism Elizete faces in Toronto, Brand also portrays how men participate in Elizete's subjugation since patriarchy does not know any frontiers. In the city of Toronto, Elizete is cornered by both imperialism and patriarchy as she described herself as being pushed flat "against the white wall, the continent":

> A man you don't know bends you against the wall, a wall in a room, your room. He says this is the procedure, he says you have no rights here, he says I can make it easier for you if I want, you could get sent back. His dick searches your womb. He says you girls are all the same, whores, sluts, you'll do anything. His dick is a machete, a knife, all the sharp things found on a kitchen table, all the killing things found in a tool shed. He says don't think about moving, I can find you. He shakes the blood off his knife and leaves. *This time they searched her skin, this time they found nothing and took it, too.* (My emphasis; 89)

Being obliged to live in the streets, Elizete's body becomes a liability, and while she has to stay out of sight of the police, she does not want any sense of it: "She doesn't want her own

body with her now" (55). Since her raced body makes her visible and suspicious, Elizete tries to fade into the malls, waiting for the night in order to sleep in back alleys. In *Demonic Grounds*, McKittrick is persuaded that this "landscaping of blackness" out of the margins of the nation as epitomized by the police harassment of people like Elizete, participates in a larger project that aims to put blackness "out of sight" (96). However, she adds, by having her characters inhabit the very crevices of the nation, Brand is able to redraw and remap this landscaping of blackness, by stubbornly "placing blackness" into the very heart of the nation. Similarly, as Rinaldo Walcott puts forward, when Brand is exhorting her protagonist in *No Language is Neutral* to "walk Bathurst Street until it comes like home," Brand is actually "staking out a territory" for her female characters who "make demands upon place and space" (41-42). Even though staking out a territory is not the same as "Feeling at home," Brand is nevertheless determined to lay claim on space by inscribing blackness into the predominantly white space of Toronto, thus "implanting the experiences of black peoples, in this case black women, in the very crevices of the nation" (Walcott 41). Even though this resistant mapping of space by "walking " can be effective at times, as seen in the ways in which Verlia appropriates the space of Toronto by laying claim to space,[39] it nonetheless has its limit. Indeed, as far as Elizete is concerned, the city of Toronto refuses to be appropriated "no matter how much she walked it" (69). Despite all her endeavours to "know this place" and live in it, Elizete is completely homeless. And while coming to realize that she will never fit in Toronto, Elizete is simultaneously aware that there is no going back home, for no homeland is waiting for her back in the Caribbean. For her, "really no country would do. Not any now on the face of the earth when she thought about it. Nothing existed that she could live in" (110); as Boyce Davies describes it, Elizete is homesick without a home ("Migratory Subjectivities." Literary Theory: An Anthology" 997). Like Molly in *Heart*, Elizete is caught between two worlds, two languages, two sexualities, and between leaving and returning, between here and there. So

[39] "her hair fills the subway door at Bathurst and Bloor. And there's a way that she walks, a way that her Afro demands, straight up...When she walks into the train nobody white dares look at her, too much wickedness to look, too much to account for...," (158)

contrary to the male diasporic yearning for a return to the native land, Brand jettisons these traditional tropes of journey and return. For her characters as well as for her, when they often go back, "all we can think of is flight," because as she says: "Flight is as strong as return" ("Just Rain, Bacolet," *Bread out of Stone* 65.) Verlia is the prime example of this affirmation, because as Susan Gingell writes, for Verlia, to return to her homeland entails to "encounter ...the physical and psychological poverty that are the legacy of imperialism ("Returning to Come Forward" 33).

After presenting the urban space mechanism of denial and rejection of the immigrants' experience, Brand does not fail to expose the pervasive effects of these politics. The bodily disintegration that has been the consequence of the city's denial of the immigrants' corporeal existence leads to a mental disintegration as Brand shows in this passage:

> They're not here! All the newspapers bellowing about here, all the traffic lights trying to keep them awake, all the clerks and officers and trainees handling them like paper, folding them in file cabinets. They're not here! By the time they walked these streets they were scraps and bits, shavings. (60)

As the last statement suggests, dwelling between here and not here at the same time is devastating. This is where the crucial relation of space and corporeality takes place, in the ways in which the consequences of the 'spatial othering' on the corporeal self of the Caribbean women immigrants reveal the extent to which the body is related to space. The importance of space becomes then crucial, in terms of corporeal experience, and is exemplified through the bodily detachment Elizete experiences as the consequence of the constant denial that the city offers. A denial founded upon a hegemonic power that time and again attempts to co-opt her body even as it abuses her sexuality and denies her a safe place.

## Summary: "We're in the middle of becoming"

Rootlessness is not a problem for me, and it doesn't have to do with Canada in particular. I think it has to do with that door. I think that after that door, rootedness is impossible. I think that rootedness is origin for some. How can you face

> that history and feel any rootedness? [...] If we were to use it well, this idea of no place, of rootlessness, it would be an incredibly interesting starting point for relocating selves in the world. (Brand Interview with da Costa)

I have tried to depict how Brand's portrayal of the lives of her female protagonists both in the Caribbean as well as in Canada challenges superficial analyses such as an unproblematic focus on gender oppression, or the nationalist myth of tying home to notions of safe and idyllic places. Much like Philip and Silvera, by underlying how the transhistorical exploitation of the black female body is rooted to a history of displacement and dislocation, Brand has outlined how our notion of capitalism should be related to slavery. As it comes out from *In Another Place Not Here*, the racialized and gendered identities of the Caribbean women immigrants render the concept of "home" a problematic one. The inability to find a home in the Caribbean because of the neocolonial exploitations as exemplified by the cane fields, and the racial and economic abuses in Toronto, on the other hand, belies the complexity and contentious nature of the concept of home for Brand's characters. The geography of the Caribbean negates the Caribbean women immigrants as women, and Toronto becomes a space impossible to inhabit because it negates their black selves. It is my sense therefore, that Brand's intention is to renounce the fixity of national boundaries in order to turn to alternative geographical locations such as the sea and safe lesbian spaces. Brand herself says that one is never solely a woman, a Black or a Lesbian, but all three at the same time. Unable to inhabit these limiting spaces, Brand feels the need to create utopian spaces that she does not locate within the nation-state, but rather on lesbian relationships, or in the metaphoric middle passage, as symbolized by Adela's flying back to Africa and Verlia's leap into the deep ocean:

> She is flying out to sea and in the emerald she sees the sea, its eyes translucent, its back solid going to some place so old there's no memory of it. She's leaping. She's tasting her own tears and she is weightless and deadly. She feels nothing except the bubble of a laugh each time she breathes. Her body is cool, cool in the air. Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current, the sight of lightning left after lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep. She doesn't need air. She is in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy. (247)

In her article "Staking Claims for No Territory: The Sea as Women's Space," Anca Vlasopolos posits the sea as "the promise of unfettered possibilities outside patriarchy" (Higonnet and Templeton 75), a "resistance to generic as well as metaphoric boundaries" (73). Describing the sea as an unconquered, uncharted "nonterritory," Vlasopolos argues that under the sea is the "the only world into which a woman can escape from patriarchally prescribed roles" (80). However, in Freiwald's view, Verlia's leap into the ocean can be read as a "fatal gesture of escape from space itself," in fact, from all other spaces that bound and bind. For Freiwald, Verlia is flying from "history, family, place, the body, and ultimately life itself" (39). So, by choosing to locate her characters out of the confines of the nation-state, Brand puts pressure on geography. Transgressing the "foolish borders" that land becomes when it is territorialized,[40] Brand thus discards the hegemonic and reterritorialist notions of place and space, by refusing a comfortable belonging to nation-states. As it shows in the epigraph opening this section, rootlessness is not a problem for Brand because for her, "becoming" is more important than "belonging". As she told da Costa in an interview, "becoming and not belonging" put the stress in time and no longer space" (3). By privileging becoming to belonging, Brand seems to have overcome her initial ambivalence over belonging, in the same way her characters do: "They are not interested in belonging. It could not suffice" (43). Refusing to position her characters in the hegemonic boundaries of the nation, Brand chooses to locate them in the in-between space of "anywhere but now" (*In Another Place* 183), the "interstitial temporality" Homi Bhabha has celebrated for its potential ability to evade "both the return to an originary 'essentialist' self-consciousness as well as a release into an endlessly fragmented subject in 'process'" (17). In doing so, Brand enacts what Susan Friedman has called a "narrative of becoming," a "fluid and flexible spatial rhetoric that posits identity as relational, situational, and interactive—the result of an ongoing process of becoming without origin or end." Brand therefore affirms, "We're in the middle of becoming": We' haven't arrived" (da Costa 7).

---

[40] Sherry Simon, "Land to Light On?" *Adjacencies* 11

Yet, by choosing to locate her characters within the space of feminist utopias as seen in Verlia's escape through the deep water, or Adela's flight back to Africa, Brand still seems to yield to the pressure of the nation, by choosing to flee its ugliness. As Susan Gingell says, Brand's aim is to construct "a feminist utopia that is conscious of women as constituted by history, race, class, among other things..." (51). This feminist utopia, which echoes Anzaldúa's utopian evocations of the future "Raza," which she prophesizes to rise up "tongue intact" and carrying the best of all the cultures, but only "in a few years or centuries" (203), nonetheless forecloses the possibility of living in the present, as well as the possibility of dwelling within the boundaries of the nation-state. Brand explains: "I have given up on land to light on... I was never committed. Not ever to offices or islands, continents, graphs, whole cloth, these sequences or even footsteps" (*Land to Light On* 47), being "stateless anyway" (Sanders). Thus, by giving up on land to light on, and by ending her novel not with the triumph of Verlia's revolutionary movement in Grenada, but with the failure of this movement, and ultimately, with Verlia's own death, Brand appears to foreclose the possibility of transforming the nation-state. By privileging utopian spaces, such as lesbian desires and the metaphorical crossing back of the Atlantic toward Africa, *In Another Place Not Here* thus appears to not acknowledge the power of memory and embodied resistance, which Marlene Nourbese Philip's collection of poetry *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* engages in the coming chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR: MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIP

### Marlene Nourbese Philip: A Poet of Place

I think if you write from place, the writing will be about place. (Philip interview with Mahlis)

"You better know your place!" is a refrain Marlene Nourbese Philip has heard over and over again growing up in her native Tobago. In the Caribbean island, this sentence is a warning usually addressed to children or to people of inferior status, to let them know that they have "stepped out of line" (*A Genealogy* 57). However, for Phillip who describes herself as a "displaced poet, triply displaced through race, gender and language, and now quadruply through place," finding her place, which means for her to step out of the boundaries established by society, is to have an "encounter with history, with time, with memory, and with language and its loss" (59). As impressive as this agenda might be, these are the very issues that Philip deals with in her work; for to re-position herself, to find her place, she will have to re-write and redefine history, time, memory, language and the body. When she recollects her decision to study law instead of engaging the profession of writer, Philip came to the decision that it was because at that time when she was still living in Tobago, among all the choices that were offered to her, "writing did not exist within the realms of possibilities" ("The Absence of Writing" (11). As Philip said, she has never contemplated that writing would be a profession for her, because "the black middle class and even the working classes in the Caribbean never thought of writing as something worthwhile to do. That was something white people did, white men, so there was nothing that I could model myself on" (Naylor 23). Furthermore, as Fido and Boyce analyze, Philip's positioning as "black and female, away with the locus of power, fostered an 'absence of writing' among women in her community" (263). As Philip herself maintains, the issue about writing is that of "power" and of "control," since writing entails in many areas such as: control of the world, of the image, of the information and so on. And as a "female Black living in a colonial society, control was absent in each of these areas, and

hence the lack of recognition of writing as possible vocation or profession" (25). So, instead of people who were born writing, Philip belongs to the category of those who had writing "thrust upon them". As she slowly came to accept "the blessing and yoke of writing," Philip's "painfully slow development" as a writer, allowed her a greater awareness of the function of language in a colonial society, what Philip terms the "anguish that is English in colonial societies" (10). For Philip, it is only by understanding the role of language in a society that we can grasp the role of writing, and that of the writer (11).

Philip first published a book of poetry, *Thorns*, in 1980, before publishing two more books of poetry, *Salmon Courage* in 1983, and *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* in 1989, which was awarded the Casa de las Americas prize. Her novel *Harriet's Daughter* was also a finalist for the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year Award for Children's Literature as well as the Max and Greta Ebel Memorial Award, and the City of Toronto Book Award. More recently, Philip has published another novel, *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* (1991), and a collection of new and previous prose work, *Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture* (1992), and *Showing Grit* in 1993. As argued above, Philip's entire oeuvre is an "encounter with history, with time, with memory, and with language and its loss."

## Speaking Silence, Voicing and Re-voicing

Marlene Nourbese Philip provides a significant change of genre from Dionne Brand. Brand used her fiction and oral history to problematize the geography of space in the displacement and loss of identity for generations of Africans and their descendants. Philip uses poetry and essays and the elevation of voice in the search for belonging in the resistance and liberation struggles. The corporeality of voice, just like the corporeality of space, is a semantic means of locating oneself within discourses of race and gender, which Philip uses to recreate history. As if to connect Brand's fiction dealing with 'spatial othering' with her poetry, Philip suggests: "Fiction is about telling lies, but you must be scathingly honest in telling those lies. Poetry is about truth telling, but you need the lie –the

artifice of the form– to tell those truths".[41] Such rendering of space and voice is undeniably an important component of female immigrant writing, of displaced descendants of an enslaved ancestry. My choice of Philip's poetry and essays is therefore deliberate, because, as I argued in Chapter Two, using a combination of both creative and critical texts is an apt way of countering both the stereotype of "non-intellectuality" attributed to "Third World" women writers, as well as the opposing view that these writers only do critical work. Yet Philip, regarded by some as 'intellectual,' having qualified and practiced law for seven years, accuses Western labelling and theorizing of being intellectual imperialism. Indeed, as I developed in the section *Reception of Caribbean Women's Writing*, if, on the one hand, Caribbean women writers like Philip have been critically read as "ethnographers" or as "sociologists," on the other hand, they are only perceived as "creative writers." By focusing on fiction and oral narrative for Brand, and on poetry and critical writing for Philip, my goal is to show that these writers blur genre distinction, thanks to their eclectic works. Furthermore, by juxtaposing Philip's poetry with her critical work, my method is similar to that advanced by Yopie Prins and Maeera Shreiber who argue that by juxtaposing criticism and poetry, their aim in that volume is to displace the binary between "critical" and "creative" writing (*Dwelling in Possibility* 2). Conversely, by reading Philip's poetry alongside her criticism –*A Genealogy of Resistance*– my intention is to show that as a poet, but also as a critic of her own work, like Dionne Brand, Philip's literary intervention is an effective disruption of that distinction made between creative and critical writing, between non-intellectuality and intellectuality. The interrelated essays of *A Genealogy of Resistance* in which Philip shares with the reader journal entries, letters sent to publishers, critical essays, plays, new pieces of poetry, and her own explanation on earlier essays, come back to illuminate and shed light on the poetry of the manuscript *She Tries Her Tongue: Her Silence Softly Breaks*. Accordingly, Susan Stanford Friedman tells us that narrative is a way of organizing knowledge, and that this interplay of the lyrical and the narrative, of prose and poetry, or the inclusion of journalistic notes such as Philip's manuscript notes, partakes

[41] From Philip's personal webpage: http://www.nourbese.com/index.htm, access when March 2009.

of the fact that it mimics the intersections of the public and the private, because "both discourses are necessary for the poet's construction of the self-as-revolutionary" ("Craving Stories" 28)[42].

Even though geographies of displacement such as transatlantic slavery, colonial discourse and other precursors of today's imperialist exploitations of the gendered and raced body are gestured to, the centrality of my reading of Philip tries to counter the overwhelming poetics of haunting and trauma on which most of her critics focus. My analysis of her work therefore utilizes a different lens and focuses on a contrasting reading other than the themes of alienation and victimization in which most readings of these Caribbean Canadian women's texts centralize themselves. My main interest here is to emphasize how she, along with the two other writers discussed in this thesis, inhabits the in-between space that exists between patriarchal imperialism and colonialism. Indeed, somewhat like Philomena, who was raped by her brother-in-law, King Tereus, and had her tongue cut out to prevent her from telling the truth, Philip has also been "raped" by capitalist colonialism, and has had her tongue "cut" by the predominance of male Caribbean writers and by hegemonic feminism. Yet, just like Philomena, Philip was able to develop a voice in order to tell her version of the history. In the same way that Philomena's tapestry enabled her to "write" her story through her art craft, by weaving the name of her assaulter, Philip has also found other devices, such as poetry, through which to tell her own version of the story. Through the centrality of re-membering embodied in the female body, Philip was able to map resistance into her story, by rearticulating the Black female body as

---

[42] Furthermore, Friedman argues that women whose cultures rely on a living oral tradition have transformed literate narrative by weaving strands of oral and written narrative conventions (21) have engaged a "collaborative dialogue between narrative and lyric" (22). Like Toni Morrison, who in "Memory, Creation, and Writing," explains that narrative needs to be supplemented by (or with) "other modes of knowing" such as "the metaphoric, the visual, the musical, and the kinaesthetic" (Friedman, 22) Philip, too, sustains the Visual as in her I-mage, and the musical as well as kinaesthetic aspect of her poetry, as seen in the performance mode of her poetry (poem whose completion lays in performance).

a site of resistance, a bodymemory, through which transformation and healing can be achieved.

If for Brand, and Silvera, naming can serve to combat the speechlessness and erasure that place can induce, for Philip, silence is one of the means for recovering a voice in order to lay claim to place and fight the politics of erasure inherent in her multiple locations as a poet "triply displaced through race, gender and language, and now quadruply through place" (*A Genealogy* 59). Yet, even if Philip's quest in *She Tries Her Tongue* is to find a voice, contrary to many critics who have mostly read Philip's intervention as a search for language, it seems to me that Philip's quest for voice is more about looking for other forms of expressions against oppression... forms such as silence, memory and the body, rather than language itself solely. For Philip, this linguistic and feminist odyssey of finding a voice does not obliterate silence or re-memory, and her reversal of the myth of the mother looking for the daughter, to become the mutual search of the mother and her daughter, is not only a search for origin, for the lost mother, the lost land, or even only for the lost mother tongue, but it is also a search for what cannot be named. Interestingly, Philip moves from voicelessness to voice only to move back to silence again.[43] Yet this time, it is no longer the "dumb" silence that the linguistic "rape" thrust upon the African in the new world induces, but the earned and resistant silence that chronicles their struggles for liberation. Therefore, in defence of Philip's search for a voice, I suggest that it does not necessarily aim at breaking silence: for if "speaking silence" can be the beginning of an authorial voice, the beginning of a narrative, silence is also needed to point at what is irrevocably lost, what Jane Hoogestraat names "the permanently missing or misnamed in received cultural and personal history" (Lashgari 27). Hoogestraat argues that if Adrienne

[43] Since I argue that Philip moves from voicelessness to voice, only to resort to silence again, my reading of her work follows this pattern. Thus, in the first section of this chapter, I analyse how Philip reads the many silences of the black female body, and the voicelessness that arises out of these multiple subjugations. Then, in another section, I look at how Philip develops a voice, by rewriting and talking back to the various paradigms that sought to silence her. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I read how Philip re-evaluates silence as a positive element, different from traditional Western interpretations of silence as a lack of voice, or as a negative element.

Rich's earlier work *Time's Power* undoes some silences by the very fact of referring to them, it also fails to give voice to other silences, which remain "permanently unnameable" (25). And what of the silence of the black female body and the loss of origin and the word? What experience might make it difficult for a distinct female voice to be heard? "Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" (250). Therefore, like Helene Cixous, whom Hoogestraat credits for acknowledging "what is beyond language," I contend that Philip's intervention follows this same pattern and values other forms of expressions that transcend language itself, such as the "speaking silence," this newly earned and resistant silence, and the defiant body- memory.

As Isobel Hoving has argued in *In Praise of New Travelers*, "voices either fit places, or they do not," as places can both destroy voices or enable them to come into being (17). Nonetheless, if Philip and Brand do differ slightly on the issue of voice, they do share the same longing for a lost origin. Their writing, from the place in which they find themselves, is about the place they seek to belong, as evidenced by Philip's epigraph opening this section. Thus, like Brand who was yearning to trace her ancestry since her early teens, Philip, too, is not free from such a desire to locate her origin, as seen in her plea for a "longing for location": "... and Modupe married Kofi and begat Abena who lay with Kwame and begat Adua who lay with [...] Oh, for a genealogy of begattings. And beginnings" (*A Genealogy* 14; my emphasis). It seems Philip cannot go any further in her account of ancestry and we see gaps in the list of ancestors. Therefore, the longing for genealogy becomes so strong that it gets "displaced onto characters" such as Margaret Cruickshank in *Harriet's Daughter*, who "longs for a black skin, a name that means something..." *(8)*, just as Bola has done in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, or Elizete in *In Another Place Not Here*, or even Brand herself when she incessantly asked her grandfather about her origin. Consequently, as a poet displaced from her homeland, her language, her culture, her race, and displaced also from the product of her own labour, and from the wisdom of her own belief in herself *(A Genealogy* 58), Philip must strive to look for what is hers by right, through a confrontation with history and language, as a "New

World poet... in search of place" (*A Genealogy* 69). A confrontation where linguistics is of prime importance in the narrative, since the relationship between place and voice is never unproblematic.

Therefore, my engagement with Philip's work is aimed at showing how she transcends the limitations imposed by colonial discourse and contemporary capital exploitation to rise above subjugation. From the discussion on Brand in the preceding chapter, the contemporary displacements that racialized and sexed bodies like Elizete's experience, must be historicized in order to understand how past displacements such as slavery legalize and continue their exploitation in today's globalization. So, for Philip, and as we will also see with Silvera in the following chapter, finding the origin of what accounts for this 'displacement' of black women requires us to turn to slavery and colonial discourses in order to seize how the former spatial tropes have written the raced and black body as a disposable commodity to use as deemed fit, for both white and black men (and sometimes by white women, as Silvera will show in her analysis of female migrant labour).

While working on the manuscript of *She Tries Her Tongue*, Philip was aware that there were two readers leaning over her; on her right shoulder was a "white, Oxford-educated, and male" reader, whom Philip calls "John-from-Sussex," and on her left shoulder, "–in the shadows– was an old wizened and 'wisened' black woman," named "Abiswa." For Philip, if the white Oxford-educated John represents "the white colonial condition," Abiswa stands for the "African Caribbean context." Despite the fact that Abiswa was not clearly perceptible, and remained still in the shadows, displaced by the presence of the white male reader, Philip will gradually manage to push back the white male reader into the shadows, while the black female reader's presence is allowed to "emerge more clearly into the light. Philip's symbolic use of these two readers serves the purpose of showing how she herself, through her writing, succeeds in eroding the colonial discourse that kept her in the controlled area of what she terms the "managed people," meaning everyone who is not white and male. At the end, her work has allowed her to seize her place; as she writes, "*She Tries Her Tongue* ... has also taught me [my] place" (10).

Much of my discourse about Philip in this thesis, then, is based on an intertextual reading of her collection of poems, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (which I will refer to henceforth as *She Tries*), and her collection of essays *A Genealogy of Resistance* (which I will refer now to as *A Genealogy*). Philip's narrative intervention in these works seems to undergo three distinct and consecutive stages as she un-voices herself: (1) she moves from voicing her silences, (2) to re-voicing the oppressive discourses of colonial and postcolonial paradigms, (3) to finally appropriating these discourses as her own, by re-voicing or transforming those very discourses into a new language, a female-centered language that encompasses silence and bodymemory. In this way, I will depict her moving linguistically through a place borne out of slavery, colonialism and exile, to transcend forms of patriarchal oppression that render violence to her womb and that would leave her silenced.

Firstly, in the first part of this chapter, I will examine how Philip theorizes the black female body as a site of multiple displacements. Going back to transatlantic slavery, Philip reads and interprets the many silences of the black female body, in order to show how these past displacements mirror their contemporary exploitations. Analysing thus the multiple erasures of black female bodies in both ancient and contemporary times, Philip theorizes the black female body as a site of oppression and suffering, a territory mapped by slavery as a site of reproduction through which new slaves will be issued, as well as a capitalist extraction site, through which postmodernity sustains itself.

Secondly, in the subsequent stage of Philip's writing, I want to analyse how Philip moves from reading and interpreting the many silences of the raced and gendered body, to voicing these silences. Using creative transgressive strategies such as the rewriting of canonical western myths or intertextual readings of the texts of male modernist writers such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, Philip manages to decenter both western colonial discourses and its eurocentrism. Like the poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language," many other poems, such as "Universal Grammar," "The Question of Language is the Answer to Power," "Testimony Stoops to Mother Tongue," and "She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence

Softly Breaks," signal Philip's attempt to "interrupt" those discourses, in order to replace herself as no longer an object of discourse but as agent of discourse. Through her emphasis on language, Philip also challenges various discourses such as religion, nineteenth-century scientific racism, and education that have given birth and legitimized colonialist and neo-colonist practices. Yet, as Philip herself comments, fighting against the "form" of these hegemonic discourses is as important as fighting against their "content." That is why her literary intervention is framed around an "Aesthetics of violence," to borrow Deirdre Lasghari's term, in order to salvage not only the themes of Western dominant modes of discourses, but also their very form. This involves staging multiple and polyvocal voices in her narrative, in order to disrupt the individuality and linearity of the male modernist lyrical "I". Using vernacular forms such as orality, storytelling, call-and-response, and the visuality of the page, in the unorthodox manner in which her poetry is sometimes vertically or horizontally placed alongside the page, Philip manages to unravel the colonial and patriarchal tropes embedded in language.

Finally, I argue that Philip's intervention goes beyond a mere "rewriting of already written narratives," as the first two sections (voicing silences and re-voicing) might imply. Relying on Mae Henderson's important notions of dialogics, and heteroglossia, I analyse how Philip's literary strategies are not only directed toward the others, but also to her inner self, what Henderson refers to as the "simultaneity of discourse." Philip thus "speaks in tongues" in order to move from transgression to "travestia," achieving the successful transformation, which Deirdre calls the "logical phase after transgression." Here, the emphasis is no longer on language only, but rather on other forms of empowerment such as the embodied possibility of the female bodymemory, or the "earned and no longer imposed silence" that Philip relies on to transport herself across patriarchally and colonially determined boundaries. Re-evaluating fragmentation, fluidity, orality devices, and a multiplicity of voices, Philip follows the black feminist tradition of the quilted and

fragmented narrative in order to "weave" herself in her narrative through the creation of a female-centered language.[44]

## The Body African. "Inner Space" "Outer Space"

Brand in the preceding chapter, Philip in this chapter, and Silvera's treatment of female migrant labour in the next chapter, propose there is a great need to passage back to slavery, in order to draw the link between enslavement and capitalism. All three writers insist on the need to apprehend the extent to which the former constructs of black femininity and black womanhood allow the contemporary displacement of their raced and sexed bodies, *in the ways in which* the former theories of racial inferiority are mobilized, in order to justify the contemporary exploitation of the female body. As Philip particularly argues, it is the "outer space" which controls the "inner space" of the black woman, in order to read her as a site of exploitation, a "reproductive machine" by capitalism and global theories (*Genealogy 97).* It is in *She Tries* that Philip therefore enumerates the multiple abuses thrust upon the black female body, a "site of exploitation and profoundly anti-human demands—forced reproduction along with subsequent forceful abduction and sale of children" (*She Tries* 24), which gives predominance to the voice of the white, male, Oxford-educated, John-from-Sussex, who entirely monopolizes the early narrative. Each of the first four sections "And over Every Land and Sea," "Cyclamen Girl," "African Majesty," and "Meditation on the Declension of Beauty by the Girl with the Flying Cheek-

---

[44] Since Philip adopts this circular narrative, which creates "circuits" rather than "linearity" ("Habit of Rats" 118) my reading of her poems tries to follow this pattern, by reading first her poems under the rubric of silences and the mapping of the black female body as a site under which overlapping discourses of modernity intersect. Yet, it is these same essays that I come back to when I come to the part in which I read Philip's dismantling and subversion of these discourses Even though some critics have separated the essays into sections that first deal with oppression, and then resistance, I claim that Philip's project defies any sense of linearity, rather, it perform a circuitous, fragmented narrative. In the same way the cyclamen girl accepts her othering," she simultaneously deploys resistance by "renaming herself"; each of the poems that has been categorized as a poem in which Philip talks about oppression, has some strains of resistance in it. And each of the "resistance" poems is not entirely resistant or triumphant, but still retains a sense of oppression. We particularly see this in her notion of silence, which can be read as the triumphant silence of the former native who now chooses to remain silent, what Naylor terms an "earned silence," but this silence can also be translated as the unvoicing of what still cannot be named.

bones," retells the 'colonial condition' represented by John, and constitutes "a mode of visually mapping the African female body within a colonial legacy" (*Lyric Interventions* 112), as Philip analyses here with the eroticized and available maternal body under slavery.

Philip's first literary strategy in the early section of *She Tries* consists of voicing and denouncing the complexly intertwined economy of race, in the example of "The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy," in which Philip outlines how the objectification of the black female body, capable of being sold and bought, such as during the slave auction sales, justifies contemporary capitalist exploitations of black women's bodies. Philip's first grievance thus is against transnational slavery, which, like Brand, she sees as the root of the imperialist modern tropes. Like Adela in Brand's *In Another Place Not Here*, black women were brought to the Caribbean (along with black men) to work on the plantations. Starting with the maternal body under slavery, Philip contends that under enslavement, "The history of slavery" becomes no more than "histories of bodies" (*A Genealogy* 92). By harnessing "female reproductive power to the machine of the plantation," the slave tropes construct a black female womanhood, one which is "opposed to the white ideologies of motherhood" (*Lyric Interventions 112),* and whose main role is to "replenish plantations and keep black men calm and non-rebellious" ("Displace" 92):

> In the new world the African woman creating life and seeing the men—the white men—taking away her children and selling them. The man who walking, getting into his boat, *his* plane, *his* ship, taking the product of her body and the body's wisdom—her children—like he taking the crops she tending. Body and place. Fertilized. Cultivated. Harvested. In the same way. Between parent. And Child. Mother. And child. Father. And child. Rupture. Umbilical cords to centuries of learning and culture severed. The Body African Place. The inner space between the legs linked irrevocably to the outer space of the plantation. (*A Genealogy* 93; emphasis mine)

## "We Bleed Therefore We Are": The Silence Between Her Legs

> (...) although my grandmother was unlettered and a peasant proprietor, she understood empire and grasped its workings in a powerful way, particularly as it impacted on the production and sale of her cocoa, and this in turn has made me feel that I wasn't alien, there was somebody else there before me who understood, in a similar way, the forces arrayed against us; that I wasn't this aberrant person flailing away at the powers-that-be, that something—call it what you will, some sort of emotional, cultural, or psychic DNA—had come down to me, and she is the conduit (Philip, *A Genealogy* 245)

The first phase of Philip's quest for voice starts with the expression of silence, silence as a lack of voice, as here, the voice of John overwrites and silences that of Abiswa, who sees her children being sold into slavery by a system which "spreads their legs to economically sustain such hierarchy through producing slave bodies" (Wiegman 6). Reduced to a mere extension of the soil that is giving crops to the slave owner, the black female body under enslavement becomes a "dis place," as seen in the ways in which Philip juxtaposes the slave woman's body with the land: similar to the ways the soil is tended to in order to produce food, the black female body is also fertilized, cultivated and harvested, in order to produce more working forces that John's ancestors will sell for more profit, but where, in both instances, she is displaced from the fruits of her labour. This literal use of the black female body echoes its metaphorical use in both colonial and postcolonial discourses, which construct the body as land to invade and colonize for the former and to rescue from the enemy for the latter, as discussed in Chapter Two.

In "And Over Every Land and Sea," Philip enacts an intertextual reference to Ovid's "And Over Every Land and Sea," by rewriting the colonial tale of Proserpine and Ceres. "Questions! Questions," the first poem in the first cycle of "And over Every Land and Sea," examines the disruption of lineage ensued from enslavement, as the daughter and the mother parted by the slave trade look for one another. On the opposite page, the second poem "Adoption Bureau" continues the search between the mother and the daughter, but this time, it is no longer the mother searching for the daughter, but the other way around: "She whom they call mother, I seek" (29). Besides the feminist aspect, Philip also racializes this myth by reading it through the lens of slavery. She stages a mother and daughter parted from each other by the slave trade: "where she, where she be, where she gone?" (28). In her version though, Ceres is given the traits of Mami Wata, (De Vita 59), the African goddess: "skin green like lime, hair indigo blue, /eyes hot like sunshine time" (28). Even the landscape does not escape from Philip's adaptation of Ovid's myth, as she introduces Caribbean words such as "kiskeedee and crow-crock" birds (28). In the poem "Clues," the search leads the speaker to the "north marry cold" Stateside, England, and Canada, and up

to Toronto where the mother might be living in the "Black Bottom—Bathurst above Bloor" (30) but also in the Caribbean, in Morahai, which echoes the birth island of Elizete and Verlia in Brand's *In Another Place Not Here*. So through these intertextual cross references, Philip manages to disrupt the colonial elements in Ovid's myth by deeply Africanizing it.

Surprisingly, even though female vocabularies such as the womb, pregnancy, birth, and milk abound in the first cycle of "And over Every Land and Sea," which might have suggested that Philip is giving prominence and voice to Abiswa over John, this presupposition is immediately complicated by the last poem in the cycle, "Adoption Bureau Revisited," in which the "ours and ancient" loss, and the hardened "unfelled tears" reveal the silences of the black mother under slavery. The first stanza, in which the mother follows the "blood-spoored" trail, suggests the violent and bloody nature of slavery (28). This displacement and deferral of maternal love and reunion, in the ways in which the mother and daughter cannot find each other, suggests the extent to which the maternal role is forfeited during enslavement. It also recalls the impossibility of mothering in Brand's *In Another Place Not Here*, where new forms of slavery and oppression perpetuate themselves through racism, homophobia and violence against women. In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich discusses the story of Proserpine of Greek and Roman mythology, and contends that "the loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter" reenacted here by Philip, is the "essential female tragedy" (Qt in *The Language of Caribbean Poetry* 168). In the poem's last stanza the speaker, or Abiswa, who represents the black female body under slavery, is denied motherhood, because, under enslavement, no familial bond is possible due to the selling off of her offspring; rather, the only possible bond for a mother and her daughter is reduced to an "oozing wound" (36).

The poem "Adoption Bureau Revisited" also echoes the bloody nature of slavery, by using the image of blood to map the search of the mother and the daughter:

blood-spoored

the trail follows
me
.....
betrayal and birth-blood
unheathed
Something! Anything! of her
She came, you say, from where
she went-to her loss. (36)

Caught under the capitalist logic of enslavement, the female body therefore becomes an "open territory," a "breeding ground" (*Lyric Interventions* 117) for capital profit, a "thoroughfare," whose main role is to accomplish the need of the New World Plantation. In "Dis place" Philip reiterates Foucault's argument that the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another, as in the evolutionism of the first sociologists, but are "bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power" (Qt in Dis Place 301, Foucault then sees the body as the locus where power by its nature and form, manifests itself to sustain an imperialist materialism. Philip denounces this historical depiction of the female body as constructivist rather than causative, by adding that "deployments of power are directly connected to the body" ("Dis Place" 301), quoting Foucault's very lines in *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault 151-2).

Thus, like Brand and Silvera, Philip deplores how, under slavery, the female body cannot fulfil its maternal role. Such an opinion is echoed in the poem "Epiphany," in which the slave mother is symbolized by a "stone-bird mother" who refuses to keep her children, just like Adela has done in *In Another Place*:

In the land of shadows
Herring-boned with memory,
The great stoned-bird mother

Sweet-balmed with honey
Drops her daughters
From her open beak
---Like pebbles. (45)

In the essay "Earth and Sound: The Place of Poetry," Philip therefore condemns the female slave's socially-constructed role as a breeder, and not as a mother, by describing how biology ties up with history in the space of the "body female and black" in order to give birth to modern contemporaneous technologies of power. The very form of the following passage, in which Philip does not leave any space between the words, suggests, perhaps, how the black female body is crushed between both ancient and contemporary powers, by being merely reduced to a space to be acted upon both by slavery and capitalism:

Newlanguageandsshecomnigtoundertandhowtosurvivetextbecoming
Bodybodiesdeadbodiesmurderedbodiesimportedbredmutilatedbodiessold
BodiesboughttheEuropeantrafficbodiesthattellingsomuchaboutthemn
Dwhichhelpingfueltheindustrializationthemetropolisbodiescreatinge
wealththecapitalfeedingtheindustrialrevolutionasmanytimesoverandoverand
Overandoverthebodies...
Between the legs thespace
within the womb thespace
Colonized like place and space
aroundher
thesilence of
thespacebetween
the legs
the silenceof

thespacewithin
thewomb
brokenintowordsof master
lord
massa
and silence (*A Genealogy* 94)

Consequently, for Philip, because the modern tropes have the power to name the place in-between the legs of the black woman, a "black whole," a "thoroughfare," the "bag o' sugar down dey," the space between the legs becomes "The Place," which is both a public space and a site of oppression (*A Genealogy* 76-77). The geo-cultural dynamics of this spatial amalgam makes race a "discursive construction with real effects" (*Lyric Interventions* 96). Historicizing the geography of descendants of African slaves and reconnecting with their genealogy, then, becomes a conflicted search for identity beyond the place dominated by patriarchal Eurocentric materialism that has constructed race, the Black race, as an economic structure historically and contemporaneously repressed, and the black female body a space for supporting its production needs. For the Black woman, then, "place and space" come together to form a "S/Place," which is Philip's means of tying together the subjective and the material, the meaning of the inner space of the legs of the Black woman being irrevocably linked to the outer place of the plantation machine:

> Between. The legs. The black woman comes to the New World with only the body. And the space between. The European buys her not only for her strength, but also to service the Black man sexually—to keep him calm. And to produce new chattels—units of production—for the plantation machine. The Black woman. And the space between her legs. Is intended to help repopulate the outer space. (*A Genealogy* 76)

Yet, even if mothers and daughters are not parted by enslavement the tragedy is still present, as seen in the slave mother's inability to protect her daughter's body. In "It Is Our Loving Will and Pleasure," Philip registers a passionate indictment of how, under slavery,

the black mother tries in vain to beseech her daughter to beware how her female body becomes a commodity, a public property:

> It Is Our Loving Will and Pleasure:
>
> don't let nobody/the mothers teach/fear/but no/body touch/there
>
> ...But consider. The Black mother under slavery—*her* loving will and pleasure—wanting to protect: "don't let nobody touch you there!"—herself and her daughters. Knowing. Everybody touching her—There! The Black mother naming what the men have. The MUST DO (*Genealogy* 9; emphasis in the original).

Nonetheless, despite all this subjugation as encapsulated in the conflicting demands thrown upon the female body, resistance is inscribed within the body, as Philip adds: "indulgence in any action described above by the female, *on the initiative of the female*, serve to subvert the hegemony of those who control the outer space" (*A Genealogy* 95-96, emphasis in the original). At this point, we see that the black female reader over Philip's shoulder who has been silenced, so far, is getting ready to claim more space in Philip's story, by being committed to a greater presence in the narrative.

### Cartographers of Silence: Creative Transgressions

> Literature, and in particular poetry, only begins to belong to a place when the poet belongs; the poet belongs when the language belongs; the language belongs when it arises from and reflects the essence of all that combine to produce place. In this process the bond between the poet and place remains indispensable. Place for the poet from the Caribbean must include language, and how the poet attempts to solve the dilemma of language. (Philip, *A Genealogy* 62)

> The liberatory voice [...] is characterized by opposition, by resistance. It demands that paradigms shift--that we learn to talk-- to listen--to hear in a new way. (bell hooks)

If the first section in this chapter outlines how Philip's early writing intervention is to voice her multiple exploitations, this second stage of her project is framed around a discourse of protest and resistance against the transgressions imbibed through language norms, moving thus from "trying her tongue" and reading her silence, to re-voicing and "talking back" to the various paradigms that have tried to silence her. Indeed if the white

male reader from Sussex dominated the first section of this discussion, in this second one, Abiswa will be shown to be slowly emerging from her centuries of silences and abuses, claiming a genealogy of female resistance, a genealogy not only made of word, but also of silences. This, then, seems to be Philip's metaphor for re-voicing and cleansing the language that has de-contextualized the Black race of its hegemonic norms, thereby reclaiming the power to disrupt the traditional arrangements of the spatial apparatus and create a liberating female language. I will consider how Philip uses the "logic of language" to subvert the various discourses on the black female body, through both the themes and the form of her writing.

In her book chapter The "'Knife in the Tongue': The Politics of Speech and Silence," Deirdre Lashgari opens her discussion with Jane Hoogestraat's examination of the multiple silences in Adrienne Rich's work experiences that cannot be named; because they have been erased by dominant institutions, as well as the active silences of women struggling to find "language for pain, poverty, and violence, and then the courage to speak that language" (12). If for Brand, place must be historicized in order to provide a sense of belonging to the displaced girl burning thè rice at the window, for Philip, place for displaced beings like her "must include language," voice and expression –what she calls the equation of language and place– and how the "poet attempts to solve the dilemma of language" whose primary purpose is to exclude her and to deny her humanity. This language will un-silence the black female body and let a distinct female voice be heard, and, in so doing, it uncensors the body, the breath and speech that Helene Cixous talks about. Because Philip describes herself as a "poet of place," she must "root herself in language" in order to develop a voice "out of a sense of place" (*A Genealogy* 62-63). Furthermore, since her interaction with place is affected by her gender, Philip must learn how "to read place—the outer space—in a gendered language" (*A Genealogy 75*).

## "The 'Knife in the Tongue': Respatializing Language":

> The white man thinks and therefore is. He is seldom, if ever says or needs to say, I am; I am white; I am male; I am human. Everything around him conspires to transform mere attibutes into qualities of apparent permanence and

> universalitity, synonymous with privilege. We might say these arguments are hackneyed and old hat. (...) But these issues crash in against the writing which is rooted in the word—"the 'paternal Word' sustained by a fight to the death between the two races (men/women)." Not to mention the father tongues imposed on us, the colonized peoples of colour. How to use the "paternal Word" to issue forth first statements—of wholeness? (Philip, *Frontiers* 67)

In "Ignoring Poetry," Philip writes:

> How does one write poetry from the twin realities of being black and female in the last quarter of the twentieth century? How does one write poetry from a place such as Canada whose reality for poets such as myself is, more often than not, structured by its absence? How does one write from the perspective of one who has "mastered" a foreign language, yet has never had a mother tongue; one whose father tongue is English fashioned to exclude, deride and deny the essence on one's be-ing? How does the poet confront and resolve the profound loss and absence of language—a language which can truly be the house of one's being? How does the poet work a language engorged on her many silences? How does she break that silence that is one yet many? Should she? Can she fashion a language that uses silence as a first principle? (120)

Seven years and twenty five rejections later, Philip tells us, these questions answer themselves. Indeed, for the questions of Philip's sexual and racial displacements as encapsulated by her query about how can she write poetry from "the twin realities of being black and female," Philip answers that to be black and female are not twin realities or even "the same" (121):

> How does one/write/poetry from a place/structured/by absence?
>
> One doesn't. One learns to read the silence/s.
>
> How/does one write/poetry/ from the perspective/of "mastery" of a mother/tongue—a foreign/language/ an anguish
>
> One doesn't. One fashion a tongue
>
> Split—two times two times two
>
> Into

Poly&
Multi&
Semi
Vocalities. (121)

By introducing her two manuscripts through the enumeration of her multiple displacements, Philip is well prepared to the "twenty five rejections" that she suffers from the hand of Canadian publishers. However, out of these displacements, Philip has been able to forge a grammar of dissent and resistance; for as she challenges: "in She Tries Her Tongue, I set out to be unmanageable. I refused to 'know my place,' the place set apart for the managed peoples of the world" ("Managing" 296).

In "Re-placing Language: Textual Strategies in Post-Colonial Writing" Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin argue that the subversion of a canon involves not only replacement of other texts, but more importantly, a conscious alternative reading (*The Empire Writes Back* 38-77). Furthermore, Ashcroft adds that the most remarkable potential of language in postcolonial literature is its ability to "construct difference, separation, and absence from the metropolitan norm" (44). In *She Tries*, Philip expresses the same intention, when she admits that she must engage in "restructuring, reshaping and, if necessary, destroying the language," in order to wrench it out of the oppressiveness of that metropolitan norm that Ashcroft talks about (*She Tries* 19). That is why Philip **must** "attack" the word even as she uses it, in order to decolonize the language of its hegemonic and racist assumptions: "*I want to write about kinky hair and flat noses—may be I should be writing about the language that kinked the hair and* flattened *the noses,* made *jaws prognathous*" (20). Writing a critique *of A Genealogy* in *The Globe and Mail*, George Elliott Clarke noted that Philip effortlessly swings between "word jazz" lyric and surging prose, fusing Caribbean demotic passages with magisterial language as her writing attempts a Creole tone. He muses, "long may she "mess with the lyric [...] interrupting and disrupting it"; long may she contest the page, that "blank space -- where the silence is and never was silent" (*Saturday, March 28, 1998; D17).*

An aphorism, commonly attributed to Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich, that language is nothing but "a dialect with an army and a navy," captures Philip's acknowledgement that linguistic struggle is vital for repositioning the African woman in language. Not only the African woman, but also the African man, for both are still displaced by the hegemony of the English language, which by essence, convey the non-being of the African. Philip finds it a great irony that descendants of societies such as African ones where acts of naming were primordial, would find themselves today in a situation where "their word" was being denied to them (*She Tries* 21). In addition to having their language destroyed, New World Africans were further displaced because they are now forced to use a language that is hostile to their very fundamental being, a language laden with alien and negative images such as big lips and kinked hair. The paradox, as Philip sums it up, is that the African learns to "speak and to be dumb at the same time" (*She Tries* 16). The English language, then, becomes a father tongue, in that the African becomes decontextualized and alienated from that language. Thus, in "The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Become a Spy," Philip wonders:

> What happens when you are excluded from the fullness and wholeness of language?
>
> What happens when only one aspect of a language is allowed you—as woman? –as Black?
>
> What happens when the language of ideas is completely removed and nothing is given to replace it?
>
> Surely thought requires language—how can you, without language, think and conceptualize?
>
> What happens to a language that is withheld or only used in a particular way with its users – does it become dissociated?
>
> one level business
>
> one level orders, commands, abuses, brutality
>
> one level education to a specific purpose and level

What of celebration
What of love?
What of trust between individuals? (22)

As Philip writes in *Looking for Livingstone*: " I wanted...words that didn't possess me—didn't own me—words free, untouched, untarnished by any previous activity. Virgin words! Unblemished! Clean like a new-born baby" (43). So the whole collection of *She Tries Her Tongue*, is focused on finding a voice by looking for new words, as the example of the poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language" suggests. In which Philip undertakes to "clean" the language from its "previous activity," the hostile articulations of her non-being, by having a mother metaphorically perform a cleansing on her new born baby girl:

> WHEN IT WAS BORN, THE MOTHER HELD HER NEWBORN CHILD CLOSE: SHE BEGAN THEN TO LICK IT ALL OVER. THE CHILD WHIMPERED A LITTLE, BUT AS THE MOTHER'S TONGUE MOVED FASTER AND STRONGER OVER ITS BODY, IT GREW SILENT- THE MOTHER TURNING IT THIS WAY AND THAT UNDER HER TONGUE UNTIL SHE HAD TONGUED IT CLEAN OF THE CREAMY WHITE SUBSTANCE COVERING ITS BODY. (56)

After cleaning her daughter by licking her all over its body, the mother then starts blowing new words into her tiny child's mouth:

> THE MOTHER THEN PUT HER FINGERS INTO HER CHILD'S MOUTH—GENTLY FORCING IT OPEN; SHE TOUCHES HER TONGUE TO THE CHILD'S TONGUE, AND HOLDING THE TINY MOUTH OPEN, SHE BLOWS INTO IT—HARD. SHE WAS BLOWING WORDS—HER WORDS, HER MOTHER'S WORDS, THOSE OF HER MOTHER'S MOTHER, AND ALL THEIR MOTHERS BEFORE—INTO HER DAUGHTER'S MOUTH. (58)

This reclaiming of the female language, that Philip has the mother perform here, is the first condition of finding a voice. So, in the entire collection of *She Tries Her Tongue*, Philip strives to reclaim the power to rename herself, in order to challenge the spatial tropes that have defined her as a black space liable to all sorts of exploitations. In her article "When

We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision," Adrienne Rich reasserts the importance of naming, by outlining how "language has trapped us as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name – and therefore live—afresh" (35). Renaming "the black space" S/Place, Philip invokes the power naming to free herself from the colonialist representations and stereotypes.

Philip also stages counter-colonial revisions that challenge and parody conventional discourses such as grammar lessons or phonetics. In "Discourse on the Logic of Language," Philip redefines parsing as "the exercise of dismembering language into fragmentary cells that forget to remember" (66). Indeed, by using "parsing," Philip signals how colonization was violent by translating this poem below in many languages:

> The tall, blond, blue-eyed, white-skinned man is shooting/an elephant /a native /a wild animal /a Black /a woman /a child /somewhere
> O homen alto, louro de olhos azuis esta a disparar
> El blanco, rubio, alto de ojos azuls està disparndo
> De lange, blanke, blonde man, met der blauwe ogen, is aan het schieten
> Le grand homme blanc et blond aux yeux bleus tire sur
> Der grosser weisse mann, blonde mit blauen augen hat geschossen (*She Tries* 67).

For Nigel Thomas, this innovative way that Philip deploys in her redefinition of parsing is a powerful textual strategy against "the racist, ethnocentrist, and chauvinistic values for which occidental languages are a vehicle" (69). Besides fighting against the content of the colonial tropes, Philip also engages a kind of "aesthetic violence" (Deirdre12), mentioned earlier, which leads her to attack not only the content but also to savage the traditional form of the poem itself. Indeed, as Philip writes, by considering the form of the poem as "not only a more true reflection of the experience out of which it came," but is also "as important as the content," it is easier to see how the poem as a "whole" becomes "a more accurate mirror of the circumstances that underpin it" (*A Genealogy* 298).

## W(R)IGHTING THE LYRIC "I": COUNTERING THE FORM OF POETRY

What is taken of art when it is separated from the social fabric? (Adrienne Rich Blood, Bread, and Poetry 185)

To take the poem one step further and re-embed it, re-encrust it within its context—to put it back in the mire of its origins.... The next step is for me to de-universalize it—make it specific and particular again. Eliot talked of the objective correlative—the arousal in the reader of the exact emotion the poet felt as **he** wrote. This assumes the existence of certain values that would or could prompt the reader to share with the writer **his** emotions. This assumption is never articulated and the so-called universal values were really a cover for imperialistic modes of thought and ways of acting upon the world. *M. Nourbese Philip ("The Habit Of" 212, emphasis on original)*

By deconstructing the universal values encoded in the poem, and by taking issue with its apparent neutral form, Philip manages to unravel poetry's "imperialistic modes of thought and ways of acting upon the world" *(A Genealogy 117)*. Consequently, in most of the poems in *She Tries*, Philip resorts to unusual spatial arrangements in order to disrupt the traditional form of the poem itself. She argues that since poetry came to the Caribbean "as another form of colonization and oppression," her intent is to subvert "in a very conscious way," all those traditional forms of poetry" (111). To describe the oppressiveness and Eurocentrism of poetry, Philip uses a Jamaican expression "buck up" to convey how she was thrust against the weight of Eurocentric traditions when she was working on the manuscript of *She Tries*. Realising that poetry and the way it was introduced to the Caribbean was "a way of management," she understood that she could not challenge the language without challenging the canon that surrounded the poetic genre ("Managing 296"):

> So in 'Discourse on the Logic of Language' I set out to subvert the poem itself. Usually a poem is centred on the page with the margins at both sides clearly demarcated. Also, there is the prescription of certain traditions like Eliot's objective correlative: you remove the poem from its morass of history, so to speak, clean it of its personal clutter and anyone anywhere ought to be able to identify with and understand it. I deliberately set out to put the poem, that particular poem, back in its historical context, which was what poetry is not supposed to do. (226)

So instead of following the traditional arrangement of the poem, which is usually centred on the page with the margins at both ends clearly demarcated, Philip places her story of the mother licking her newborn daughter vertically along one side of the page, next to "Edict I," a historical excerpt in which slave owners were prompted to prevent rebellion by mixing slaves with different African tongues together. On the next page, Philip again stages the mother blowing words into the mouth of her newborn daughter along the left-hand margin of the page; on the right margin, Philip places historical edicts about African slaves being prohibited from speaking their mother tongues and having their tongues removed for breach of this edict. On the pages facing the poem, Philip places descriptions of how speech takes place, followed by a series of multiple-choice questions. By juxtaposing the mother tongue that is represented by the mother blowing words into her daughter's mouth and the father tongue, the edicts, Philip's aim is to outline the simultaneous function of the English language which is both a mother and a father tongue:

English

Is my mother tongue.

A mother tongue is not

not a foreign lan lan lang

language

l/anghish

anguish

...a foreigh anguish

English is

my father tongue

A father tongue is

EDICT I

Every owner of slaves

shall, whenever possible,

a foreign language

therefore English
ethno-

is a foreign language

not a mother tongue

not a mother tongue

ensure that his slaves

belong to as many

linguistics groups as

possible.

If they cannot speak to each

other, they cannot then

foment rebellion and

revolution.

What is my mother

tongue

my mammy tongue

my mummy tongue

my momsy tongue

my modder tongue

my ma tongue?

(*She Tries* 56)

On the opposite page, Philip puts three short paragraphs in prose describing the work of two nineteenth-century doctors: Doctors Wernicke and Broca. Here, the colonial condition is represented by the two race doctors, as science becomes indistinguishable from racism. One of the doctors, Dr. Broca, devoted much of his time to "'proving' that white males of the Caucasian race had larger brains than, and therefore were superior to, women, Blacks and other people of colour" (57). By putting together the discourses of the edicts, the race discourse and the mother tongue, we see how "the body silenced by dominant discourse" is

being "awakened by the mother tongue," as symbolized by the mother cleaning her daughter and blowing words into her tiny mouth. Linda Kinnahan evocatively suggests in *Lyric Interventions* that "the tongue, erotically and maternally empowered, becomes in this three-way juxtaposition of texts, the body part most threatening to the regime of power, most transfiguring to the subject inscribed by that regime's discourse of race" (125).

Philip's contention, that the presence of the Africans in the New World inscribes itself under a history of violence and "fatal interruptions," recalls Brand's story of her ancestors being forcibly brought to the Caribbean. Therefore, to write about what happened "in a logical, linear way is to do a second violence" ("The Habit Of" 212). She needed to devise a fragmented narrative which seeks to suggest the violence and traumatic experiences of her ancestors, while also resisting the linearity and universality of the lyric voice. This involves staging multiple and polyvocal voices in her narrative, a "multiplicity of voices that undoes the individual lyric voice" (*Lyric Interventions 86*). By thus grounding the lyric "I," and by forcing it to share the visual page with the violent history of colonialism and racism, it seems that Philip has succeeded in transforming this "univers-all" "I":

> (B)y cramping the space traditionally given the poem itself, by forcing it to share its space with something else—and extended image about women, words, language and silence; with the edicts that established the parameters of silence for the Africans in the New World, by giving more space to the descriptions of the physiology of speech, the scientific legacy of racism we have inherited, and by questioning the tongue as organ and concept, poetry is put to its place—both in terms of taking a less elevated position: moving from centre stage and page and putting it back to where it belongs—locating it at a particular historical sequence of events. ("The Habit Of" 212)

In "The Habit of: Poetry, Rats, and Cats," Philip comments on her own work: "I set out to destroy the lyric voice, the singularity of the lyric voice, and found that poetry had split" (*A Genealogy* 115):

> It took me fully one year of readings to understand how completely I had subverted the individual lyric voice.... Much of the poetry in *She Tries* ...

> has become unreadable, in the sense of one person getting up before an audience and reading.... On one occasion, when asked to read a certain poem (Universal Grammar), in desperation I call on a student to assist me—the work immediately becomes a mini-drama. Constantly changing depending on who is reading it. Along with me. The polyvocular. The multiplicity of voices. ("The Habit Of" 211-12)

In order to disrupt the formal properties of western poetry, Philip often puts alongside the page, both the original and the rewritten narrative. This intertextual strategy of re-vision is used in "*Over Every Land and Sea*," in which Philip places in italics before her own text, Ovid's version of the myth of Ceres and Proserpine looking for one another: "*Meanwhile Proserpine's mother Ceres, with panic in her heart vainly sought her daughter over every land and over all the seas*" *(28).* By invoking a narrative that relies on the blending of traditional African storytelling Philip signals the important place African elements play in her stories as she brings to the fore their potentiality to infect and subvert the hegemony of western forms.

## From Transgression to Travestia: Transformative Crossing Over

> The language of creative transgression is an act of daring, a border crossing that is both "festively vertiginous" and dangerous.51 One learns to move alertly but without fear through the borderlands, to experience the margins both as re-placed center and as cutting edge, the ground of transformation. .. This new ground is not solid ground at all, no easy space, the language in which these relations are discussed no longer constitutes solid ground.. no adequate terminology for the categories central to our conversation: old solutions have been found wanting, and new ones being proposed likewise have flaws. (Lasghari 54)

In her seminal article "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics and Dialectics and The Black Woman Writer's LiteraryTradition," Mae Henderson starts by evoking the traditional erasure of black women writers, and the lipservice and token recognition that have followed the verbalization of their exclusion. According to Henderson, it is not that black women, in the past, have had nothing to say, but rather "that they have had no say" (24). This absence of black female voices that Philip describes as the "missing" silence, has allowed others "to inscribe, or write, and ascribe to, or read, them" (24). Indeed, as Henderson writes, caught

between both mainstream feminism and masculinist diasporic discourses of race, black women like Philip find themselves displaced by the mutually exclusive nature of these paradigms designed to look only for either gender or race concerns.[45] I believe that Henderson's theory of the "*simultaneity of discourse*," is an apt way of avoiding the binary constructs while providing a means of mapping the "multiple ways of voicing that reside in Black women's textualities" (Davies 164), what Philip calls the "polyvocal" and "many-tongued": "the many-voiced one of one voice/ours..." ("Dis Place" 106). This term aptly captures the experiences of Caribbean Canadian women, for, instead of replicating the reification against which black women are subjected in discourses that look to either gender *or* racial oppression, Henderson's theory privileges a mode of reading that takes into account both the racial and gendered aspects in Caribbean Canadian women's writings. And as Henderson affirms "the 'critical insights' of one reading might well become the 'blind spots' of another reading," and might end up resulting in what Nancy Fraser describes as "blindness to 'the gender subtext' can be just as occluding as blindness to the racial subtext in the works of black women writers" (17). For Henderson, such approaches can result in exclusion at worst and, at best, a reading of part of the text as the whole—a strategy that threatens to replicate (if not valorize) the reification against which black women struggle in life and literature. By seeking a model that accounts for racial difference within gender identity and gender difference within racial identity, this model is also useful in deconstructing the "assumptions of internal identity (homogeneity) and the repression of internal difference (heterogeneity) in racial and gendered readings of works by black women writers (17).

Using Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* and Toni Morrison's *Sula*, as exemplary works that encode and resist the material and discursive dilemma of the black woman writer, Henderson compares the suppression of the black female voice in the dominant discourse with its repression in the subdominant discourse, before showing how these same novels provide models for the disruption of the dominant and subdominant discourse by

[45] See Appendix A

black and female expression, as well as for the appropriation and transformation of these discourses. In the same way Henderson credits Dessa Rose for being the "author of her own story" (19). Likewise, Philip also "writes herself into the dominant discourse and, in the process, transforms it" (ibid). For Henderson, if the psyche functions as an "internalization of heterogeneous social voices," then black women's "speech/writing" becomes an undistinguishable dialogue between self and society and between self and psyche. Taking her cue from Bakhtin who describes the model of "Writing as inner speech" as, "a unique form of collaboration with oneself," Henderson contends that the writing of black women writers like Philip needs a reading that decodes both levels of these discourses: the one directed to the others as well as the one aimed at the inner self. What she describes as a model geared toward addressing not only "a subject en-gendered in the experiencing of race," but also a subject "racialized" in the experiencing of gender" (24). That is what the foregoing discussion has been arguing for all through these chapters. Contrary to the gender-based discourses of hegemonic feminisms or the race-oriented discourse of masculinist Diasporas, Henderson's model is an inclusive one able to uncover Philip's multilayered identity. So like Janie, the protagonist in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and like Toni Morrison's Sula in the eponymous novel, Philip "must speak in a plurality of voices as well as in a multiplicity of discourses" (22). That is why her fragmented and circular narrative asks for a new language, a female language that only relies on devices such as orality, creolization, and bodymemory.

## Oh, for a race of women!

> The power I sought was not the same power the white European male/father has used to manage, control, and destroy the other, but a power directed at controlling our words, our reality, and our experience. (Philip, "Managing" 296)

For Philip, subversion of the English language, as made evident by the proliferation of "bad English," "broken English," or "Dialect," has already been done, and much more should be attempted now. For her, the next step is to forge a new language, one which is vested with the experience and i-mages of the denied African wisdom and culture. As she

says: "for too long, we have been verbal or linguistic squatters, possessing adversely what is truly ours" (*She Tries* 21). Indeed, Philip lays claims to the ownership of the English language, which according to her, belongs to the African in the Caribbean and the New World, in the same way it belongs to the Englishman in his castle. Since their experiences have met and touched in both negative and positive ways, they will remain "forever sensitive to each other through the language" (*She Tries* 21). For Philip, her role as an artist, as a writer, is to become a "wordsmith" so that she can re-voice the language and forge new words in order to recreate the positive i-mage of the New World African. Similarly, Nigel Thomas argues that "One way of regaining or refashioning a mother tongue is to create a language vested with one's history, one's own story" ("Caliban's" 73). Yet, before the English language can be successfully turned into a mother tongue, there is the need to reconcile the imbalance between the word and the i-mage, so the images behind the words are re-created "newly" (*She Tries* 21). For this language represents histories of displacement, oppression and legacies of resistance. As Philip writes: "If the language is to continue to do what language must do; if it is to name and give voice to the i-mage and the experience behind that i-mage, then the experience must be incorporated in the language and the language must begin to serve the re-creation of those i-mages (*She Tries* 20).

Indeed, according to Philip, not only must the new language be cleaned of its racist and patriarchal undertones as such, but it also needs to be rooted in place, as language and place must interpenetrate and allow access to one another:

> What must be done appears paradoxical: we, as poets, must so use a language, whose primary purpose vis-à-vis the New World African was to destroy, exclude, deny, subjugate or marginalize—never to affirm—that at least we "leave a trace in the language, and leave it more ready" for a new language—one rooted in place. When the poet begins to see place from the perspective of one who lives within, not without, as that *from* which as not *about* which one writes, this process has begun. Language and place must interpenetrate and allow access to each other. (*A Genealogy* 65; emphasis on original)

In this vein, in "Meditations on the Declension of Beauty by the Girl with the Flying Cheek-bones," Philip takes issues with the English language, in order to re-articulate her black beauty:

> If not in yours
>
> In whose
>
> In whose language
>
> I am
>
> If not in yours
>
> Beautiful (53)

We see, then, that here, the voice of the white male reader has been silenced by Abiswa, Philip's persona, who is re-voicing and using the English language in a way that does not dehumanize her. Furthermore, from using the language as a subversive device, Philip also comes to the travestia, the transformational potential that lays waiting at the other side of transgression. This transformation is nowhere more visible than in the seven poems comprising the cycle "Cyclamen Girl." In the opening of this cycle, the first poem entitled "The Catechist" stages an adult woman looking back at her picture as a young girl in "black and white," caught between blurred images of "massa and master" (38). Philip's juxtaposition of the two terms "black and white," which symbolize Caribbean culture and Christianity, suggests that her two readers John and Abiswa stand in equal footing. In "Vows," the young girl now adorned in whitness: "White satin ribbons/ White / cotton sox /White / Bata shoes /... White / satin –cotton confirmation dress," is shown ready to promise "the triple lie" (41). Here, Christianity has written out the Caribbean context, in the ways in which the young girl is shown to have deserted anything that might relate her to her African heritage. Her "body broken" is described in "The Communant" as being displaced by "His blood," meaning the Christ's blood (44). The forces of Christian indoctrination is such that the cyclamen girl is reduced to a "duded dumb/can't-get-the focus-right reality/ of mullato dougla nigerandcoolie that escaped the so-called truth of the shutter ("Eucharist Contradictions" 39).Yet, near the end of the cycle, in the poem evocatively titled

"Transfiguration," the cyclamen girl turns to her African heritage in order to perform a symbolic act of self-renaming: "In the ceremony of White/The Cyclamen girl would answer/ To her name/ Aphrodite!", and with the power of African drums, she will answer to her other names: "Mary," "Atebey," "Orehu," Yemoja," and "Oshun" (43). Moreover, by displacing the blood of the Christ for the cyclamen girl's "first menses," Philip succeeds in "displacing Him," as Naylor suggests *(184).* In his review of A *Genealogy*, George Elliott Clarke praises Philip for rejecting the aristocratic notion that intellectuals should eschew vulgar nationalistic and feminist political passions and instead use a fierce intellectuality and experiences such as birth and menstruation to scorn imperialism and racism.

## (UN)SILENCING THE BODY: The Redemptive Powers of Weaving

> There were two separate strand or threads—word and silence—each as important as the other. To weave anything I first had to make the separation, I needed to find my own Silence (...) I clung to my anger for a long time—it was very hard to let go of it—but when I began to give it up to the Silence around me, my fingers, as if of their own accord, began to weave. (...) I was finding *my own power of transformation*" (Philip, *Looking for Livingstone* 54; emphasis mine)

Philip's quest for voice does not obliterate other forms of communication and expression such as silence or memory, the bodymemory of the black women in the Afrospora. For her, in order to read the texts that lay "missing" in the silence of the inner space, there is a need to coin a new language, a language made of words as well as silences: like the language of jamettes, "who possess both their inner and outer space". In "Entering the Silence: Voice, Ethnicity, and Pedagogy of Creative Writing," Richard Teleky writes: "Whether as arms, grammar, vocabulary, genre, or space, silence allows writers to transform their own battles with language in crucial acts of self-discovery that shape their voices. Representations of silence signal the start of this process, which ends in language. Likewise, Muriel Rukeyser wrote, 'silence is become speech'" (109). Contrary to the first notion of silence identified in the first section of this chapter, the silenced of the oppressed female body, this new form of silence becomes "a language of its own," as Trinh Minh-Ha writes in *Woman Native Other* (8), a speaking silence. At this stage of the narrative, silence thus no longer means repression but resistance, for as Philips says, "holding on to your

silence is more than a state of non-submission. It is resisting" (8). Moreover, Naylor suggests that by "displacing the word with silence," Philip turns the body, which was previously the material site of history, into a weapon for re-voicing, which allows her to create "a textual 'space' in which the body speaks through the word rather than the word speaking through the body" (192). Indeed, for Naylor: "if history's holes are to be made visible.... To revenge/ the self/ broken/ upon/ the word ... one song would bridge the finite in silence/... one word erect the infinite in memory (192).

Even though Philip's account of the place of the black woman in a capitalist neo-colonial system and modernity has mostly been enacted as a site of multiple displacements, both discursive and physical; she nonetheless signals the power of memory and the agency of resistance inscribed in her texts. Through an intergenerational bodymemory passed down from generation to generation, Philip puts pressure on various sites of oppression such as place, voice and language. Furthermore, since "the historical construction of the black female body has been mapped by both slavery and capitalist exploitation as a site of oppression and suffering, it is through the body that reclamation of the lost experience, language and identity must be made. Also, foregrounding the vital potentiality of memory in fomenting resistance, Philip asks "without memory can there be history?" (97). Like the tapestry of Philomena which has allowed her to weave the identity of her rapist in her artwork, Philip also foregrounds the redemptive powers of weaving. Resorting to "weaving," like Celie's quilting in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Philip is able to transcend her desire for revenge and her anger, thanks to the transformative power of weaving[46]. The "weaving," just like the "healing" silence embodied in Adrienne Rich's

[46] In her analysis of Alice walker's *The Color Purple*, Martha J. Cutter comments that: "buried within this myth of patriarchal subjugation (...) there is a subtext that focuses on how women can 'speak' across and against the limits of patriarchal discourse," (162) and that by having Celie learn to write and sew, Walker succeeded in "deconstructing the binary oppositions between the masculine and the feminine, the spoken and the silenced, the lexical and the graphic" (164):

> Since the pen symbolizes phallic discourse, and the needle the tool of a woman's oppression, then, by blurring the pen and the needle, as seen in Celie's acquisition of both tools, walker succeeds in "reconfiguring the myth of Philomena," and thus " overturns the master discourse and the master narrative of patriarchal society" (Marder 164).

"Speaking silence," also embodies some redemptive potential. By transforming the "black hole," the space between the legs of the black woman into a "whole," Philip invokes the power of re-voicing language to inscribe resistance in her text. Usually the site of repression and oppression, Philip, just like Brand and Silvera, seems to be suggesting that the body also functions as the means through which the agency of resistance, and therefore liberation, is sought out. The body becomes the written text that Philip uses to interrupt and reverse the negative connotation in patriarchal and colonialist languages:

> Silence c(o)unt /ours the inner space!
> textbody—
> body as text
> body inscribed
> on text
> on body
> to interrupt
> disrupt
> erupt
> the text of the new world
> is a text of
> a history of
> inter/uptions
> of bodies
> a body of interruptions
> of bodies of interred
> eruption
> how to interrupt
> disrupt
> erupt

the body
of the text
to allow
the silence
in erupt (*A Genealogy*100).

Like the body of Naomi, which in her reading of Joy Kogawa's Obasan, Smaro Kamboureli analyzes as "a memory site where the construction of race, gender, sexuality and nationalism are implicated in each other while remaining distinct dimensions in her formation as a subject" (177), Philip's female body functions as a bodymemory within which the potentiality of resistance is inscribed. The "corporality of diasporic subjectivity" thus becomes not only a product and a reflection of historical events, in the ways in which the body's visuality and physicality become its pathological condition, but also as a very "site of resistance" (Kamboureli x). That is why Philip has noted that "there was a profound eruption of the body into the text of *She Tries Her Tongue*" because she uses this body as a corporeal text through which to disrupt the functional place of the black woman. As she writes in "Managing the Unmanageable":

> When the African came to the New World she brought with her nothing but her body and the memory and history which this body could contain. The text of her history and memory were inscribed upon and within the body which would become the repository of all the tools necessary for spiritual and cultural survival.... body, text, history, and memory--the body with its remembered and forgotten texts is of supreme importance in both the larger History and the little histories of the Caribbean. I believe this to be one of the reasons why the body erupted so forcibly and with such violence in the text of *She Tries*[...]. (298-9)

That the body might become tongue (98), besides her role as a textual discursive strategy, is what Philip has aimed for, by having the female body invade her text so powerfully. By staging the body into the written text, Philip disrupts its traditional role as a colonial/postcolonial possession, and instead of being acted upon, the body becomes its

own agent. In the same way that Philomena "writes the mutilated body (Marder 161). Philip rewrites the female body as the text through which her story is woven. The "Body becoming text" inscribes itself, as Philip affirms, "permanently on the European text," not on the margins, but within the "very body of the text where silence exists" (Genealogy 95):

> That body speaks when silence is
> ... might I like Philomena sing
> Songwordspeech
> Might I...like Philomela...sing
> continue
> over
> into
> ...pure utterance (*She Tries* 98)

## CHAPTER FIVE MAKEDA SILVERA

## Makeda Silvera: On Publishing and Positing New Knowledge

An acclaimed novelist, short story and essay writer, Makeda Silvera is also an editor who co-founded Sister Vision Press, one of the first presses in North America dedicated to publishing writing by and about women of colour. Silvera is also an activist who was involved with the United African Improvement Association and the African Liberation Society before withdrawing from these movements because of their limited views on gender and sexuality. Silvera's challenges on the way to her early accomplishments surfaced well before she had access to publishing. In fact, they can be traced back to the 1970s when her children's stories were being rejected for publication. Echoing other Caribbean Canadian female contemporaries, Silvera talks about the vacuum of black women's literature in mainstream Canadian culture during the 1970s, how there were no real role models, except for a few black American authors, and how for Black Canadian women in Canada, Toronto was just like a "vacant parking lot" (*The Other Woman* 412). Because of this invisibility and silencing of Black Canadian women's experiences in Canada, Silvera's oeuvre is an exploration of the socio-economic and political constraints that characterize the lives of black women in Canada, as well as in the Caribbean.

Silvera's literary career was ignited with her work as a reporter in the early 1970s; she spent over five years working with the black community newspapers in Toronto. She then produced two short stories: *Remembering G and Other Stories* (1990), and Her *Head a Village and Other Stories* (1994). Silvera has edited a number of anthologies: *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian-of-Colour Anthology* (1991), the first lesbian of colour anthology in North America; *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature* (1994); *Ma-ka, Diasporic Juks: Contemporary Writing by Queers of African Descent* (1997); and *Fireworks: The Best of Fireweeds* (1986). Silvera has also co-edited

*The Issue is 'Ism: Women of Color Speak Out* (1989) and she has written the notable essays: *Growing up Black: a Resource Manuel for Black Youth* (1989), and "Man Royals and Sodomites" published in the anthology *Piece of my Heart*. Written in 1987, "Man Royals and Sodomites" is an early exploration of an Afro-Caribbean lesbian presence lesbian among the diasporic community in Canada and in the Caribbean, and talks about the utter discrimination lesbians face in that society. Published in 2002, Silvera's first novel, *The Heart Does Not Bend*, is also focused on denouncing the position of black women within Canadian multicultural policies, by uncovering the tale of immigration and exile. Awareness of how the past shaped the present and how history tends to repeat itself coupled with the ways memory and oral history inform this shaping are an important part of Silvera's work. Her oral herstory, *Silenced: Talks with Working Class West Indian Women About Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* was published in 1989.

Drawing on life experience, Silvera writes about ordinary people and everyday life. She contends: "Because I am a Caribbean woman of African descent, of working-class background, a lesbian, a mother, some but not all of my characters are too" (Makeda Silvera *The Other Woman : Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature* xi). In this vein, the story "Caribbean Chameleon," from *Her Head a Village*, is a dramatization of Silvera's personal experience as a Jamaican Canadian woman who has been living in Canada for more than twenty years; she was searched and arrested (when she protested) on a return to Canada at Pearson International Airport on a return flight from Jamaica, her home country. Contrary to the misconception of Canada as the "land of milk and honey," this dramatization reveals the "racist and sexist policy of the Canadian Immigration Department," as Silvera describes it (*Silenced* vii). At the image of Silvera's real life experience, the experience of the heroine of *Caribbean Chameleon* reveals the vulnerability of the black female body at the mercy of the immigration officers. While the tourists lining in front of her pass the immigration process without problem, the Jamaican domestic worker is immediately viewed with suspicion:

> "Did you stay with family? "No mam, I visit dem, but I stay in a hotel." "Hotel?" "Yes mam." "Take off your glasses, please." Officer look lady in black polka dot pant suit up and down. "What date did you leave Canada for Jamaica? Woman in black polka dot pant suit start breathing hard. "I have me landed papers right here." "Open your suitcase, please." Suitcase get search. Hand luggage search. Sweat running down woman black face. Line long behind her. Officer call for body search. Woman in black polka dot pant suit trembling. Head start itch. Line longer. Black and white in line. Woman in black polka dot pant suit sweating with embarrassment. (*Her Head a Village* 31)

Silvera transposes her own anger through the voice of the Jamaican domestic worker, who started to lose her temper faced with this discriminatory treatment. Since she cannot voice her emotion through English, she started the "talking of tongues," which frightens the officers. Their response is that this woman is mad:

> Mad woman tek over. Officer frighten like hell. Don't understand di talking of tongues. Call for a body search in locked room. Black polka dot woman don't wait. Tear off shirt. Tear off jacket. Tear off pants. Polka dot woman reach for bra. For drawers. Officer shout for Royal Canadian Mounted Police to take mad woman away. "TAKE HER AWAY. TAKE HER AWAY." Take this wild savage. Monster. Jungle beast. "AWAY. Arrest her for indecent exposure." Woman in black polka dot pant suit foam at the mouth. Hair standing high. Head-wrap drop off. Eyes vacant. Open wide. Sister. Brother. Cousin. Mother. Aunt. Father. Grandparent. Look the other way. (32)

Several months after her "hellish nightmare" at Pearson International Airport, Silvera tries to transpose her experience into a story, but she could not find the words. A year later, the words still would not come, as she says. However, when she gets back to Jamaica she begins to "see the story." What she realizes was that she was trying to tell that story in Standard English; that is why she could not find the means to tell the story for:

> The characters would not have it. They were Jamaican. The woman was angry, and her anger could not be expressed in Standard English – it didn't have the words, and the story would not make sense unless I wrote it in patwah. ("The Characters Would Not Have it" 415)

## "Imperialist Economies": Locating The Body Within Capitalist Perspectives

> I am a feminist, but I would hesitate to define myself as a feminist fiction writer. My fiction is not an attempt to champion a cause. If it does, then it's not deliberate. It's about me keeping sane, my attempt to understand things around me, make some sense of them. It's about unlocking pain and anger and giving them `nuff respect. (Silvera, Conversation 1)

Like Brand who has claimed a multi layered identity, as a woman, a black person, and a lesbian, Makeda Silvera also reclaims her multiple identities as a black lesbian woman, which links to who she is and her sense of belonging. This intersectional identity can be seized, neither by an all-feminist perspective that homogenizes the category 'woman' and empties it of its other constituencies, nor by a male-focused diasporic approach which privileges patriarchal notions of identity. Throughout this thesis, I have uncovered that since neither mainstream feminism nor diasporic formulations can encompass their multiple identities, African Caribbean women like Silvera, search for other kinds of feminist practices such as transnational feminist studies. This chapter on Silvera draws on the transnational feminist refusal to collapse forms of displacements in mystified ways. In this context I prefer use of the term "migrancy" to "exile," as a way of conveying how women's migration is most often due to economic hardships, and has then to be distinguished from the intellectual exile Belinda Edmonton refers to as "the Scholarship Boys" in *Making Men*. Because it also appears in poststructuralist appropriation of nomadic experience, a postmodernist transnational feminist conception of travel and displacement, accounts for the very materiality of postmodernity that the master narratives of male critics of postmodernity (discussed in chapter two) fail to do.

As seen in Philip's challenge to some modernist writers for their lack of materialism and historicity, Silvera also confronts the evasion of history and materialism in her engagement of postmodernity, not as an "aesthetic game," but as "a set of economic and cultural relationships that produce specific discourses of space, time and subjectivity in a particular time period and in relation to multiple locations" (Kaplan 11). What is also often

lacking from Caribbean male theorizations of postmodernism is the acknowledgement of the ways in which displacement is impacted by gender and class, and not only by race and national origin. But mainstream feminism is itself not exempt from its own neglect of the fate of racialized women in globalization, even for feminists using Marxist theories, for as Bryson notes, the failure to analyze the signification of racism is a common failing thought, from which feminists using Marxist concepts have certainly not been immune (23). Bryson maintains however, that even if few feminists talk in terms of class struggle and the overthrow of capitalism, and even if "moderate forms of socialism are on the defensive in a political environment that has moved sharply to the right in most of the western world," it is nonetheless true that "issues of economic inequalities are now part of mainstream feminist politics and debates," and the "general socialist perception that feminist issues cannot be isolated from their socio-economic context remains an important starting point for an effective feminist politics" (24). However, as a whole, the various analyses (white and black men's theorization of postmodernity, mainstream feminism's attention to class oppression) divert attention away from the capitalist exploitation of the labour of poor black women, such as the material realities of the migrant women that Silvera discusses in *Silenced.* Instead of undertaking a study of working class women in a universal and homogeneous way, Bryson suggests using more materially-grounded theories in order to apprehend the specificity of women's oppression:

> Used with caution, Marxist feminism can therefore provide a useful guard against the kind of individualism that finds it difficult to see collective interests and structured inequalities, the elitism that fails to recognize inequalities of class, race as well as gender... the ahistorical belief that all women are the victims of an unchanging male oppression. (29)

It seems to me that Silvera's texts partake of the historically informed socialist ideology, which advocates looking at the situation of "those at the bottom– that is working class black women" (*Silenced* 34). Thus, this chapter on Silvera recalls the earlier argument made by Caren Kaplan about the need to resist the current tendency that collapses various forms of displacement into an undifferentiated aesthetic of travel. That is what Kaplan

called for with Inderpal Grewal, in *Scattered Hegemonies*, when they both warn about the implications of only engaging the cultural and literary styles of the postmodern while ignoring the concrete and material reality of postmodernity. Relegating then the postmodern aesthetics as the domain of male high theorists, Kaplan reiterates the relevance of postmodernity as a strategic analytical tool for transnational feminist practices (10). As Mohanty has done in her theorization of postmodernity as a set of "multiple, fluid structures of domination which intersect to locate women differently at particular historical conjunctures," while at the same time emphasizing their "dynamic oppositional agency," or Aihwa Ong's theorization of the "labour politics of postmodernity" that addresses the structural inequalities created by global capitalism (Qtd in *Questions of Travel* 18), a feminist transnational focus on postmodernity cannot ignore the material realities that the modernist narratives of displacement overlook.

Engaging Caren Kaplan's argument that the term exile as it is currently being used owes little to the urgency and crisis involved in mass displacements, such as those undertaken by the Caribbean migrant women workers in *Silenced*, I try to make a distinction between 'masculinist exile' and 'female migrancy'. As Inderpal Grewal has done in her insightful book *Home and Harem*, in which she problematizes exile as a form of Eurocentrist imperialist formation, Caren Kaplan also distinguishes between modernist exiles and postmodernist migrancies. By refusing to collapse forms of displacement such as exile, tourism, and nomadism with the mass migration of refugees and immigrants engendered by modernity, Kaplan argues that a historicization of the various metaphors of travel in circulation in contemporary theory is needed in order to achieve more meaningful critical practices. Here, a politics of location can help; as Kaplan then advocates seeing location as a place "in relation to history," in order to engage displacement in a historically and politically viable way (25-26). In this vein, *Silenced* historicizes displacement, through the use of oral history, which enables Silvera to unravel how Canada was, in the past, involved in forms of abuses such as the Domestic Scheme, which legalized the exploitation and mistreatment of Caribbean migrant women. So rather than using mystified notions of

displacements that evade such forms of displacement as immigration, deportation, indenture and slavery, Kaplan suggests the historicization of displacement, and like Rich and Brand have done, to see how "a place on the map is also a place in history". Relying thus on this postcolonial transnational feminist approach, I have read Silvera's work through a transnational perspective, by specifically examining how imperialism collides with patriarchy in the lives of her female characters.

## The Regulated Body

> If the body is not a "being," but a variable boundary a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, then what language is left for understanding this corporeal enactment, gender, that constitutes its "interior" signification on its surface? (ButlerGender Trouble)

> The body has been made so problematic for women that it has often seemed easier to shrug it off and travel as a disembodied spirit. (A. Rich Of Woman Born)

In *Lyric Interventions*, Linda Kinnahan argues that "For women of African descent in the Americas, like Philip, "a history of self's definition—or erasure is intimately linked to the apprehensions of the black female body" (80). This also holds true for Silvera. Indeed, as Brand and Philip have done, Silvera also locates the black female body in terms of historical violence. For her, the body too, is the site through which multiple subjugations intersect. Similar to ways Elizete's body was invaded by both patriarchy and imperialism, and Philip's account of the several exploitations of the raced and gendered female body, Silvera also declares that as "the sisters, daughters, mothers of a people enslaved by colonialists and imperialists," black women have been for "three hundred years of history" burdened with "the memory and the scars of racism and violence" ("Man Royals and Sodomites" 529). However, since the body cannot repudiate its past, black women still carry and reproduce the stigma of violence and discrimination, just by dwelling in their body. How to inhabit a body, female, black, and sometimes lesbian, is then a central concern in this chapter on Silvera's writings.

My discussions in this chapter will be looked at under two main themes. First, I localize the black female body within a class and economic perspective, by exploring how it is exploited in the context of female migrant labour. As Sonali Perrera asks, are we entitled to speak of a collective "subject of feminism within economic globalization," when we know that women's community is fractured along lines of class, besides race and sexual orientation? (1). By addressing citizenship exclusionary practices toward its "outsiders," in this case Caribbean Canadian immigrant women; by raising questions such as: who is a member of the nation? And how is citizenship affected by race, gender, national origin and sexuality, this chapter argues that citizenship is not only a gendered concept, but also a racialized one.

Using oral stories and the power of rememory, Silvera undertakes in *Silenced* an historical analysis of female domestic work in the context of Canada's Domestic Scheme policy that legalized the oppression and exploitation of Black Caribbean women. Due to its similarity with Dionne Brand's own project in *No Burden to Carry*, in which Brand also interviews black domestic workers, this chapter draws a parallel between Silvera's *Silenced* and Brand's *No Burden to Carry* in the ways in which both works outline how the gender and racial origin of these domestic workers influence their rights to citizenship by hindering their aspiration toward upward social mobility. The commentary will also largely draw on Dionne Brand's work as a critic, in her essay "A Working Paper on Black Women in Toronto: Gender, Race and Class," in Himani Bannerji's edited anthology *Returning the Gaze, Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics.*

The second theme of this chapter deals with the search for 'home', both in the Caribbean and within the migratory space represented by Canada, which Silvera explores with her character Molly in *The Heart Does Not Bend*, and with her own personal life in her essay "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians." For Silvera, if the heart does not bend, the body certainly does: bending in the abusive heterosexual relationship, in another woman's kitchen, bending for the rape...Yet, even though the broken heart cannot fix itself, the body can "unbend" itself, and become

the locale through which to absolve the harms done to it. Thus, in the first instance we will examine how the body bends itself under the weight of racism, sexism and homophobia as represented by the protagonist Molly and by Silvera's own recollections from her essay "Man Royals and Sodomites." Then, we will see how by using the lesbian body, Silvera allows her character and reflections on herself to "unbend" their body, by using their sexuality as a source of empowerment. Even if Molly does, ultimately, yield under the weight of societal expectations, Silvera does not. By choosing to openly pursue a lesbian relationship and identity, Silvera reclaims the power and the right to live an alternative sexuality outside the confine of normative and prescriptive sexualities.

## Marginal Citizenships: Female Migrant Labour in Globalization

> Today, Marx's ghost needs a stronger offering than Human Rights with economics worked in, or the open-ended messianicity of the future anterior, or even "responsibility" (choice of being-called) in the Western tradition. The need is to turn toward ethical practices—cares of others as cares of the self—that are defective for capitalism. Spivak (Can the Subaltern Speak?)

> "Oral historians can learn from these testimonies because the documents bring into the forefront the lived experience of the voiceless" (Silenced *viii)*

Women from Mexico and Central America are moving into the households of working families in the United States, Indonesian women to richer nations in Asia and the Gulf region, Sri Lankan women to Greece and Gulf region, Polish women to Western Europe, Caribbean women to the United States and Canada, finally Filipino women the world over (*Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes* 23). This observation from Rhacel Salazar Parreñas illustrates how, under the economic pressures of globalization, the global reach of late capitalism is producing what Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo calls the "new world domestic order" (xxvii), the flow of migrant domestic workers from poor nations to richer ones, in the hope of securing a more stable life, and in so doing exacerbating the inequality between the south and the north.Unlike the forced displacement of African people under the harsh capitalist imperialism of slavery, this displacement under equally harsh economic postmodernity might seem voluntary. In

this part of the chapter, therefore, I will resituate the debate of domestic work within the context of globalization, by examining how the political economy of globalization might engage in trafficking in women's labour, and hence whether Mohanty's allegation that the 'first world' depends on 'third world' labour to function, is still valid. This section thus turns the lens to the strategic importance of gender, race and class in globalization, by affirming the political priority of locating them within contemporary capitalist economic relations (Watson 2003). Indeed, Mohanty observes that in a world system in which corporate capitalism has redefined citizens as consumers, and where the global markets have come to replace the commitments to economic, sexual, and racial equality, there is a great need to demystify, re-examine, and theorize the political economy of globalization. As Mohanty further claims, "Many global cities now require and completely depend on the service and domestic labour of immigrant and migrant women" ("Under Western Eyes Revisited" (246) :

> It is especially on the bodies and lives of women and girls from the Third World/South-theTwo-Thirds World-that global capitalism writes its script, and it is by paying attention to and theorizing the experiences of these communities of women and girls that we demystify capitalism as a system of debilitating sexism and racism and envision anticapitalist resistance. Thus any analysis of the effects of globalization needs to centralize the experiences and struggles of these particular communities of women and girls. (235)

Since the global economic and political processes are becoming more brutal, exacerbating economic, racial, and gender inequalities, a transnational feminist analysis should concern itself with the fate of migrant domestic workers in globalization by addressing the vexed relationship between gender studies and globalization studies, which has led to the reluctance to address how globalization and gender may be related (Staeheli et al. 127). Silvera's *Silenced* is one such analysis that takes issue with the fate of domestic workers in globalization. This work is regarded as displacing a reading of home in purely deterritorialized forms in the Deleuzian sense, "from margin to centers," in the ways in which in this oral narrative, the women rather move "from margin to margin" *(Kaplan 359-*

*367)*. Much like the collections of essays We are Rooted Here: They Can't Pull Us Up, *Silenced* developed out of the vacuum that is the history of Black people in Canada, and Black women in particular, which is missing from the pages of mainstream Canadian history. Silvera's intervention in *Silenced*, then, is aimed at addressing these critical gaps in "Canadian herstory."[47]

Like Elizete in *In Another Place*, the women in the book, Noreen, Julie, Angel, Savitri, Hyacinth, Molly, Myrtle, Irma, Primrose, and Gail, are never heard from. When we do hear about them, it is only via impersonalized statistics. Silvera thus directs her intervention as a means for facilitating the entry of these women into the public sphere, so they can become "makers of their own history rather than merely the subjects of the recorders of history" (*Silenced* 16). By bringing to the surface the voices of these excluded Black women, Silvera writes against the reification of master narratives by giving these unheard of women the chance to speak their own stories rather than continuing to only be spoken of. She observes, "We rarely hear about women like Molly, Irma, Myrtle, Hyacinth or Angel, and when we do learn about their hopes, struggles, and vision, it is often heard through the words of others" (18). By using oral history as methodology, Silvera then responds to Tamari Kitossa's call that feminist historiography represents the struggle to write women into history as agents of their own making and as members of social collectivities.[48]

Silvera contends in her essay, "Speaking of Women's Lives and Imperialist Economies: Two Introductions from *Silenced*," that in their first-person perspectives, the oral testimonies of these women disrupt the myth of Canada as a benevolent country (242). She notes the misconception of Canada as a refuge for Third World people is reinforced by "airline advertisements, domestic agencies, weekly dramas on television" that present North America as the Promised Land. What is never talked about, however, is "the

---

[47] In her project, Silvera interviewed women who were working as domestic workers and facing great ordeals because of their temporary situation which exposed them to various exploitation and injustices.

[48] See her essay in Njoki Nathani Wane, Erica Lawson and Katerina Deliovsky, *Back to the Drawing Board : African-Canadian Feminisms* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002).

widespread prejudice they will come up against in Canada and the racism imbedded within a system which thrives on the labour of women of colour from third world countries," or the cases of women who are brought to Canada to work "virtually as legal slaves in the homes of both wealthy and middle class Canadian families" (243). Quoting Nakano Glenn, Charmaine Crawford writes that it is the racialization of black women's labour from a colonial past that has largely contributed to them being ghettoized (to borrow Dionne Brand's term), in domestic and other underpaid jobs. This is a past embedded in space where imperialist domination has subjugated the black female and privileged a Eurocentric social order. Practically on call twenty-four hours a day, these women work seven days a week as domestic servants for as little as $200 a month:

> Right now my day begins at around 5 a.m.... sometimes after 7 p.m. you want to put on your sleep clothes, but it is not possible because sometimes at 10 p.m. they calling you to feed the eight month old baby if he wake up. Then when the children sick when they have the cold, it's me who have to get up, not either their mother and father. (17)

This real life story that Silvera records here, is again characterized in the story of her fictional character Punsie:

> Punsie say she and the people dem baby sleep on the same floor and every time that baby wake up, two, three times at night, she have to get up and feed it. If the baby miserable and won't go back to sleep, she have to stay up. She would say, "Yuh tink that mother would get up and come attend to her child? No, for di work horse can do it. 'Cause I sure she hear her baby crying at night. And di husband, he just as bad, for if him coffee and breakfast don't ready by 7 a.m., mi in trouble." She would suck her teeth and ask me in disgust, "Yuh think Canada sweet?" (41)

The women in the book were all driven by the difficult conditions under which they were living in the Caribbean. As Crawford analyzes,

> By the mid-1980s, Caribbean economies were collapsing under World Bank/International Monetary Fund implemented structural policies that brought on increased social malaise, poverty, inflation, and unemployment. Going abroad or foreign became even more pressing for working-class

> African-Caribbean women who sought economic opportunities elsewhere in lieu of sending back remittances to support their weakened households (78).

Primrose, one of the women interviewed in *Silenced* confides to Silvera. She argues, "when I came to this country, I came with three intentions—to help my kids, to go to school to better myself, and to go to work and save money. But now that I'm here, I find that you can neither save money, go to school, nor send your kids" (11). Primrose's disillusionment comes from the fact that no one told them that they would be facing discriminatory laws such as the impossibility of taking courses that would allow them to do other jobs than caring. This is done in order to categorize these women to what Dionne Brand terms "dirty work": "White employers see the type of work that Black women do as "natural," as what they were born to do, and it is expected that Black women will "make do." ...Much extra work gets wrung out of Black women because of their designated place in society" (Bannerji 272).

If these narratives come from migrant women under limited visas, Dionne Brand's *No Burden to Carry* presents oral stories of Canadian-born women of African ancestry with experiences starkly similar. In this socio-historical work, Brand recollects the tales of fifteen elderly black working women living in Ontario from the 1920s to the 1950s. Just like Silvera in *Silenced*, what led Brand to engage in this oral project is her observation of the particular plight of these black women, caught at the intersection of imperial and patriarchal oppressions. Different time, same s/place, same ruptured history. What makes these black working women's condition compelling is that they are neither taken into consideration within the agenda of mainstream feminist theory, nor in the agenda of black male theorists. For if, on the one hand, the sexual division of labour is subsumed under the racial division of labour, on the other hand, race is "conflated and narrowed" to its male members (*No Burden* 12). Even though, with one exception, all these women were Canadian born, their colour ghettoized them into "racialized, segregated, female employment" in the domestic sphere. When admitted into the industrial labour and clerical work, racism was such that these women were invariably assigned "dangerous" tasks that

involved manipulating "high explosives," or making grenades (*No Burden* 22). Two of the women interviewed by Brand recollected how their race affected their aspirations toward more upward social mobility:

Eleanor H.:

> (...) When I left high school and was looking for a job I used to think I was good in figures. I took a dressmaking course because they already told me that nobody was going to hire me anyhow (...) So I figure out I'd settle with dressmaking, but when I got out of school I decided I didn't want to do that—I would like to try something else; I would like to work in a bank. So I got the phone book and I wrote down the number of all the branches downtown—Bay, Yonge, King, Adelaide, that whole bit – and I phoned each one: "Are there any jobs available?" "Oh yes."
>
> Esther H.:
>
> "Are you prepared to hire a Negro?" "Oh no!" You would ask so as not to waste your time and because there was carfare to consider. (208)

In another testimony, Grace Fowler narrated how she was routinely denied the possibility of entering non-domestic jobs. After many hours of roaming Toronto's streets in search of a job, she entered a factory with her friend Mrs Doderidge:

> We went in, and as we were walking up to where you have to fill out the applications, I saw this man walk over and say something to the woman. She said, "I'm sorry, we're not taking any more applications today." So I won't argue with that, that's their privilege, but when we went out I said to Mrs. Doderidge, "Let's just wait here for a minute." And there was two white girls walked in behind us and went up to the desk and started filling out applications.
>
> I said, "Let's go on back."
>
> Mrs. Doderidge said, "Oh, no, let's just leave it alone."
>
> I said, "I don't care what you're doing, but I'm going back," and I said to the clerk, "well, since you're reopening applications, I guess I'll fill out an application."

> And the clerk said, "Uh oh, I'm sorry..."
>
> I said, "Now they're filling out. If you don't hire Black why don't you just put it in the paper? Why have us come half-way across the country trying to get a job?"
>
> She said, "Oh, we have Chinese working here. We have Japanese." (185-186)

*No Burden to Carry* challenges the dominant discourses of mainstream feminism and black male history, while it is simultaneously engaged in the discourse of self-representation. Just like Silvera and the women she interviewed in *Silenced*, Brand gives the floor to Violet Blackman, Addie Aylestock and Bertha McAleer who present their stories from their own voices, thereby deconstructing the long-standing assumption that black women should be spoken for. By bringing to the surface the voices of these excluded black women, Silvera and Brand confront and come to terms with the black woman's historical absence. So although postmodern displacements may appear voluntary, the conditions that precipitated the economic degradation of Caribbean society were brought about by capitalist structures of globalization controlled by former colonial empires and other imperialist nations. Just as to historicize the geography of slavery we uncover an economic engine made efficient through oppression and violence inflicted on African slaves, Silvera finds female domestic workers similarly oppressed and suffering much violence.

By presenting these oral narratives of race-bound domestic workers that go against the national tale of inclusion and diversity, Silvera (and Brand) rewrite the national history by deconstructing the seamless narration of state multiculturalism that presents Canada as a country exempt from racism and discrimination. They construct tales of generational displacement of Caribbean women's immigrant experiences in Canada juxtaposed against their African forebears' experiences of slavery. In so doing, they challenge not only the veneer of liberal humanist discourse that shields Canada from acknowledging its treatment of non-white people (Chancy 67), but also the metanarratives of feminist and black male discourses that fail to consider these working class women. Both *Silenced* and *No Burden*

*to Carry* offer a sophisticated analysis of how the exploitation of the black female body is multilayered. By showing how gender collides with race and national origin in order to further compound the fate of these temporary domestic workers, Silvera and Brand answer Mohanty's transnational call that the present global economic situation necessitates that feminists organize themselves against capitalism. As Mohanty writes, "It is then the lives, experiences, and struggles of girls and women of the Two-Thirds World that demystify capitalism in its racial and sexual dimensions-and that provide productive and necessary avenues of theorizing and enacting anticapitalist resistance" ("Under Western Eyes Revisited" 235). Engaging the power that oral history offers -as an empowering tool that seeks to retrieve these forgotten voices, to put them back into mainstream history, *Silenced*, just like *No Burden to Carry*, clearly seems to agree with the implication that "only the subjects can and must tell their stories" (Daenzer "Review of No Burden to Carry" Narratives of ....1920s1950s" 167).

**"I wanted to touch the snow so much"**

Undertaking a historical analysis of female domestic work through the oral history of these women recounted by Makeda Silvera, my thesis now takes a retrospective look at how domestics of colour have been denied citizenship rights in Canada, as a result of their race and origin. If within the Canadian context, British (and other European) women, who immigrated in the 1940's as domestic workers, benefited from citizenship and mobility rights and guaranteed employment, these same rights were subsequently denied to Caribbean and Filipino women, (Daenzer 1997:81; Cohen 2000:79). Consequently, this lack of permanent status exposes the women to more exploitation and discrimination, since it has been established that there is a direct link between the women's lack of status and their abuse, for they are afraid to report their exploitation for fear of losing their right to stay in Canada.

The first full-scale recruitment of West Indian women to Canada was initiated in 1955 by the Canadian government, writes Silvera in *Silenced*. She further explains that the

domestic workers first came under a program known as the Domestic Scheme, which attracted women primarily from the Philippines and the Caribbean. Hundreds of women from Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados came to Canada annually to work as domestic workers through this program. In *Regulating Class Privilege*, Patricia Daenzer notes that European domestic workers who entered Canada earlier were treated as "equals," benefiting from the unconditional right of residency, since they entered the territory as landed immigrants (53). Yet, in 1955, when non-white women began to enter Canada more and more to do domestic work, the right to automatic immigrant status became questionable, as the practices and law began to change in order to exclude non-white women from these rights previously granted to European domestics:

> The only right granted to the Black women domestics from the British West Indies (the Caribbean) upon their arrival in Canada was the right of full landed status. But this was a right in principle only. Unlike the process of inclusion for Germans, Italians, and Greeks, the Cabinet issued a carefully worded decision which set the Black women apart in social status and privilege, and thus redefined their citizenship. (53)

Daenzer reports that the main reason why these domestics of colour were denied the same rights given to their European colleagues is that racial intolerance was widespread in Canada during the 1950s, which caused an "overt anxiety about the process of including the Caribbean Black women in Canadian Society" (54).

By deconstructing how these women's racialized identity prevents them from attaining the same citizenship rights the Canadian government was automatically bestowing on domestic workers from Europe, Silvera conveys the extent to which the Canadian state deploys citizenship as a regulatory weapon of inclusion/exclusion. So here, again, as also from the writings of Brand and Philip, it is the relationships of the former tropes that once again influence the contemporary places of these domestic workers, and which allows for their exploitation as female migrant labourers. Common among acts of exploitation is the sexual abuse of these women who must depend on their employers' goodwill to remain in Canada. The web of meanings attached to the black body of the female slave during

slavery, follows her in the contemporary period, as capitalism builds on the same discourses of racism. The commodification and exploitation of these racialized domestic workers reveals then that corporeal issues are socio-economic issues, because it is the women's' racialized identities that render them vulnerable to state-sanctioned abuse such as the denial of landed immigrant status. In her article "A Treadmill Life: Class and African American Women's Paid Domestic Service in the Postbellum South, 1861-1920," Cecilia Rio notes that the social meaning attached to notions of race, gender, and domestic work were tied to the slave symbolic realm that denied Blacks any ideals of humanity, freedom, equality, and wage labour (98). Yet for Black women, these slave ideals also come with competing notions of femininity that constructed white women as a modern housewife/manager/consumer: "the exalted, yet unpaid, domestic worker (fragile, virtuous, skilled, rational," counterpoised with the subordinate and backward "black" paid domestic serf: "physical, depraved, menial, childish" (101). This analysis, which centralizes itself to the fate of African American domestics in the Postbellum South, nonetheless pertains to the fate of these Caribbean women workers in Canada, whose rights are jeopardized by the social construction of their race and sexualities. In *Returning the Gaze*, Dionne Brand confirms this view in her working paper on migration, labour, gender and the construction of Black[49] women's sexualities: "White femininity played a major role in slavery. Miss Anne—the Southern belle, the pride and purity of the white race—could not have emerged in the absence of the image of Black carnality" (276). Out of these historical characteristics, Brand pursues, Black women have come to be known to be fit for any kind of work, "except the jobs that white men want":

> We have always done manual work, i.e., "non-traditional" work. Our history knows no category called "women's work": there is "white men's work," "white women's work," and "nigger work." "Nigger work" has its roots in

[49] Brand is using the upper case for Black women, so in this part I will use the upper to conform with her choice.

> slavery in the "new world," and in the ascriptions of less-than-human characteristics to Black people as a whole. (275)[50]

In much the same way that slavery in all its brutality and oppression was 'legal' and officially sanctioned by racist imperialist national systems of government, the exploitation of black female domestic workers is also sanctioned by the Canadian state in its refusal to give them status such that would break the dependency on their employers and afford them explicit protection from the organs and institutions of the state. The fact that the women are denied citizenship rights therefore exposes them to abuses from their employers. Once again the black female body is treated as the locus for the deployment of power and the constructivist "thoroughfare" that Philip denounces. For Silvera, the women's precarious status exposes them to even greater exploitation because they will not speak out against their employers for fear of losing their jobs and their work visas, and consequently being deported.

Like Elizete who was raped by her male employer, two of the women in *Silenced* were also raped while working as domestics. Hyacinth describes how she felt someone invading her body, while she was sleeping:

> I remember the first time I think was funny was one night I was sleeping and I feel someone in my clothing, feeling up my private parts.... I jumped because I was frighten and when I look it was him, the man I was working for. I nearly scream out, but he hold my mouth and tell me to be quiet. He smell of alcohol and I don't know where his wife was, but I was late at night... I remember he kept pushing his finger down in my private parts and blowing hard. It really hurt and when I told him so, he asked me if I didn't give birth to one baby already... I remember him telling me that if I have sex with him he would raise my pay. I tell him that I couldn't do that because he was married and his wife was upstairs. He laugh and ask me what Black girls know about marriage. (64)

---

[50] Brand then goes on to quote Hazel Carby who draws a parallel between work and black women's sexualities: "Carby suggests that a deeper look at the reproduction of labour power reveals how Black women's work effects first 'the construction of ideologies of black female sexualities, and second how this role relates to the black woman's struggle for control over her own sexuality" (Carby, 218).

Again, just like Elizete, the only option available to Hyacinth is to move. The only help Hyacinth could get from immigration when she reported the rape was to find another job as soon as she can, if not she will be deported. In *Returning the Gaze*, Dionne Brand elaborates on this issue:

> Just as the slave women were expected to sexually service the male slave owner, so too today's white male employer may feel he has the right to sexual service from "his" domestic worker. Black women employed as domestic workers on the work permit are tied to their jobs and thus reluctant to report sexual assault to either or immigration officials. Furthermore, the domestic worker may find herself confronted with an immigration officer who expects sexual service in payment for favourable attention to a permanent residence application. I know a case where for a year and a half an immigration officer sexually harassed a Black woman, with the threat of deportation if she did not comply. (293)

Brand's concerns are echoed by Macklin Blamley who argues that there is a direct correlation between the temporary status and a domestic worker's vulnerability to abuse (1999:20). This is acknowledged on the Canadian government's 'Status of Women' website. That is why Inderpal Grewal has called for the need to deconstruct state-imposed categories such as legal, illegal, citizen, and alien as they relate to gender, race and sexuality (517). By showing how these domestic workers' precarious status under temporary visas prevent them from attaining full and equal citizenship rights, Silvera addresses citizenship's exclusionary practices in relation to nation-state "outsiders," by explicitly showing how the law condones and allows abusive relationships between these women and their employers.

**"She's a Hassle, but Immigration is also a Hassle": Women Oppressing Women**

By also resituating the domestic worker debate within the context of globalization, my thesis addresses how the global economy and the ever-increasing privatization of the workplace have created the "global care chains" (*Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woesintroduction*) in which some women have been forced to buy the labour of other women with lesser resources, in order to conciliate public

and domestic work. This inequality has in turn jeopardized the notion of transnational solidarity between women, in that the advancement of one group of women occurs at the cost of the lesser advantaged group of women because as Parenas puts it, in order to solve the burden of housework, richer women purchase the low-wage services of poorer women. Indeed, the living standard between women from developed capitalist countries and those living in the Third World has widened and is now incomparable. Thus neo-liberal globalization has enabled rich women to continue the patriarchal impoverishment of other women.

**Housework. A Bond of Sisterhood or a Bond of Oppression?**

Silvera writes in *Silenced*, that she is convinced few people will dispute that housework, whether paid or not, is forced labour, since domestic workers have no choice. Writing in the *International Law Journal*, Virginia Mantouvalou, a lecturer in Law at the University of Leicester, notes that

> While work is central for an individual's sense of fulfillment and self-respect, a further function of one's job is the sense of belonging and social inclusion that it inspires. Isolation, often deliberately created, is one of the primary effects that domestic servitude has upon individuals. (396)

Since 1965 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has conducted research into the particularity of domestic labour, and identified it as a primary instance of forced labour. In a 2005 report the ILO explained that migrant domestic workers are in a particularly precarious position because in order to escape poverty they are forced to take up this type of employment but do not have legal status in the host country and, therefore; employers take advantage of this situation and exploit them. It notes that part of the problem lies in domestic work taking place inside private households, away from scrutiny, and typically excluded from labour market regulations. In commenting on this, Silvera makes reference to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who argued for the removal of domestic work out of the private sphere, to the public one (*Silenced* 124). However, women who are exploited as

domestic workers are entrapped by the space in which they find themselves. Silvera discusses the lack of options that poor migrant female workers have by arguing:

> I have yet to meet an immigrant worker who is willing to stay in this work if other jobs were available to her here or in her home country. Nor have I met anyone who aspired to a life of domestic work as a child or who has dreamed that her daughter would some day take her post. (*Silenced* 123)

The suggestion by Silvera is that domestic labour is forced labour and a form of servitude, yet Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibit slavery and servitude, and forced and compulsory labour is further prohibited by Article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. But though women are the enslaved in this oppressive space, other women are sometimes the ones holding the whip. To unleash the burden of housework, women, as Evelyn Nakano Glenn points out, purchase the low-wage services of poorer women like Irma or Primrose. But as Mary Romero puts it in "Bonds of Sisterhood-Bonds of Oppression," in instances where the employer might be a woman, housework is not a "bond of sisterhood" but instead a "bond of oppression":

> Domestic service reveals the contradiction in a feminism that pushed for women's involvement outside the home, yet failed to make men take responsibility for housework labor. Employed middle- and upper- middle class women escaped the double day syndrome by hiring poor women of color to perform housework and child care, and this was characterized as progress. Some feminists defined domestic service as progressive because traditional women's work moved into the labor market and became paid work. However, this definition neglects the inescapable fact that when women hire other women at low wages to do housework, both employees and employers remain women. As employers, women continued to accept responsibility for housework even if they supervised domestics who perform the actual labor. If we accept domestic service as central to women's oppression, the contradiction, as Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave have pointed out, is that 'every time the housewife buys her freedom for herself with a domestic, that very freedom is denied to the domestic, for the maid must go home and do her own housework.'(128)

Likewise, Hazel V. Carby acknowledges in her essay "Slave and Mistress" that women were not only the subjects but also the "perpetrators of oppression," and that the

"hegemonic control of dominant classes has been secured at the expense of sisterhood" (18). Silvera shares Carby's view, and also argues that in a class of women with "degrees of subordination and domination," the idea of sisterhood is fundamentally challenged. For even where the female employers of racialized domestic workers are themselves members of a subordinate group by virtue of their sex, they are concomitantly members of the dominant group because of race and class privileges (*Silenced* 124).

In her analysis of women as the oppressors, Silvera highlights the dichotomy that can be seen in "woman-as-mistress" and "woman-as-servant". Engaging the transnational concern about how "women participate in and resist their own oppression and the oppression of other women," Silvera outlines how the binary male=oppressor and women=oppressed does not work in the case of these migrant women. For her, the woman-as-mistress and the woman-as-servant relationship is a very complex one and rarely addressed as a topic in contemporary writings by women. Even though they suffer from unwanted sexual advances from male employers, or even rape as shown above, these domestic workers also suffer a great deal from their female employers. Noreen gives us an insight into her relationship with her female employer, a relationship that is fraught with racism and abuse:

> One thing that I don't like though is that I have to wash her nylons and her panties and brassieres by hand. One day she ask me how I was her panties and brassieres and I told her in the washer and she was very rude to me. I remember that night I went to bed and cry out to the Lord to take me out of that house. I remember: she told me that her panties are not like my cloth ones and that this was not the jungle, but civilised North America, telling me that she only wear silk things which have to be hand washed. (27)

At times, the relationship is openly abusive, as the example of Irma illustrates. She describes how her first employer would ask her to go and wash her friend's clothes on her days off: "That woman was driving me like a slave. Is a lot of times when I was supposed to be on my days off that she would send me over to her friend house to wash clothes for them" (94). Even though Irma is aware of her exploitation, she cannot complain to anyone

for fear of being deported. Julia was actually deported because she could not find another job after she complained to immigration about the difficult conditions she was living in. For Silvera, it is only through the woman-as-servant discourse, that we are able to grasp the extent to which this relationship is fraught with inequality:

> I could use the back door to get out and come in and nobody would bother me. Really there were nice people, but I always felt very uncomfortable, because the woman had this attitude that you-are-here-to-be-servant. Let's face it. They are white and elite and I is Black.... So I was treated as know-your-place, you are-here-to-to-this-and-that-is-all-there-is-to-it". (*Silenced* 124)

However, the feminist woman-as-mistress prefers to maintain her silence on this abusive relationship and to ignore this topic. All she can say is that she "has solved the 'housework question' by employing domestic help" (124), whereas her relationship with this domestic help remains unexamined. Patricia Daenzer elaborates on this relationship in "Locating Housework: Between Mistresses and Their Servants":

> An instructive irony assumes centrality in the domestic work policy issue. It concerns women across classes engaging in a similar struggle to gain economic independence and reconstructed social identities. But class location, not gender, defines these interests. There is no strategy of collaboration, nor is there any evidence of what some feminists refer to as sisterhood consciousness (Smith, 1985) among the women located in the policy scenario. The compelling juxtaposition of cryptically silent mistresses against the agony of the immigrant servant women-mothers ruptures feminist analysis about women's condition under the tyranny of patriarchy... ( (Regulating Class Privilege: Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s 7)

Indeed, Daenzer strongly disputes the Marxist idea of women being a universal class exploited by patriarchal capitalism, since in the case of domestic work, women employers assume the same attributes traditionally ascribed to male oppressors, in the ways in which they *own* the labour of their servants (144). Silvera is also of the opinion that regardless of whether the oppressor is man or woman, as long as domestic work will remain under the realm of the private, there is no chance that the exploitation of these domestic workers will be eradicated.

## The Transnational Mother

> But the psychosocial impact of migration is not easy for women, especially for working mothers who have to leave their children behind. African-Caribbean women and their children have had to deal with the difficulty of being separated from each other for long periods of time. Caribbean writers and scholars are attempting to address the issue of family dislocation in their work as result of immigration restrictions and employment marginality experienced by Caribbean in host countries, which have retarded the pace of reunification with their children (Crawford 97).

Like Silvera (and Brand), who was raised by her grandmother, all the women in *Silenced* have left their children under the care of their grandmother. In an article entitled "Global Care Chains," Nicola Yeates cites Arlie Hochschild, who defines the concept of global care chains as a transnational transfers of "motherly" labour, in which "an older daughter from a poor family who cares for her siblings while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a migrating nanny who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country" (131). This feminization of globalization in the ways in which most mothers are forced to leave their children has become a predicament in the Caribbean. In her article "African-Caribbean Women, Diaspora and Transnationality," Charmaine Crawford discusses the ordeal of transnational mothers, like Angel, who are forced to leave their children in the care of someone else, in order to be able to provide them with a better life. As Crawford notes, transnational mothering "calls on female migrants to rearrange mother-child relations in opposition to normative gender standards, as "The public/private dichotomy collapses as migrant mothers simultaneously engage in productive and reproductive activities by remitting money, goods, and services in order to care and provide for their children" (102). Yet the inhumanity of the capitalist system that Canada represents underscores the continuation of the historical dislocation of the African descendant.

*Silenced* also discusses the condition of transnational motherhood. A recurrent complaint that Silvera heard from the women she interviewed is how they are forced to live isolated in Canada, without the possibility of going back to visit their families left behind. I argue that in the same way slavery prevented the black slave woman from mothering her children, contemporary capitalism also produces motherless children in the manner in which it uses the female body for labour. Molly, who left for Canada when her

youngest was nine months old, worries that she will not recognize her when she returns: "Oh God, I miss them. When I left in 1973 my youngest child was nine months old. I know that whenever we meet again he won't even know me. It hurts (34). As for Angel, who had the chance to go and visit her family, it emotionally pains her to remember how hard it was to come back to Canada and have to explain to her children why she cannot stay in Jamaica or take them to Canada with her:

> It hurts so much to leave the kids. When I went back in '81 for Christmas, they were crying and telling me "Don't go back to Canada. Take us with you. We want to be with you. Can't you stay with us?"No, I have to go back. I know you're sad and so am I, but some day you'll understand." Saying that to them, especially the younger ones, really tore my heart . . . I keep saying to my boyfriend, "Listen, we have to make sacrifices. I want something for them, I want them to come here and then[...] whatever they want they can choose, and then I will know that I did my part." (80)

For Myrtle, it is too hard taking care of her employer's children, because it painfully reminds her of her children bereft of their own mother: "She reminds me of my children. Lord only know how much I miss them. All I have of them is pictures for memories. It's really hard you know, working for somebody and looking after their children because every day it's a reminder of your own children" (87).

This predicament that the Caribbean transnational mother faces is widely shared with women from the Philipines who have left their children under the care of others in order to sell their labour in the West, as Parenas discusses in her chapter "Exported Care and Transnational Mothering." Through the voice of Rosemarie Samaniego, a Philipina mother who has left her children beihing to work in Rome, Parenas give us a testimony of the ordeals of transnational mothering:

> When the girl that I take care of calls her mother "Mama," my heart jumps all the time because my children also call me "Mama." I feel the gap caused by our physical separation especially in the morning, when I pack (her) lunch, because that's what I used to do for my children.... I used to do that very same thing for them. I begin thinking that at this hour I should be taking care of my very own children and not someone else's, someone who is not

> related to me in any way, shape, or form.... The work that I do here is done for my family, but the problem is they are not close to me but are far away in the Philippines. Sometimes, you feel the separation and you start to cry. Some days, I just start crying while I am sweeping the floor because I am thinking about my children in the Philippines. Sometimes, when I receive a letter from my children telling me that they are sick, I look up out the window and ask the Lord to look after them and make sure they get better even without me around to care after them. [Starts crying.] If I had wings, I would fly home to my children. Just for a moment, to see my children and take care of their needs, help them, then fly back over here to continue my work. (*Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* 119)

Whether the transnational mother is Caribbean working in Canada, like the women interviewed by Silvera, or Philipina working in Europe, the fate is strikingly similar, the forces of labor, class and gender collude and leave them heartsick and broken. Yet, despite the fact that all these women suffer from being separated from their families, they know that there is no other way, as Rosemarie tellingly says here; she is not longing to abandon her job to go and live with her children, but just to grow some "wings" so that she can go and "see (her) children and take care of their needs, help them," before flying "back over here to continue my work." Indeed, as hard as the separation is, the labour of these women is the only way to guarantee the survival of their children left behind. As Crawford puts it, that is how these mothers can be "here," while being "there" for their children (97).

## In-Between Silence and Resistance: The Lesbian Body in The Heart Does Not Bend

> One feature of lesbian oppression consists precisely of making women out of reach for us, since women belong to men. Thus a lesbian has to be something else, a not-woman, a not-man, not a product of nature (One I Not Born a WomanWittig 13)

> What stories could these lesbians have told us? I *am an Afro-Caribbean* woman living in Canada, come with this baggage their silenced stories. My grandmother and mother know the truth, but silence still surrounds us. The truth remains a secret to the rest of the family and friends, and I must decide whether to continue to sew this cloth of denial or break free, creating and becoming the artist I am, bringing alive the voices and images of Cherry Rose, Miss Gem, Miss Jones, Opal, Pearl and, others.... (Makeda. Silvera 529Man Royals and Sodomite)

Makeda Silvera's *The Heart Does Not Bend* is also focused on denouncing the position of Black women within Canadian multicultural policies, by uncovering contradictions woven within the tale of immigration and exile. Her book is about family loyalty, betrayal and the redemptive power of love. It's also about mother-daughter relationships– explosive with its fears, joys, frustrations and love. Silvera begins by rewriting the idealized and romanticized notions of home and diaspora by showing how sometimes home is *nowhere* for women, a place where patriarchy and narrow and essentialist versions of nationalism deny women any agency. *The Heart Does Not Bend* epitomizes the extent to which a woman has no place in either the patriarchal system of the Caribbean or in the racialized hierarchy of belonging in the space in which they find themselves, their place of exile. In her narrative, which switches back and forth between the Caribbean and Canada, Silvera challenges the male restricted notion of nationalism and sexuality, by analyzing both the Caribbean and Canada as uniquely male spaces.

So, as Brand has done in *In Another Place Not Here*, in *The Heart Does Not Bend*, Silvera contrasts lesbian love and relationships with the brutality of heterosexual relationships, which make lesbian relations appear to be a safe space, the space for women to escape from a brutal heterosexual society. Elizete's rape, and that of Maria and Molly, epitomizes the dryness of heterosexual relationships; and the women only survive in both

works through the compassion and love of another woman. It becomes apparent then, that both Brand and Silvera see lesbian love as not only a safe space, but also as a place of belonging, and as a source of empowerment for downtrodden women. However, they must all fight against the homophobia of a society that considers lesbianism a threat.

As a Black lesbian mother, Molly does not fit within the overtly homophobic Jamaican society. Born to 15-year old Glory, who immigrated to Canada in search of a better future, Molly has been raised by her grandmother Maria, who has lovingly taken care of her. However, when Molly and her grandmother join Glory in Canada, her relationship with her grandmother begins to deteriorate, when the latter learns about her love affair with Rose. When Maria eventually dies, she disowns Molly and leaves everything to her spoiled grandson, Vittorio. The members of the Galloway family reunite in Jamaica in order to hear the reading of Maria's Will, and everyone, especially Molly, is surprised to learn that Maria has disinherited everyone except for Vittorio. Molly is left with a feeling of guilt but also with the realization of the price she has to pay in order to assume her lesbian identity. Even though Molly is her favourite granddaughter, her "questionable" sexual orientation, as Molly puts it, deteriorates their relationship, after Maria realizes that Molly's relationship with Rose goes beyond friendship (195). What upset Molly most is that Maria even bequeathed Vitorrio the house where she grew up with Maria. She lamented: "How could Mama do this? I was her only granddaughter. I was there. I was always there. Vittorio never was, and what does he know of Wiggam Street?" (7). Like Elizete, Molly turns to the land for comfort. As earth-bound as Elizete is in *In Another Place*, Molly has a special affinity with the land. Her love of plants and gardening leads her to undertake botanic studies at the university. Yet, unlike Elizete who decided to pursue her love relationship with Verlia, Molly yields to the weight of the social expectations.

In her essay "Fear of Going Home: Homophobia," in *Borderlands,* Gloria Anzaldúa describes homophobia as the "fear of going back home". This is the very fear Molly is experiencing here. Canada has its own challenges, but this is the only "home" she feels safe enough to express her lesbian relationship with Rose. As Mohanty and Biddy point out,

drawing on Winni Bruce Pratt's essay "Identity: Skin, Blood and Heart," lesbianism becomes what makes "'home' impossible" because the security and comfort that home allows is purchased on the condition of surrendering all notions of difference in order to espouse the stable notions of conformity (202). Indeed, for Pratt assuming a lesbian identity makes her liable to lose the "protection afforded those women within privileged races and classes who do not transgress a limited sphere of movement" (203). Mohanty and Biddy elaborate thus:

> Her lesbianism is precisely what she can deny, and indeed must deny, in order to benefit fully from the privilege of being white and middle-class and Christian. She can deny it, but only at great expense to herself. Her lesbianism is what she experiences most immediately as the limitation imposed on her by her family, culture, race, and class that afforded her both privilege and comfort, at a price. Learning at what price privilege, comfort, home, and secure notions of self are purchased, the price to herself and ultimately to others is what makes lesbianism a political motivation as well as a personal experience. (203)

Similarly, it is their lesbian identity that denies both Silvera and her character Molly the comfort and security of "home." Contemplating her own personal investment, notion of herself and the price for conformity, Silvera wonders whether she must submit to the code of silence and benefit from the "protection" of her family and her community, or come out and pay the price for living as an open lesbian. She describes the extent to which lesbian and gay identity is dreadful in Jamaica:

> In Jamaica, the words used to describe many of these women would be "Man Royal" and/or "Sodomite." Dread words. So dread that women dare not use these words to name themselves. "They were names given to women by men to describe aspects of our lives that men neither understood nor approved." (552)

Kofi Campbell also notes, "The label of 'homosexual' or 'sodomite' in the Caribbean today remains both a "marker of absolute difference" and a "magnet for violence":

> The peripheral position immediately inherent in being named a 'sodomite' also proceeds from the fact that in Caribbean culture in general, homosexuality is seen as something which is, by definition, non-Caribbean.

> Silvera tells of coming out to her grandmother, whose response is this is a white people ting or a ting only people with mixed blood was involved in (510). Skelton reports a conversation with a Jamaican man who assures her that Jamaica did not have such men and if they were there in Jamaica, real Jamaican men knew what to do with such anti-men, kill them (265).

According to Campbell, the prevalent idea that if you are homosexual, you are not Caribbean, is a concept which originates with Frantz Fanon, who argued that because "the Oedipal complex is culturally and psychologically foreign to the West Indies, and that there are no homosexuals in that part of the world" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 180; Qtd in Campbell). In this vein, as far as accepting her sexual orientation is concerned, Jamaica functions as a not-home for Molly, because she vividly remembers how her uncle Mikey was being discriminated against because of his homosexuality:

> Given the intolerance shown to all these different beliefs, I found it unforgivable that they wouldn't accept Mikey's difference. I won't say my difference. The grandaunts and cousins knew little about my personal life back in Canada, for Mama had not mentioned anything about Rose. (227)

Yet even if Molly did not disclose her relationship with Rose, Maria eventually realized their love for each other. Maria's disapproval of that relationship is framed around Christianity, which considers homosexuality a deadly sin, as Maria reminded Molly and Rose every morning, by waking them with a Christian chant: "If you are tired of the load of your sin/ Let Jesus come into your heart; if you desire a new life to begin[...]" (182). When this did not work, Maria eventually confronts Molly: "Ah don't have to tell yu dat it nuh right, a satan work. Him nuh mean yuh no good. Look pon yuh, a nice attractive girl, yuh can get any man out dere, even a husband, and yuh go tek up wid woman. It nuh right. It nuh right" (185). Maria who has already "lost" her son Mikey to a man, is visibly shaken that her granddaughter Molly, who could get any man she likes, and "even a husband," decides to "tek up" with Rose. Indeed, when Maria realizes Molly's sexual identity, she immediately draws a parallel with Mikey's homosexuality: "Look at yuh Uncle Mikey. Yuh had sense and yuh was bright, so yuh know what was going on in we yard. Yuh see de destruction[...] Never forget dat we had to flee because of Mikey and Frank" (186). So

though Molly thought they left Jamaica because her grandmother wanted them to re-connect with Glory, her mother, and also to have a better life, as far as Maria was concerned, their coming to Canada had more to do with fleeing what people thought about her son's homosexuality. Maria did not inform Mikey about her decision to flee Jamaica with Molly until the night preceding their departure. When she finally told her son, Mikey painfully asks her: "How long unnu Know?" he demanded to know, "Dis... is a....conspiracy," to which Maria wilfully replied: "Conspiracy, so yuh call it. Well, mi call it life" (85).

Like Maria, Silvera's own grandmother's reaction to her lesbianism was also rooted in Christian faith: "When, thousands of miles away and fifteen years after school days, my grandmother was confronted with my love for a woman, her reaction was determined by her Christian faith and by this dread word "sodomite"– its meaning, its implication, its history" (523):

> The word "sodomite" derives from the Old Testament. Its common use to describe a lesbian (or any strong independent woman) is peculiar to Jamaica –a culture historically strongly grounded in the Bible. Although Christian values have dominated the world, their effect in slave colonies is particular. Our foreparents gained access to literature through the Bible when they were being indoctrinated by missionaries. It provided powerful and ancient stories of strength, endurance, and hope which reflected their own fight against oppression. This book has been so powerful that it continues to bind our lives with its racism and misogyny. Thus, the importance the Bible plays in Afro-Caribbean culture must be recognized in order to understand the historical and political context for the invisibility of lesbians. The wrath of God "rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah" (Genesis 19:23). How could a Caribbean woman claim the name? (523)

Even though Silvera recalls that the act of loving women was really "commonplace," particularly in working-class communities, the act was nonetheless heavily weighed down with "shame and silence" (524) especially in Kingston. Mixing her voice with those of her grand-mother and her mother, Silvera explores the silenced lives of black Jamaican lesbians who are only able to live under the condition of their silence. Silvera wonders whether she

should continue this politics of silence or live openly as a lesbian woman, with the inherent complications linked to that political choice. Denying her granddaughter's lesbian identity is a way for Silvera's grandmother to protect her, as Silvera realizes:

> It was finally through my conversations with my grandmother, my mother, and my mother's friend five years later that I began to realize the scope of this denial which was intended to dissuade and protect me. She knows too well that any woman who took a woman lover was attempting to walk on fire – entering a 'no man's land' (523).

Indeed, in Jamaica, physical retaliation is not uncommon, for both gay men (and men suspected of being gay) and lesbian women. Silvera recalls a memory of a man: "every night when he was coming home, a group of guys use to lay wait for him and stone him so viciously that he had to run for his life. Dem time, he was safe only in the day" (511). Or, as Silvera recollects, if a group of men suspect a woman of being a "sodomite," they would organize and gang rape her just on the basis of their suspicion (524). They may also use other subtler forms such as "scorning" the women, which means that "you didn't eat anything from them, especially a cooked meal. It was almost as if those accused of being "man royal" or "sodomite" could somehow contaminate food (525). This overt anxiety about lesbianism that these men express is done in order to "consolidate home, identity, community and privilege" (Martin and Mohanty 204).

Silvera analyzes that this fear and violence against lesbians and gay men is connected to the system of enslavement, in which "production and reproduction were inextricably linked," since reproduction not only worked to increase the slave owners "labour force," but it also had another deeper function, which is to facilitate what Silvera calls the process of social control, by "domesticating" the enslaved (529). The dehumanization that slavery represented for the enslaved resulted in a focus on "those aspects in life in which they could express their own desires," one of which was "Sex" (529). Silvera suggests that sex was one of the activities through which the enslaved can prove to themselves that they are human, it becomes a central "power" for people who are

denied any other attributes. Thus under the code of slavery, gender roles as well as the act of procreation become "badges of status":

> To be male was to be the stud, the procreator; to be female was to be fecund, and one's femininity was measured by the ability to attract and hold a man and to bear children. In this way, slavery and the post emancipate colonial order defined the structures of patriarchy and heterosexuality as necessary for social mobility and acceptance. (530)

Jacqui Alexander in her article, "Not Just (Any) Body Can be a Citizen," echoes Silvera grievance against the nation-state that assumes the same role as the former master slaves in regard to sex and procreation:

> Although policing the sexual (stigmatizing and outlawing several kinds of non-procreative sex, particularly lesbian and gay sex and prostitution) has something to do with sex, it is also more than sex. Embedded here are powerful signifiers about appropriate sexuality, about the kind of sexuality that presumably imperils the nation and about the kind of sexuality that promotes citizenship. Not just (any) body can be a citizen any more, for some bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and economic gain. (6)

If Jamaica is not a safe place for lesbians like Molly and Silvera, the diasporic Caribbean Canadian community does not offer much relief either. For Silvera, who is convinced that she lives within a "legacy of continued racism and prejudice" as a member of the "visible minorities," her status as a lesbian is another struggle: "the struggle for acceptance and positive self-definition within (her) own communities" (530):

> The presence of an "out" Afro-Caribbean lesbian in our community is dealt with suspicion and fear from both men and our heterosexual Black sisters. It brings into question the assumption of heterosexuality as the only "normal" way. It forces them to acknowledge something that has always been covered up. It forces them to look at women differently and brings into question the traditional Black female role. Negative responses from our heterosexual Black sisters, although more painful, are, to a certain extent, understandable because we have no race privilege and very few of us have class privilege. The only privilege within our group is heterosexual. We have all suffered at the hands of this racist system at one time or another and to many

> heterosexual Black women it is inconceivable, almost frightening, that one could turn her back on credibility in our community and the society at large by being a lesbian. (531)

Silvera's short story, "Baby" in *Her Head a Village*, documents the intolerance that lesbians such as Asha and her female lover face, in their own community. In this passage, Silvera depicts how they are threatened with death by a black man just because of their sexuality:

> "Bwoy, dem girls different. Dem need a good fuck. Can't understand how nice Black woman like dem get influence in dis lesbian business."
>
> "Nastiness man, nastiness. Satan work."
>
> He'd overheard the last comment many times. He'd watched the two women closely each time they came into the Hotspot. They had an independent streak about them. He didn't like it. They come to Canada and they adopt foreign ways, he thought to himself. (71)

Silvera thus echoes Patricia Hill Collins, who stresses that for black women who "have already been labelled the 'Other' by virtue of race and gender, the threat of being labelled a lesbian can have a chilling effect on our ideas and on our own relationships with one another" (*Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* 18-19). In her essay "Sexual Politics and Black Woman's Relationships," Collins addresses this notion of homophobia that Black lesbians face. She argues that one of the most important challenges for and to Black feminist thought has come through the voices of Black lesbians. However, Collins thinks that the major contribution by Black lesbian theorists and activists has been to "illuminate homophobia and the toll it takes on African American women" (*Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* 15). She cites Barbara Smith's argument that the oppression affecting Black gay people, female and male "is pervasive, constant, and not abstract. Some of us die from it" (Qtd in Collins 15). For Collins therefore, by labelling Black lesbians "as not white, male, or heterosexual," the heterosexual system has constructed Black lesbians as the "ultimate others". As such, they represent the antithesis of Audre Lorde's "mythical norm," and

become the standard by which other groups measure their own so-called normality (Qtd in Collins 17). Furthermore, as Barbara Christian observes, "by being sexually independent of men, lesbians, by their very existence, call into question society's definition of women at its deepest level" (199). And, by challenging the mythical norm that "the best people are white, male, rich and heterosexual," Black lesbians generate "anxiety, discomfort and a challenge to the dominant group's control of power and sexuality on the interpersonal level" (Carole S. Vance Qt in Collins 17).

Silvera is very aware of this challenge, and her essay, "Man Royals and Sodomites" discusses the invisibility and discrimination she faces as a Black lesbian. She has too often been asked to subsume her lesbian identity, in order to conform to the heterosexual norm:

> Too often, we have had to sacrifice our love for women in political meetings that have been dominated by the 'we are the world' attitude of the heterosexual ideology. We have had to hide too often that part of our identity which contributes profoundly to make up the whole. There is also the fear of being labelled a lesbian 'by association,' by uniting with openly identified lesbian women, which keeps black women isolated from each other. (530-531)

## Summary: The Body as Site of Resistance

Like Philip, Silvera uses the body as the means through which women can seek agency and claim their identity. She also resists the prescriptive heteronormative system, like Brand, who commented that she does not want to write sex in a conventional way (Interview withTihanyi). Therefore, in her interview with Elizabeth Ruth, Makeda Silvera says that as a mother, she is not ready to surrender her sexuality: "I have always questioned and challenged the imperial views of motherhood: mothers are virtuous, mothers are asexual" (2). So, besides positioning her portrayal of motherhood through a socio-political lens, in the ways in which "poverty, colonialism and racism" affect mother-daughter relationships, Silvera deliberately presents portrayals of mothers that go against the grain of this traditional presentation of motherhood. Maria Calloway, the matriarch in *the Heart*

*Does Not Bend*, even though reaching her fiftieth year, is nevertheless portrayed as a sensuous woman who still enjoys her sexuality.

Silvera, therefore, goes beyond this mere role of oppression, victimization and women's subjugation, by carving spaces into places where downtrodden women such as Molly and Rose can have some agency. In situating and grounding her narrative around the lives of female lovers, she articulates a powerful counter-discourse to homophobic and ethnocentrist notions of masculinity that are threatened by lesbianism. The black female body, which typically is the site of domination and prime marker of discrimination and oppression, is re-appropriated by Silvera to counter hegemonic narration of the nation, in the ways in which she subverts the trope of sexuality and highlights the reclamation of the black female body. This has been the subject of primary interest in this thesis. By turning the black female body into a potent agent of "subjectification," a resistant subject that is the lesbian body, Silvera proposes an alternative form of motherhood, which is that of the "lesbian mother." So even though Molly does not pursue her relationship with Rose, just by *allowing* lesbian love and female-centered spaces into which a woman can find other women sexually gratifying, Silvera deconstructs the heteronormative myth that women's bodies are only for male consumption. By "queering" the racist heteronormative hegemony of the nation, Molly and Rose fracture discourses of national, racial and sexual belongings as Silvera rewrites the tale of nation with these two characters' very lesbian presence. This lesbian presence that she inscribes within the predominantly heterosexual, white, patriarchal and masculinist landscape, charts a new terrain, an alterable, albeit uncomfortable, in-between place, the last place they thought of, in the crevices of power (*Demonic Ground*). Foregrounding how corporeal resistance can work to undermine those very oppressions the body itself is subjected to, Silvera inscribes herself along the same lines of resistance as Brand and Philip. For, as Elizabeth Grosz has argued, "if bodies are traversed and infiltrated by knowledge, meanings and power, they can also, under certain circumstances, become sites of struggles and resistance, actively inscribing themselves on social practices" (36).

# CONCLUSION

## Postmodern Reterritorialization, Creating Elsewhere Homes:

> Living as we did -on the edge- we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention upon the centre as well as on the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and centre. Our survival depended upon an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and centre and an ongoing private acknowledgment that we were a necessary, vital part of. (hooks *Feminist Theory* ix)

> By identifying marginal space as both a site or repression and resistance, location becomes historicized and theoretically viable—a space of future possibilities as well as the nuanced articulation of the past. (Scattered Hegemonies 144)

In this dissertation, I have attempted to trace the in-between place that writers like Dionne Brand, Makeda Silvera, and Marlene Nourbese Philip dwell in, as writers displaced by their gender, their race, and their sexual orientation. Even though my project has concerned itself with the subjugation and oppression of Caribbean Canadian women writers caught between multiple and intersecting displacements, my main concern was to simultaneously highlight how these writers inhabit the liminal place that exists in between patriarchy and imperialism. My purpose has been to attempt to understand the trajectory of these writers, by starting with the various paradigms that were silencing them. Drawing on the insights of transnational feminist critics of globalization and postmodernity, I was able to seize how these writers do not fit within mainstream feminism nor in masculinist versions of diaspora and nation formation. Each of these paradigms was overlooking an essential part of these writers identity. Through the analysis of their works, I have highlighted where, by refusing to be tied to a single constituency such as gender or race, Brand's, Silvera's, and Philip's texts collapse the Manichean binaries of modernity, and in so doing, participate in theorizing postmodernity.

Throughout this thesis, my aim was to answer questions such as: how do these Caribbean Canadian women approach the failures of the male-biased discourses of

nationalism and Diaspora, and the gender-focused discourse of western feminist hegemonic discourses, which both eclipse and elude their specificity in mutually excluding and competing agendas? How do these Caribbean Canadian women handle the legacy of colonialism and imperialism as it still plays out in the context of female labour, both in the cane plantation fields in the Caribbean as well as the Canadian experience of female immigration and domestic work? And how do they recuperate their sexuality from both illicit colonial stereotypes and from the restrictions of male nationalist discourses? In answering these questions, this thesis defined transnational identities and feminist postmodern concepts of subjectivity that are presented as corrective to reified prescriptive identities, and considered the complexities of colonial and postcolonial subjectivities.

Unlike the problematic focus of gender in mainstream feminism, or the prominence of race at the expense of other factors in masculine postcolonial discourses, these writers' texts deploy an analysis that captures the multiple axes of women's subordination, including the relationship between capitalism and women. Indeed, the transnational impulses of Brand's, Silvera's, and Philip's texts reside not only in their challenge of the modernist concept of tying home to nationalisms, but also in proposing revised notions of home that take into account our condition of Postcoloniality and Postmodernity. By presenting non-nationalist forms of identification that are multiple, contradictory, fluid and flexible, and by problematizing the unitary and essentialist subject of feminist theory, Brand, Philip and Silvera disrupt their hegemonic representation within mainstream feminist research, while simultaneously reclaiming their bodies from the narrow discourses of nationalism. By also mapping the distinct field that is Caribbean Canadian women's writing, I have opposed in this thesis, the currently held view that this field is a "postcolonial" field, a recent explosion. In referring back to the silenced and ignored foremothers, we have seen how these three writers were following a long established tradition of Caribbean women writers. Uncovering these narratives was critical to my inquiry into alternative discourses besides the feminist theory and critique that advanced gender as the universal nature of women's oppression under patriarchy and sidelined other

factors such as race and sexuality. However, my findings have shown where this field of Caribbean women's' writing has its own problems as seen in the marginalization of Indo-Caribbean women's writing. Yet, by resorting to transnational feminist linkages in this thesis, I believe there exists the possibility of transcending this hegemonic stance embodied in this body of writing. Mohanty's idea of solidarity and Dionne Brand and Adrienne Rich's collaboration are evidences of successful feminist transnational organizing against capitalism and other scattered hegemonies. Nonetheless, the biggest gap that I have identified through this incursion into Caribbean Canadian women's writing is that almost all the theses, books, or articles written about this field tend to study these writers by always pairing them with one or more other writers; conversely, the male Caribbean writers benefit from single coverage.

I have addressed a varied range of eclectic and theoretical positions as encapsulated in feminist transnational theory, in order to show how these writers use their liminal status to devise strategies of resistance. Living in the very "crevices" of power as they do, Makeda Silvera, Marlene Nourbese Philip and Dionne Brand have rejected the meta-narratives that threaten to erase Black women. In doing so, they have carved out their own space – an in-between space– which is located neither within the homogenizing tendencies of mainstream feminism nor in the narrowly articulated versions of male nationalism, a space in which they can have the agency to theorize their intersectional identities as both women and Black persons. The attempt to write the history of black women, thus, involves a multi-layered narrative which deconstructs the assumption that black women should be spoken of/for, as well as rescuing their bodies from the oppressive and totalizing inscriptions of male centered Diasporas. Just like the garret, this in-between place that these writers dwell in is both a place of limitation and resistance. As bell hooks has argued in *Yearning*, much more than a mere state of deprivation, marginality is also:

> a space for resistance. It (is) this marginality that... (is) a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse.... As such, (it is) not... marginality one wishes to lose –to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center– but rather (it is) a site one stays in, clings to even... It offers

> to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternative, new worlds. (149-50)

Similarly, for Karen Caplan, by identifying marginal space as a site of repression and resistance, "location becomes historicized and theoretically viable—a space of future possibilities as well as the nuanced articulation of the past" (*Scattered Hegemonies* 144). Indeed as our exploration of Brand, Philip and Silvera reveal, despite the restrictiveness they face, their liminal subject position becomes the heart of their work; for it not only allows them to create a "discursive space" through which to expose and reject the feminist, colonial, and patriarchal myths that hold them hostage to a contained identity, but also to create alternative and more positive rendering of their own experiences. As Marlene Nourbese Philip writes in *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*:

> Displacements ... lead often, if not always, to a disjunction in the psyche which can be, and often is, for poets and writers, a source of intense creativity: displacement leads to marginality; marginality allows a certain distance from, and lucidity of vision about, the mainstream society, which, in turn, allows the poet to explode the myths and lies by which such a society fuels itself. (58)

**Erotics of Resistance: "Scars" as Sites of Desire**

If my project suggests that Brand, Philip and Silvera focus on the burden of the slave tropes, which still translates into the contemporary experience of black women, it further indicates they do not also fail to outline how the body unbends itself, by using that body as the very locale through which resistance and agency are sought out. Farah Jasmine Griffin's concept of "textual healing" in "Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women's Bodies," provides and facilitates a framework in the ways in which the black female body, which was previously the site and repository of all the oppression and suffering, becomes also the site of multiple possibilities, including that of healing and transformation. As Farah Jasmine Griffin states, even though colonialist and patriarchal discourses have constructed the black female body as "abnormal, diseased, and ugly" (519), many black women writers have engaged in a project of re-imagining the bodies of black women as sites of healing,

pleasure and resistance. Indeed, at various stages in their work, Caribbean Canadian women writers have documented the pain and suffering that expatriate women face in their daily lives. Yet in the past decades, these writers have begun to replace the dominant discourses on women's bodies by their own versions, a more accurate rendering of what it entails to be black and female in diasporic locations. This is what Silvera, Brand, and Philip set out to do. By refusing their hegemonic and limited representations, they thus rewrite these gendered and racialized discourses, and reposition themselves as subjects in these traditional paradigms. As a result, they engage in a project of re-imagining the black female body within a perspective of resistance and transformation. In doing so, they trouble the categorization of black women's voices, appropriated by mainstream feminist research and their bodies captured by male's discourse of nationalism and citizenship. What is very instructive from my reading of these writers' work is that, from transgression and challenge to oppressive paradigms, the writing of black women begins to move toward more healing perspectives. The black female body, which was previously the site and repository of all the oppression and suffering, also becomes the site of multiple possibilities, including that of healing and transformation.

Even though my reading of Brand ends with the failed revolution and with Verlia's death, there is nonetheless, the power of resistance as inscribed between the lines of her story. For, though it is true Brand's writing about Diaspora is about "displacement, loss, exile," as Johanna Garvey has suggested, it is nonetheless worth noting that her work also enacts the "the power of memory and the urgency of resistance, especially through the mapping of space to locate diaspor(ic) identification" (486). It is the search for identity and a place to call home that serves as the inspiration for Brand's style of writing and the resistance to oppression inscribed in her message. In "Mapping the Door of No Return: Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand," Marlene Goldman has proposed that the notion of "drifting" functions as an alternative to the oppressiveness of home and the nation-state in Brand's writing, because by privileging this notion of drifting, Brand underscores "the inadequacies of the nation-state, particularly in its response to demands

for social justice in a global era and in its long-standing practices of exclusion" (2). More than a mere alternative to the boundedness of home and nation states, this fluid notion also serves as a "legitimate resistance practice," which signals Brand's refusal to be tied to a singular origin and history, but rather, her recognition "of multiple histories based on shared experiences of class, race, gender, and sexuality":

> Ultimately, the concept of drifting invites readers to re-theorize home as a constellation of multiple sites-a series of somewheres that cannot be captured under any one place name. Drifting is particularly suited to a reconsideration of the Black Diaspora. Unlike the Jewish Diaspora, which critics have used to generate an ideal type, the Black Diaspora has not always been associated with a single origin, a specific place of return, or a nation to build. (2)

In moving from a "nostalgic desire for homeland to recognition of homeland in herself and in a synthesis of experiences shared with others" (211) Brand carves from her exile a paradoxical place of belonging as Zackodnik suggested. Instead of identifying herself through a nationalist ethos, she chooses to relocate herself within her own self:

> I have become *myself.* A woman who looks at a woman and says, here, I have found you, in this, I am blackening in my way. You ripped the world raw. It was as if another life exploded in my face, brightening, so easily the brow of a wing touching the surf, so easily I saw my own body, that is, my eyes followed me to *myself*, touched *myself* as a place, another life, terra. They say this place does not exist, then, my tongue is mythic. I was here before. ("Hard Against the Soul" 242)

Similarly, foregrounding how corporeal resistance can work to undermine those very oppressions the body itself is submitted to, Silvera inscribes herself along the same line of resistance as Brand. In *The Heart Does Not Bend*, even though Molly does not pursue her relationship with Rose, just by *allowing* lesbian love and female centered spaces into which a woman can find other women sexually gratifying, Silvera challenges society's homophobia. Elizabeth A. Meese observes in *(Sem)erotics: Theorizing Lesbian Writing* that "The lesbian writer seeks to intervene in language, reinvent, or better, re-work its texture, to produce an exploratory language through which we can find ourselves as subject

and (of) desire" (14). By "queering" the racist heteronormative hegemony of the nation, Molly and Rose fracture discourses of national, racial and sexual belongings as Silvera rewrites the tale of nation with these two characters. By inscribing lesbian presence within the predominantly heterosexual, white, patriarchal and masculinist landscape, they chart a new terrain, an alterable, albeit uncomfortable, in-between place, "the last place they thought of," in the crevices of power (K. McKittrick 37). Silvera also uses the lesbian body as a barrier against the walls of the homophobic society. By further rescuing their bodies from ascribed sexuality and the resultant economy of childbearing, the very condition for the sustainability of the nation-state, Brand and Silvera rewrite the nation with their lesbian presence, while simultaneously rescuing their citizenship rights from the homogenizing and limiting paradigms offered by Canadian state multicultural policy.

**Sexual/Textual Healing**

> Once our polyvocal discourse has broken free from the strangleholds of polarization, so that those born into dominator status can stop fighting to silence the voices of the Other and those in the borderlands can stop fighting to be heard, then we can look around us and see what is to be seen, in all its disconcerting and empowering multiplicity. We can, together, get on with the business of envisioning and weaving a world conducive to human life. (Lashgari 12)

Analysis of the three Caribbean Canadian writers illustrates that while Brand and Silvera engage Audre Lorde's empowering notion of the erotics, to reclaim the lesbian body out of the confines of prescriptive and normative sexualities, Philip stages the body, even though not lesbian, as the means through which to recover her voice: the "bodytext" that carries the resistant possibility of the black woman's bodymemory. For a woman like Philip, whose work may clash with these assumptions of her designated place in society, and for whom an acceptance by the literary mainstream "too often means silencing a part of what she sees and knows," to write honestly may thus mean transgressing, violating the literary boundaries of the expected and accepted" ( Deirdre 2). Indeed, by showing how the raced and sexed body is the site of multiple displacements engendered by colonial, imperial, and even postcolonial abuses, Philip subsequently rewrites these master discourses. By entering into a dialogically-centered struggle that does not only aim at

"unsaying" the labels others have put on herself, but also directed to her inner self, as Henderson has argued, Philip has been able to simultaneously reclaim her voice, by re-presenting her wounded self anew. Determined to make the black "hole" "whole," Philip writes the body into her text; the bodymemory, which like Philomena's body, allows her to reclaim her own version of history. No longer the raped hole of colonialism, Philip traded her role to become the castrator of the rapist, as seen in her later work: *Looking For Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence.* In "Craving Stories," Friedman advances that to counter the discourses of their marginality, people made peripheral by the dominant society such as Philip, are driven by the need to tell not only "another story," but also a "better story" in order to "chart their exclusions, affirm their agency (however complicit and circumscribed), and continually (re)construct their identities" (17). It therefore seems to me in this thesis that that is what Philip has done throughout her intervention. In her interview with Barbara Carey, Philip expresses her need to search for "a language to understand what is beyond the margin" (18), before sending a call to people excluded by the tradition of Euro-centric discourse to redefine the margins as frontiers.

**From Homeland to Homepage: Creating Textual Homes through Art**

The project of this thesis believes that, in the fight for finding a home outside the confines of nationalism, in addition to the possibility of creating elsewhere homes in the self, and through the body, Brand, Silvera, and Philip have all shown with their art that there also exists the possibility of dwelling in textual homes. For Joanne Saul, even as if for Brand, "the past continues to shape the present," and that Brand's novel seems to offer little hope for the diasporic woman caught between "another place" and "here," in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand begins to chart, more positively, a potentially new way of envisioning citizenry, both national and global, within a world order dominated by the expansion of global capital. Indeed, as Saul further observes, Elizete does attempt to reclaim the island from its "nowhere-ness" by naming it. As she analyses, " Elizete's act of naming shows how the rupture with the past--being cut off from history--might in theory have the potential to open up a space of creativity, by however small an act" (63). In fact, it

is this vision of mapping, of beginning to explore different ways of belonging in the face of the burden of the past that is taken up and given a much fuller articulation in *A Map to the Door of No Return.*

And even though Elizete does not want Verlia to kiss her scars, they must nonetheless be read as sites of "healing, pleasure, and resistance" and as *Dessa Rose* has learned to do, Elizete will have to redefine her "scars" as "sites of desire" (Griffin 520). By reclaiming the social constructions of their bodies, as "narrative of love and care," writings by black women like Brand, Silvera and Philip will begin to perform a textual healing for all readers". As Brand writes, even if she cannot "unhappen history" (*A Map to the Door of No Return* 203), she yearns "to draw new maps," and learn how to live "without historical pain" (157), and feel "as if history was not destiny" (168): "This dreary door which I've been thinking about," Brand writes, "though its effects are unremitting, does not claim the human being unremittingly" (42), because there is the possibility of transforming the door of no return from a "site of pain" (23) into a "site of pleasure" (93).

## Works Cited


Adjarian, M. M. *Allegories of Desire: Body, Nation, and Empire in Modern Caribbean Literature by Women*. Praeger Publishers, 2004.

Adisa, Opal. Palmer. "De Language Reflect Dem Ethos: Some Issues with Nation Language." *Winds of Change: The Transforming Voices of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars* (1998): 17–30.

Alexander, M. Jacquie. "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas." *Feminist Review* (1994): 5-23.

Amireh, Amal, and Lisa Suhair Majaj. *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*. New York: Garland, 2000.

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands = La Frontera*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.

Bannerji, Himani. *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism, and Politics*. Toronto, Ont.: Sister Vision, 1993.

Belsey, Catherine, and Jane Moore. *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*. New York: B. Blackwell, 1989.

Beneventi, D. A., L. Canton, and L. Moyes. *Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada*. Guernica Editions Inc., 2004.

Benstock, Shari. *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Bhabha, H. "Unpacking My Library Again." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* (1995): 5-18.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. 2nd ed. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Brand, Dionne. *Bread out of Stone*. 1st ed. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994.

---. *In Another Place, Not Here*. 1st ed. Toronto: A.A. Knopf Canada, 1996.

---. *Land to Light On*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996.

---. *A Map to the Door of No Return*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2001.

---. *No Burden to Carry*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1991.

---. *Winter Epigrams: & Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia*. Toronto: Williams-Wallace International, 1983.

Bryson, Valerie, and Jo Campling. *Feminist Debates: Issues of Theory and Political Practice*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Bryson, Valerie. *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd Ed: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Burrowes, R. A. *Revolution and Rescue in Grenada: An Account of the Us-Caribbean Invasion*. Greenwood Press, 1988.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 10th anniversary ed. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Butling, Pauline, and Susan Rudy. *Poets Talk: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch, Daphne Marlatt, Erin Mouré, Dionne Brand, Marie Annharte Baker, Jeff Derksen and Fred Wah*. 1st ed. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005.

Campbell, Kofi. "Reading Queer Caribbean Identities: Faizal Deens Land without Chocolate and the Gay Caribbean Canon." *Postcolonial Text* 2.2 (2006).

Carby, Hazel. V. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1987.

Carey, Barbara. "Secrecy & Silence: M. Nourbese Philip's Struggle to Connect with Her Lost Cultural Heritage Fuels Her Writing." *Books in Canada* 20.6 (summer 1991): 17 - 21.

Césaire, Aimé, and Robin D. G. Kelley. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.

Chancy, Myriam J. A. *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.

Christian, Barbara. *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1985.

Cixous, H., K. Cohen, and P. Cohen. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs* (1976): 875-93.

Clifford, James. "Travelling Cultures." *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Cary Nelson Lawrence Grossberg, Paula Treichler. vols. New York: Routledge, 1992. 96-116.

Clarke, G. E. "Contesting a Model Blackness: A Meditation on African-Canadian African Americanism, or the Structures of African Canadianite." *Essays on Canadian Writing* (1998): 1-55.

---. "Must All Blackness Be American? Locating Canada in Borden's Tightrope Time, or Nationalizing Gilroy's the Black Atlantic." *African-Canadian Theatre* (2005): 11.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd, rev., 10th anniversary ed. New York: Routledge, 2000.

---. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York; London: Routledge, 2004.

Crawford, Charmaine. "African-Caribbean Women, Diaspora and Transnationality." *Canadian Woman Studies* 23.2 (2004): 97-103.

Da Costa, Paulo. "An Interview with Dionne Brand: The Blood Boils in Canada around the French/English Conflict." *CiberKiosk*.

Daenzer, Patricia. *Regulating Class Privilege: Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s*. Canadian Scholars Press, 1993.

---. "Review of No Burden to Carry" Narratives of ....1920s1950s." *Resources for Feminist Research* 20.3/4 (Winter 1991).

Daurio, B. *The Power to Bend Spoons: Interviews with Canadian Novelists*. Mercury Press, 1998.

Davies, Carole Boyce. *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1994.

---. "Migratory Subjectivities." Literary Theory: An Anthology." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. vols. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. 996-1015.

DeCaires Narain, Denise. *Contemporary Caribbean Women's Poetry: Making Style.* Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures; 3. London; New York: Routledge, 2002.

DeKoven, Marianne. *Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice.* New Brunswick, N.J. ; London: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

De Vita, A. B. *Mythatypes: Signatures and Signs of African/Diaspora and Black Goddesses.* Greenwood Press, 2000.

Dirks, Nicholas B. *Colonialism and Culture.* Comparative Studies in Society and History Book Series. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Donovan, Josephine. *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism.* New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1985.

Edmondson, Belinda. *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* New York: Grove Press, 1967.

---. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press, 1968.

Freiwald, Bina. "Cartographies of Be/Longing: Dionne Brand's in Another Place, Not Here." *Mapping Canadian Cultural Space: Essays on Canadian Literature.* Ed. Danielle Schaub. Jerusalem: Magnes. vols, 1998.

Friedman, Susan Standford. "Craving Stories Narrative and Lyric in Contemporary Theory and Women's Long Poems." *Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory.* Ed. Lynn Keller and Cristanne Miller. vols. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1994. 15-42.

---. *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter.* Princeton University Press, 1998.

Garvey, Johanna X. K. "The Place She Miss: Exile, Memory, and Resistance in Dionne Brand's Fiction." *Callaloo* (2003): 486-503.

Ghosh-Schellhorn, Martina. *Writing Women across Borders and Categories.* Hallenser Studien Zur Anglistik Und Amerikanistik ; Bd. 6. M©*nster

Piscataway, NJ: Lit ; Distributed in North America by Transaction Publishers, 2000.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Gingell, S. "Returning to Come Forward: Dionne Brand Confronts Derek Walcott." *Journal of West Indian Literature* 6 (1994): 43-54.

Glissant, Edouard, and J. Michael Dash. *Caribbean Discourse : Selected Essays.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.

Glissant, Edouard, and Betsy Wing. *Poetics of Relation.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Goldman, Marlene. "Mapping the Door of No Return: Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand." *Canadian literature.*182 (2004): 13-28.

Greene, Gayle, and Coppélia Kahn. *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism.* New Accents. London ; New York: Methuen, 1985.

Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women's Bodies, the Erotic and Resistance in Contemporary Novels of Slavery." *Callaloo* (1996): 519-36.

Grosz, E. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Allen & Unwin, 1994.

Gupta, Nila, and Makeda Silvera. *The Issue Is 'Ism: Women of Colour Speak Out*. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1989.

Hall, Stuart. "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities." *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*. Ed. Les Black and John Solomos. vols. London: Routledge, 2000.

Henderson, Mae G. "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogism and the Black Woman

Writer's Literary Tradition." *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory,and Writing by Black Women*

*New Brunswick*. Ed. Cheryl Wall. vols. New Brunswick, 1989.

Higonnet, Margaret R., and Joan Templeton. *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.

Hochschild, A. R. "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value." *On the edge: Living with global capitalism* (2000): 130–46.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory* Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984.

---. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. 1st ed. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990.

Judd, Denis. *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present*. New York: BasicBooks, 1997.

Kamboureli, Smaro. *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*. Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press Canada, 1999.

Kinnahan, Linda A. *Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry, and Contemporary Discourse*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004.

Komar, Kathleen. L. "Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space." *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space*: 1994.89-107.

Lamming, George. *The Pleasures of Exile*. London: Michael Joseph, 1960.

Lashgari, Deirdre. *Violence, Silence, and Anger: Women's Writing as Transgression*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995.

Lewis, Reina, and Sara Mills. *Feminist Postcolonial Theory : A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. The New Critical Idiom. 2nd ed. London ; New York: Routledge, 2005.

Liu, Lydia. "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: The Field of Life and Death Revisited." *Scattered hegemonies: Postmodernity and transnational feminist practices*: 37-62.

Mahlis, Kristen "A Poet of Place: An Interview with M. Nourbese Philip." *Callaloo.* Vol. 27 vols: The Johns Hopkins University Press, Summer 2004. 682-97.

Mantouvalou, Virginia. "Servitude and Forced Labour in the 21st Century: The Human Rights of Domestic Workers." *Industrial Law Journal* 35.4 (2006): 395-414.

Martin, B., and C. T. Mohanty. "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?"." *Feminisms: An anthology of literary theory and criticism* (1997): 293.

McCrimmon, A. L. *The Woman Movement.* Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland, 1915.

McKittrick, K. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle.* Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2006.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism.* Manchester [England]; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Meese, E. A. *(Sem) Erotics: Theorizing Lesbian Writing.* New York University Press, 1992.

Martin, B., and C. T. Mohanty. "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?"." *Feminisms: An anthology of literary theory and criticism* (1997): 293.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders.* Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003.

---. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity.* Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003.

---. "Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.2 (2003): 499-535.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics : Feminist Literary Theory.* London; New York: Methuen, 1985.

Naipaul, V. S. *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies--British, French, and Dutch--in the West Indies and South America.* [Harmondworth]: Penguin Books, 1969.

Naylor, Paul. "River City Interview with M. Nourbese Philip with Paul Naylor." *River City: A Journal of Contemporary Culture* (Summer 1996).

Ngugi wa, Thiongo. *Writers in Politics: Essays.* London: Heinemann, 1981.

Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo. *Africa Wo/Man Palava : The Nigerian Novel by Women.* Women in Culture and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005.

---. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Pateman, Carole, and Elizabeth Gross. *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory.* Sydney ; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986.

Perrera, Sonali. "Rethinking Working-Class Literature: Feminism, Globalization, and Socialist Ethics." *Difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 19.1 (Spring 2008).

Philip, M. N. "The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy." *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989): 10-25.

Philip, M. Nourbese. "Managing the Unmanageable." *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference*. Ed. Selwyn R. Cudjoe. vols. Wellesley, MA: Calaloux, 1990. 295-300.

Philip, Marlene Nourbese. *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*. Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997.

---. *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*. Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Ragweed, 1989.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 2nd ed. London ; New York: Routledge, 2008.

Prins, Y., and M. Shreiber. *Dwelling in Possibility: Women Poets and Critics on Poetry*. Cornell University Press, 1997.

Quayson, Ato. *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* Malden, MA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

Ramazanoglu, Caroline. *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression*. London ;
New York: Routledge, 1989.

Rich, Adrienne Cecile. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1986.

Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Bantam Books, 1977.

Rimstead, Roxanne. *Remnants of Nation: On Poverty Narratives by Women*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Rio, Cecilia. "A Treadmill Life: Class and African American Women's Paid Domestic Service in the Postbellum South, 1863–1920." *Rethinking Marxism* 20.1 (2008): 91-106.

Romero, Mary. *Maid in the USA*. Routledge, 2002.

Ruth, Elizabeth. "Conversation with Makeda Silvera." *Herizons*. Vol. 16.4. vols, 2003. 23-27.

Said, Edward. "The London Review of Books ". Access 12 February 2009.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993.

---. *Orientalism*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Sanders, Leslie. "I Am Stateless Anyway: The Poetry of Dionne Brand." *The Zora Neale Hurston Forum* 3.2 (1989): 19-29.

Saul, Joanne. "In the Middle of Becoming: Dionne Brand's Historical Vision." *Canadian Woman Studies* 23.2 (2004):59-63

Silvera, Makeda. *Her Head a Village*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1994.

---. "In the Company of My Work: An Interview with Dionne Brand." *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*. Ed. Makeda Silvera. vols. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1995. 356-80.

---. *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1995.

Silvera, Makeda. "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians." *Feminist Studies* (1992): 521-32.

Smith, Sidonie. "Identity's Body." *In Autobiography and Postmodernism.* Ed. Leigh Gilmore and Gerald Peters Ed. Kathleen Ashley. vols. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1994. 266-92.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* Ed. Gareth Griffiths Bill Ashcroft, and Helen Tiffin. vols. London: Routledge, 1995. 24-28.

---. "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives." *History and Theory* 24 (1985a): 247–72.

---. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* Ed. Gareth Griffiths Bill Ashcroft, and Helen Tiffin. vols. London: Routledge, 1995. 269-72.

Staeheli, Lynn A., et al. "Mapping Women, Making Politics Feminist Perspectives on Political Geography". New York, 2004. vii, 319 p. Routledge.

Steady, Filomina Chioma. *Black Women, Globalization, and Economic Justice: Studies from Africa and the African Diaspora.* Ed. Schenkman Books. VT: Rochester, 2001.

Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* London Portsmouth, N.H.: J. Currey ; Heinemann, 1986.

Tiffin, Chris, and Alan Lawson. *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality.* London ; New York: Routledge, 1994.

Tihanyi, Eva. "Unredeemed Grace: Eva Tihanyi Speaks with Dionne Brand." *Books In Canada* 26.2 (1997): 8-9.

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha. "Cotton and Iron." *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures.* Ed. Russell Ferguson [et al.]. vols. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Truth, Sojourner. " Women's Convention." Akron Ohio, 1851.

Walcott, Rinaldo. *Black Like Who?* Toronto: Insomniac Press, 1997.

Wane, Njoki Nathani, Erica Lawson, and Katerina Deliovsky. *Back to the Drawing Board : African-Canadian Feminisms.* Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002.

Wittig, Monique. "One Is Not Born a Woman." *The lesbian and gay studies reader* (1993): 103-09.

Woolf, Virginia, Virginia Woolf, and Morag Shiach. *A Room of One's Own ; Three Guineas.* World's Classics. Oxford England ; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Zackodnik, T. "I Am Blackening in My Way: Identity and Place in Dionne Brand's No Language Is Neutral." *Essays on Canadian Writing* (1995): 194-211.

Zimra, Clarisse. "Righting the Calabash : Writing History in the Female Francophone Narrative" *Out of the Kumbla : Caribbean Women and Literature*. Ed. Davies et Fido. vols. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990.

## Appendix A

This discursive diversity, or simultaneity of discourse, I call "speaking in tongues." Significantly, glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, is a practice associated with black women in the Pentecostal Holiness church, the church of my childhood and the church of my mother. In the Holiness church (or as we called it, the Sanctified church), speaking unknown tongues (tongues known only to God) is in fact a sign of election, or holiness. As a trope it is also intended to remind us of Alice Walker's characterization of black women as artists, as "Creators," intensely rich in that spirituality which Walker sees as "the basis of Art." 18

Glossolalia is perhaps the meaning most frequently associated with speaking in tongues. It is this connotation which emphasizes the particular, private, closed, and privileged communication between the congregant and the divinity. Inaccessible to the general congregation, this mode of communication is outside the realm of public discourse and foreign to the known tongues of humankind.

But there is a second connotation to the notion of speaking in tongues—one that suggests not glossolalia, but heteroglossia, the ability to speak in diverse known languages. While glossolalia refers to the ability to "utter the mysteries of the spirit," heteroglossia describes the ability to speak in the multiple languages of public discourse. If glossolalia suggests private, nonmediated, nondifferentiated univocality, heteroglossia connotes public, differentiated, social, mediated, dialogic discourse. Returning from the trope to the act of reading, perhaps we can say that speaking in tongues connotes both the semiotic, presymbolic babble (baby talk), as between mother and child—which Julia Kristeva postulates as the "mother tongue"—as well as the diversity of voices, discourses, and languages described by Mikhail Bakhtin.

Speaking in tongues, my trope for both glossolalia and heteroglossia, has a precise genealogical evolution in the Scriptures. In Genesis II, God confounded the world's language when the city of Babel built a tower in an attempt to reach the heavens. Speaking in many and different tongues, the dwellers of Babel, unable to understand each

other, fell into confusion, discord, and strife, and had to abandon the project. Etymologically, the name of the city Babel sounds much like the Hebrew word for "babble"—meaning confused, as in baby talk. Babel, then, suggests the two related, but distinctly different, meanings of speaking in tongues, meanings borne out in other parts of the Scriptures. The most common is that implied in Corinthians 14—the ability to speak in unknown tongues. According to this interpretation, speaking in tongues suggests the ability to speak in and through the spirit. Associated with glossolalia—speech in unknown tongues—is ecstatic, rapturous, inspired speech, based on a relation of intimacy and identification between the individual and God.

If Genesis tells of the disempowerment of a people by the introduction of different tongues, then Acts 2 suggests the empowerment of the disciples who, assembled on the day of Pentecost in the upper room of the temple in Jerusalem, "were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues." Although the people thought the disciples had "imbibed a strange and unknown wine," it was the Holy Spirit which had driven them, filled with ecstasy, from the upper room to speak among the five thousand Jews surrounding the temple. The Scriptures tell us that the tribes of Israel all understood them, each in his own tongue. The Old Testament then, suggests the dialogics of difference in its diversity of discourse, while the New Testament, in its unifying language of the spirit, suggests the dialectics of identity. If the Bakhtinian model suggests the multiplicity of speech as suggested in the dialogics of difference, then Gadamer's model moves toward a unity of understanding in its dialectics of identity.