

## CARIBBEAN WOMEN POETS - DISARMING TRADITION



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Hortense Spillers' statement regarding the capacity of black women's writings for redefining and disarming tradition "by suggesting that the term [tradition] itself is a critical fable intended to encode and circumscribe an inner and licit circle of empowered texts" (cf. Davies and Fido 1990: 18), provides a launching point for an exploration of the work of Caribbean women poets, in particular by Grace Nichols, and Lorna Goodison. It is possibly somewhat premature to talk of any Caribbean poetry in terms of tradition—if by the term we wish to avoid the inevitable notions conjured up of Eurocentric norms of poetry and patriarchal domination that prevailed in the early part of this century, when writers were "generally colonial in outlook" (Birbalsingh 1996: xi)—and embrace instead the research taking place now which largely focuses on more recent developments in writing that come under the umbrella of post-colonial, bringing in a whole variety of other concerns. But as Ramabai Espinet points out, the literary "canon" of the Caribbean consists "overwhelmingly of male writers" (1992: 162) with role models coming from the "major" recognised writers such as Walcott, Brathwaite, Naipaul, Lamming and Harris (Wilson). What is also questionable is how to determine what constitutes the denomination "Caribbean" writer, when so many now live away from that archipelago. Poets such as Audre Lorde and Paule Marshall were born and reared in the United States, yet they have embraced the Caribbean cultural environment handed down to them by their parents as their own. The multi-ethnic communities that reside within the Caribbean comprise a wide range of backgrounds from both the African and Indian continents, and however disperse they may be now it is generally recognised and accepted that any claim to a Caribbean past counts as valid. As Antonio Benítez-Rojo discusses in *The Repeating Island* there are mixed opinions about Caribbean culture being representative of unity and diversity, as well as

about the very possibility of the existence of a single culture, given the extremely heterogeneous condition of the area (1996: 35-39).

It is perhaps the most striking facet of the poetry designated as Caribbean that the authors are predominately no longer living in the geographic space of the Caribbean, but elsewhere. However, Samuel Selvon's elucidatory remarks, which, he concedes, echo those of George Lamming, go a long way to help an understanding of how this has contributed to the growth of Caribbean concerns in their poetry when he says how West Indians "only started to identify themselves as such when they moved outside the Caribbean" (1996: 63). Distancing thus provides a perspective which permits, forces even, the writer to consolidate an identity that, as is well known, for West Indians is highly complex and multifaceted. Olive Senior lives in Canada, and Grace Nichols in Britain, for example, and while Lorna Goodison remains a resident of Jamaica, she frequently travels abroad. All would probably consider themselves, like Selvon, to be "a citizen of the world" (66), and all would probably agree with Carole B. Davies' assertion about women: that creoleness, as an essentially Caribbean identity, is "the necessity of accepting all facets of experience, history and personhood in the definition of the self" (1994: 122).

Political, colonial, national or historical agendas, whose basic ideological assumptions stem from black power and négritude and Marxist-Leninist premises, have been to the fore in guiding Caribbean thought and have prevailed in much writing that has come out of the Caribbean. By contrast, women poets writing from within a Caribbean culture have collectively been considered as addressing a feminist agenda, or at least as politicising the position of women in their poetry. Thus women poets have generally been set apart from their male counterparts, not least because it has taken far longer for them to achieve recognition or even to get started in their writing—the female roles of carer, wife or mother have most often taken precedence over other individual career pursuits. It must also be acknowledged that Caribbean women's literature only began to unfold on a large scale in the 1980s when enabled by an increased international feminist awareness and the growth of feminist criticism, where representations of women were examined in a new light. Male poets such as Derek Walcott or Edward Kamau Brathwaite who have achieved acclaim for their innovative work—innovative because they too have contributed to that redefinition of tradition and launched the Caribbean psyche onto the international market—have no doubt paved the way for others. However, their work remains different nonetheless from work being produced by women. Walcott's view of women contrasts with that of other poets, with a frame of reference firmly

grounded in European thought, mythology and religion. He has even been accused of treating women in his writing in ways that are "full of clichés, stereotypes and negativity" (Fido 1990a: 289), and his prejudices about women are conveyed through "conventional" imagery. "The Schooner, *Flight*", often regarded as Walcott's most important poem, presents the woman figure María Concepción purely in terms of sexuality. It is a prime example of work that Seamus Heaney describes as having "evolved out of one man's inherited divisions and obsessions" (1991: 65), concisely conveying the theme that is Walcott's principal preoccupation—that of weaving a language out of dialect and literature, of shaping an idiom that fuses the old with the new. The structure of Brathwaite's poetry can also be seen to have had a pioneering influence on work by other poets; its multitude of forms and their interplay persistently provide pictures of the Creole continuum with the employment of Nation Language, and by extension of the Caribbean experience, to the extent that his compositions led to the feeling that "a revolution of some kind was taking place" (Markham 1989: 28). When similar constructions are used by women poets, they indubitably tend to be employed in terms of gender issues, but even so there is no single voice or perspective among them. This is hardly surprising given that, as Jan Carew points out, the West Indian experience has always been "a very eclectic experience" (1996: 50). If it can be narrowed down at all, the women poets' concerns largely incline towards a commitment to gender, race, nationality and class issues, through recurrent themes of the struggle of survival—described by Paula Burnett as "gritty celebrations" (1986: xxiii). Hardly a narrowing down, they remain in themselves a broad range of concerns, but they are inextricably inter-linked and unavoidably bound together in any black female's experience. Although the predominant focus may be one of "lamenting the lost and searching for identity" (Burnett 1986: xxiii), this is always expressed through an exulting celebration of tongue and tradition, a tradition which comes from innovative and altered perspectives. As Grace Nichols puts it,

I have crossed an ocean  
I have lost my tongue  
from the root of the old  
one  
a new one has sprung. (1990: 87)

Grace Nichols' "Epilogue" to her first collection of poems *I is a long-memoried woman* (first published in 1983 and awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize) encapsulates Selvon's notion of finding an identity and a voice

in her historical past. Nichols (b. 1950) grew up in the UK at the age of twenty-seven, and although it is clear that other women poets have similar objectives, Nichols is something that tries to close in on me", and from this we can all think alike because we are all women or girls (192: 148). Nichols has an identifiably feminist first collection demands an acknowledgement of her history and are self-assured in that knowledge, and she concisely captures these notions:

honored woman. (1990: 3)

Nichols acknowledges that "the myths of the past are of old and remain powerful sources of strength throughout a demonstration of her belief in the power of certain images and archetypes", and declares "I am a woman of old and new, and I am reshaping", to offer "brown and black ...] the miraculous" (1992: 149-150).

Nichols is divided into five parts that links the present-day Caribbean with their African past and the future. The cycle of poems that wind their way through "Web of Kin", 1990: 8-9) and the tense "The Return/ woman-keeper" ("Like Anansi", 1990: 66), and "The Return/ a vengeful" daughter of Africa as she makes her way from Africa to the Caribbean. The anger that is contained and focused, its content saturated with emotion that proceed with contained emotion.

Nichols expresses yearnings for Africa; Part Two, "The Return/ experience of a living hell in the time of 'The Return'", stirs up a gathering for revenge which is "The Return/ dling" until finally, Part Five, "The Return", "The Return/ sneys through, "from a country of strong women" ("Web of Kin", 1990: 8), "whose praises go up" ("We the Women", 12); "traded by men"

("Taint", 18) whose "life has slipped out/ of my possession" ("Sunshine", 21), "The Beginning" angrily and forcefully decries the treatment of the African woman uprooted as she was from her native origins. The opening poem, "One Continent to Another" (5-7) amply illustrates the quality of her work. A poem divided into fifteen sections, sometimes of only one word, and with a typographical layout that recalls Brathwaite's compositions in *The Arrivants* trilogy, its reeling, lamenting dactylic rhythm works together with the imagery to effect an almost tangible anguish and pain:

Child of the middle passage womb  
push  
daughter of a vengeful Chi  
she came.

The onomatopoeic "push" conjures up the winds that blew this daughter "into the new world" "from one continent/ to another", while also conveying the pain and effort of the figurative birth, and is followed by an audible, isolated "moaning" which culminates in the powerful imagery contained in the following line, also isolated:

her belly cry sounding the wind.

We are reminded of the oral nature of the language in hearing how "she hasn't forgotten/ hasn't forgotten" how she was taken slave and grieved even for the men who were made to lose their "deep man pride", for which she "wasn't prepared" to have to witness. The final three lines are forcefully spat out in a rhythm that resounds with execration for her future:

Now she stoops  
in green canefields  
piecing the life she would lead. (my emphasis, 1990: 5-7)

"These Islands" (31) marks a turning point where the woman begins to identify in a rhythmic chant the contrasting beauty and horror of the Caribbean islands. The juxtaposition of lines that convey first idyllic and then metaphorically brutal images: "These islands green/ with green blades" whose gently swaying rhythm abruptly become in the second stanza a dactylic beat, quickening the pace, lashing out and building up to the final lines in the third stanza:

islands  
fertile  
with brutality (1990: 31)

inverting the meaning of fertile from rich and abundant and invoking instead its terrifying power for the growth of pain and suffering of her experience.

The issues of slavery and the sugar plantations which provide the backdrop to the collection are heavily conflated with issues of feminism in poems such as "Loveact", "Skin-teeth" and "Sugar Cane". In "Loveact" (48-49), her power manifestly lies in her gender; the present retrospective tense is firmly based in the past history of slavery, and power over the master's House is gained in spite of the slave's being in a situation of submission.<sup>1</sup> Nichols employs a language full of evocation: words like "ebony haunches" convey the strength of a hard wood with the implication of black as beautiful and seductive, while all the time it is her "sorcery" —magic and the supernatural being a very strong part of African life— which empowers her to find her revenge. The rich, concise and refreshing way in which Nichols uses language gives the poems a lively feeling. "Skin-teeth" (50) —a Caribbean term which denotes a smile of hatred, much like a grimace— is laden with references to slave origins, but connotations for contemporary white male attitudes to women can be read into it. Although the poem is full of hate and revenge it contains the kind of humour that is always present in Nichols' work. Laughter serves as a means to protect oneself against tribulations and hardships and is therefore often employed as "a defence mechanism" (Selvon 1996: 61). Nichols makes it clear in "Skin-teeth" that the slaves would mock the masters, and her use of the snake image in the final section —"to rise and strike"— ends the poem on an assertive note by isolating the final word "again", to encourage the reader to re-think history and realise that there always was resistance, however small. But it is in "Sugar Cane" (32-35) that the history of life on the plantation is employed most forcefully as a metaphor for man. The shape of the poem itself is emblematic, visually reflecting the form of the sugar cane plant, it is male-gendered and throughout contains a double-edged meaning:

He isn't what  
he seem —

indifferent hard  
and sheathed in blades

his waving arms

is a sign for help (1990: 32)

and, once again, ends on a note of power and control of woman: "I crouch/ below them/ quietly" —implying that although subjugated she knows how to bide her time and wait for the moment to retaliate.

It is now common, after Gayatri Spivak's seminal works<sup>2</sup> to find feminism and post-colonialism grouped together with postmodernism. Ann Brooks asserts that they are movements which all share a process of "dismantling or subverting dominant hegemonic discourses" on account of their common aim of challenging the established theories of knowledge in an attempt to "re-establish marginal discourses" (Brooks 1997: 105). It may be somewhat reductionistic, however, to marry the concept of a post-colonial identity to a feminist label automatically when discussing Caribbean women's poetry. It is easy also to fall prey too hastily to the assumption that for West Indians identity is necessarily a universal concern, when it is really only a tiny facet of particular women's concerns in the myriad individual experiences that their poetry deals with. Nichols, for example, who cannot "compartmentalize" herself, acknowledges that she is influenced not only by her "sex, race, cultural background" but also by "a heap of other factors" (Nichols 1992: 151). Human beings are not "uni-dimensional" after all (Rassool 1997: 188), and so each individual writer brings to bear on her work, both "consciously and unconsciously", different individual experiences of a common socio-historical background.

The search for "rootedness" and a sense of historical "belonging" for the Caribbean émigré can create a degree of conflict when trying to determine a cultural identity. The long historical experience of being uprooted, displaced and socially alienated as a result of the slave experience and colonisation may give rise to an inclination towards a "monolithic construction" of identity (Davies 1994: 10). That is to say that the West Indian may favour an identity as an African as being something more concrete and tangible, and as one which immediately comprises a "resistance to European domination" (Davies 1994: 10). Olive Senior frequently draws on a sense of African culture, using references to the rituals of the African past and its relation to the contemporary experience —somewhat sceptically at times, as in "Epitaph":

Last year the child died  
we didn't mourn long  
and cedar's plentiful  
but that was the one  
we buried  
beneath the tree of life

lord, old superstitions  
are such lies. (1989: 219-220)

and dwelling on ancestors who make their presence felt. Much of her poetry also focuses heavily on the unification and disruption of family, and conveys a strong feeling of pain, "isolation and displacement" (Davies and Fido 1990: 35) along with helpless desperation, as in the fourth stanza of "Cockpit Country Dreams" (1989: 219):

Now my disorder of ancestry  
proves as stable as the many rivers  
flowing round me. Undocumented  
I drown in the other's history.

For those who feel a sense of displacement, clinging to the "myth of unitary origin" (Davies 1994: 113) may therefore be the inevitable consequence of their need to find a "home" or a "nation" to identify with. Throughout Britain's empire, long into the twentieth century until India's Independence of 1947 and the Caribbean's of the 1960s, the imposed British culture had successfully suppressed other cultural expression. During the struggles for independence the nation "as a source of identity, destiny and liberation" (Persram 1997: 209) frequently prevailed as a dominant discourse. That growing nationalist feeling had to contend with the white British hegemony which endured throughout the transition period from Empire to Commonwealth. Even today, male white hegemony still prevails, a problem Nichols addresses in her poem "Spell Against Too Much Male White Power" (1989: 18-19), which she explains derives from trying to watch television one night only to find that on every channel the programmes were dominated by "elderly white men" discussing different issues (Nichols 1991). The poem ranges wide, in the most concise and compact way, from "Pretoria" to the "Kremlin", and like a spell uses a chanting, rhythmic beat and rhyming groups of alliterative and assonantal sounds. But the irregular stanzas which cut across a traditional spell formula all the while seek to find ways to overcome that "Male White Power" and "persuade it/ ...dissuade it/ ...dissipate it". The final imagery of the need to stop the tentacles of power from reaching too far, and the posing of the question of how a female black can invert that power into a desire for peace and tranquillity bring the poem to a close that inspires hope rather than frustration, the last line being the only one in the poem to contain punctuation:

How can I rebound  
the missiles and rockets  
How can I confound  
multinational octopuses  
Or at least

How can I remove the 'Big Chiefs'  
from the helm  
How can I put them to sit on beaches  
quiet, sea-gazing, retired old men.

Nichols has stated that she hates "the one-dimensional stereotype of the black woman as just being a sufferer or a person who's a victim or who's had a very oppressive history" (1988: 19). In 1950s Britain, Black women "experienced [...] the entrenched prejudice, racism, sexism and foreign bias" (Davies 1994: 99) that subsequent generations of Black professional women are still having to face today, and it would appear that sexism is still "rife in the Caribbean" also (Davies and Fido 1990: 41). The "fight for survival and dignity" of the 1970s (Gilroy 1976: 10) still forms a part of their struggle for equal recognition decades on. This is why Nichols' *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) are so important for those women to "Stan up pon we dignity", —to quote from the poetry of Louise Bennett, arguably the mother of all Caribbean women poets (1989: 51)— in their celebration of all that, ostensibly, does not meet with the "mythical norm" (Davies 1994: 153). Nichols strategically empowers women to take a pride in their appearance —if she can be accused of adhering to a stereotype then she is also defending a feature that has a right to its place in society. She invites the women to slap those norms in the face and disarm the traditional white, slim, Nordic stereotype rather than be moulded by a society which "located beauty always in European features and physical characteristics" (Davies 1994: 101). Hence her fat black woman in "Looking at Miss World" can proudly be seen to be "toasting herself as a likely win" (1984: 20) over and above all the "slim aspirants" she sees before her on her television screen.<sup>3</sup> But Nichols categorically states that she is not only speaking to black people, she is "addressing the whole world" (Nichols 1991).

There could be a danger of over-romanticising in Nichols' work in the face of the hardship that black women in Britain have had to endure. Ever present is that sense of displacement, where "back home" simultaneously means back in the Caribbean and back in Britain. This becomes a more important concept than that of seeking a nationalist identity, although the two are never far apart. Nichols' third collection of poems, *Lazy Thoughts of*

a *Lazy Woman* (1989), which subtly mocks the modern mores of her country's ex-colonisers, poignantly and wittily treats the experience of the migration of a black woman living in London and her resurgent memories of the Caribbean. In "Wherever I Hang" (1989: 10) she finds moving to England's "misty greyness" like living in a dream, and although little by little she "get accustom to de English life" she "still miss back-home side", and is perplexed as to "know really where I belong". The Creole emphasis is clearly defined in her outward expression of her inner identity. The woman is of the "new-world-self" too, however, and in acknowledging that:

Yes, divided to de ocean  
Divided to de bone

Wherever I hang me knickers – that's my home,

she is giving others the motivation to be themselves at all times and in all places. The idiom of pop culture, also parodied in "Invitation" in *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984: 12-13), ("Come up and see me sometime") juxtaposed with the rawness of Creole speech suggestively underlines woman's capacity to have control over her personal domain and circumstance, whatever or wherever it may be.

The concept of nation in post-colonial terms, and especially for those of West Indian heritage, is frequently the site for retrieving histories that were either lost or suppressed, and lies at the heart of reclaiming histories that have "yet to be written" (Persram 1997: 209). For the majority of writers who grew up in the pre-independence era, their educational experience under British colonising forces was one that had "excluded any reference to slavery or to the African ancestry of the slaves" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989: 147). The revival of their true history and its subsequent development is still a preoccupation; as George Lamming explains in his introduction to *In the Castle of My Skin*, the Caribbean writer needs to restore the fragmented memories of his people and find the truth between "White instruction and Black imagination" (1991: xxxvii).<sup>4</sup> The attempts to legitimise the narratives of the oral societies by dismantling given versions of history and redefining them with a newly-found voice is one which adopts Lyotard's definition of post-modern (and by extension, that of post-colonial) as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (1992: 999). And when we consider feminist issues in the light of post-colonial issues such as these then "traditional" feminism also comes into question. Early theories from Luce Irigaray, for example, are based on locating woman as a universal category whose prime challenge is to speak out from the silence imposed by the patriarchal discourses. Yet as

Hazel Carby explains, this patriarchal oppression is expressed in relation to middle class *white* women and does not embrace the oppression of black women and their gender within the same terms. In variance to the framework of white femininity it is also in consequence "subject to racism" (1997: 46). Black and white women's "herstories" (45) are therefore not the same stories.

Lorna Goodison goes some way towards redressing the balance and writing more recent black heroines "into the text" (Cixous 1990: 316) in her poems "For Rosa Parks" and "Bedsread" (1989: 244-245). "For Rosa Parks" is a tribute to a simple black woman's refusal to vacate her seat to a white person on a bus during the post-emancipation era, when there was dire black segregation in the Southern States of the US and blacks, who were only allowed to travel at the rear of the buses, were obliged to offer their seats to a white person when none were available elsewhere. We are told in the poem how Rosa Parks' soft word "No" was "like the closing of some awful book/ a too long story/ with no pauses for reason". With this Goodison wills the history books away —the archaic spelling used in *aweful* connoting the power to inspire fear or reverence and at once encapsulating how history had been conveyed as being the whole truth to be revered without calling it into question. She does not forget how the real history for her people harked back to when, as slaves, they "had walked before/ in yoked formations down to Calabar" and walked "again/ alongside cane stalks tall as men". But Rosa Parks' action marked a signal "to begin the walking", to enter a new period of history when the black people began boycotting the buses in response to segregation, and the "heroine", who "never lowered her eyes" proudly led the people "towards sunrise", towards a brighter, more hopeful future. Although it took a long time in coming; many protest marches, much brutality, Martin Luther King and the 1960s' Civil Rights movements were the ripple effects of Rosa Parks' action.<sup>5</sup>

"Bedsread" tells how Winnie Mandela and the women of the land of Africa "fought for the right to/ speak in their own tongues" and wove a bedsread with "notes of hope" and "ancient blessings". It heralds the relentless struggle to fight off the "hot and hopeless" memories, work to free Nelson Mandela and bring "glory in a Free/ Azania", clinging always to the "dreams" which Goodison acknowledges as providing "the only country some people have to live in" (1996: 163). The poem's resounding overall significance is that the dreams have the power even to solve a political problem, and the women's conviction of this has the power therefore to propel history into a forward trajectory of significant and momentous change.

Goodison's poetry comes over as more heartfelt and earnest than Nichols's, her references to the past and the present are implied rather than

stated. In "Heartease I", from her third collection (1989: 246), "We with the straight eyes" who are looking for truth as seekers on a "spiritual journey" (Goodison 1996: 158) are still manipulated by the "spider's direction"; the allusion to the trickery of Anansi as the deceit which tries to mislead them on their quest is used in conjunction with a more contemporary history of being "born/ a Jubilee/ and grow with your granny/ and eat crackers for your tea". The message that cuts through the allusions is direct enough though—"Believe" and have the conviction to pursue the quest. Elaine Savory Fido says of Goodison: "she is powerfully a writer of spells, incantations and blessings, which work on a metaphysical level, almost, to bring us closer together in an atmosphere of harmony and peace" (1990b: 40-41). Her interest in mysticism develops from her reading of Sufi influenced writings and those of the 18th Century Trappist monks, which, as she explains in an interview with Anne Walmsley, she has embraced because of her concern "more with reunification than anything else ... as the paramount task of humanity" (1989: 233). That she is a religious person "in a very big sense", but in a non-denominational sense, is expressed in her poem "A Rosary of Your Names (II)" (1989: 247), where "God is/ Infinity" and the "Architect of Planets"; as the title to the collection "Heartease" suggests, she believes the human situation to be one which needs to pursue a personal "spiritual journey" to find relief from the pain that the heart suffers.

The period of history in which we live is indeed an extraordinary one. The end of the twentieth century is witnessing such escalating changes that it is proving difficult to keep up with them. Race, class and gender are terms which are slowly merging as politically and ecologically forced migrations suddenly place people in a different position. Societies are increasingly multicultural, but their members are slow, and sometimes unwilling even, to assimilate the implications of this. The need for a cultural identity is of paramount importance but increasingly hard to retain; a totally universal and hybrid society is impossible, but humanitarian goals can remain to the fore, as Nichols and Goodison both appear to agree, where acts of writing poetry can become "spiritual journeys" and acts of "spiritual revival" (Nichols 1992: 147) in efforts to reclaim a heritage and forge a path forward. As Homi Bhabha explains in his illuminating text *The Location of Culture*:

The 'right' to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging

the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. (1994: 2)

Bhabha refers to these acts of restaging the past as "borderline engagements of cultural difference", where "past-present" (1994: 7) articulations are precisely the result of the complex era in which society is currently living, where time and space are no longer clearly demarcated and the prefix "post" is already losing its force as a defining term. Which is why Goodison's poetry clings more to the one "essence" that is constant amidst such changing definitions—man's and woman's inner desire for peace and concern for finding at least one aspect that can make a disrupted, dispirited, dissipated being begin to feel whole again. It is also why Nichols's "spiritual revival" takes on a new meaning when considered thus; the term tradition itself is disarmed by a past-presentness which provides a glimpse of glory and a ray of hope for the future, as her poem "Of Course When They Ask for Poems About the 'Realities' of Black Women" unequivocally illustrates:

I say I can write  
no poem big enough  
to hold the essence  
of a black woman  
or a white woman  
or a green woman

[...]  
Maybe this poem is to say,  
that I like to see  
we black women  
full-of-we-selves walking

Crushing out  
with each dancing step  
the twisted self-negating  
history  
we've inherited

Crushing out  
with each dancing step. (Nichols 1989:52-54)

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Rhonda Cobham's "Women in Jamaican Literature 1900-1950", in Davies and Fido (1990: 195-222). Slave women and women of the post-emancipation period, many of whom worked in domestic roles, were regarded as "sexually promiscuous", which was seen as something "dangerous and evil". Cobham cites examples of literature where domestic servants "fought back against their employers and the system in general" rather than acquiesce in being portrayed as "victims of exploitation".

<sup>2</sup> In particular "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Williams and Chrisman (1993: 66-111).

<sup>3</sup> In 1977, Janelle Commissiong, Miss Trinidad and Tobago, won the Miss Universe title in spite of the continuing "tendency towards European criteria of the beautiful" (In C. B. Davies's "Woman is A Nation", in Davies and Fido 1990: 189).

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3 of Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1991) for an autobiographical insight into the distorted nature of instruction of Nationalism imparted at school during the colonial era.

<sup>5</sup> Contextual information about Rosa Parks provided by Amryl Johnson, poet, speaking on cassette A421 produced by the Open University, 1992.

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