

“Now the Half Has Been Told”: An Intertextual
Approach to Gender and Resistance^(A.S.S.) in the Fiction
of Four Contemporary Caribbean Women Writers

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the articulation of political resistance in contemporary fiction by Caribbean women writers and, by using a dialogic approach to reading selected texts, theorises the difference that gender makes in the representation of these dominant themes. Representations of political resistance and transformation in novels by Merle Collins, Zee Edgell, Brenda Flanagan and Erna Brodber are examined in the context of an analysis of Caribbean fiction by male and female writers, which spans a seventy-year period.

It begins by arguing that, although Caribbean writers have traditionally used creatively transformed linguistic and textual strategies to signify resistance to colonial domination, Merle Collins' first novel, Angel, extends these traditions of novelistic transformation to produce a text which is more radically oppositional and at the same time dependent for meaning on its literary precursors. Subsequent chapters focus on different aspects of resistance and trace dialogic connections between fiction by contemporary women writers, colonialist narratives and writing by earlier canonical and non-canonical Caribbean novelists: these connections are used to reveal the ways in which ideologies of gender shape the character of resistance and determine the conditions and possibilities of political, social and cultural transformation.

The study concludes by arguing for the need to resist merely reproducing the over-determining categories of resistance and liberation that have characterised fictional and theoretical treatments of these themes: it argues for a need to take into account women's complex and sometimes contradictory interventions in the process of anti-colonial resistance and for the construction of a model of resistance which is inclusive, plural and dialogically defined.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: Critical and Theoretical Frameworks for a Dialogic Reading of Resistance and Gender in Caribbean Women's Fiction

This thesis focuses on the articulation of political resistance in the fiction of four contemporary Caribbean women writers and, by situating women's fiction in a context of repeated representations of themes of resistance and liberation in male and female-authored Caribbean fiction, theorises the difference that gender makes in the representation of these dominant themes. It begins and ends with Merle Collins' fiction: her two novels are used to set the questions that this work addresses and to demonstrate the importance of gender both as a dominant mode of representation in Caribbean fiction, and as a category of analysis.

My aim is to investigate the extent to which fictional representations of resistance are inflected by ideologies of gender and my analysis is driven by the following questions: How and in what ways does gender power determine the modes of resistance available to men and women? How do ideologies of gender affect the nature and effectiveness of that resistance? Does contemporary Caribbean women's fiction re-envision tropes of resistance that dominate literary representation in the Caribbean? Can their fictional work be used to theorise new readings of resistance that use gender as a dominant category of analysis? In the process of this investigation I examine the ways in which women-authored texts portray acts of political resistance as complex and as compromised by personal struggles and responsibilities. I demonstrate that women's engagement with political resistance is mediated by the struggle against patriarchal authority, male abuse and male violence and examine the

ways in which these struggles, that take place within the broader effort to resist colonialism, radically transform acts of resistance and the process of liberation.

In order to reveal the connections, interconnection and echoes within the group of texts on which I focus, I use a dialogic approach to reading the fiction and non-fiction that is the subject of this thesis. This, as I demonstrate in later sections of this introduction, represents a new interpretative strategy, which allows for the creation of new meanings in individual texts, meanings that derive from their interconnection with other texts. In addition, the value of dialogism is that it offers the opportunity not merely to compare and contrast representations of resistance in these texts, nor simply to illustrate how works converge and contest each other, but to demonstrate that representation itself depends on the “already uttered” word, or the revision and recreation of the “already bespoke” quality of the word in dialogue (Bakhtin 331). Bakhtinian dialogics also, importantly, allows for a focus on how meaning is created from each new historical, social and political context within which the “word” - that is the fictional work, its repetition and revision of other work and critical interpretations of it - is uttered. Using this theoretical approach, I argue that language, as a site of contestation, is central to literary representations of resistance; language not only mirrors the context within which it is used, it also resists and contests it: meaning is produced from that struggle. My aim is to demonstrate that the figures of resistance and the ideologies of gender that both inform and emerge from these novels, are freighted with meaning that derives from external sources: other works of fiction, historical and political narratives, oral narrative, songs, proverbial sayings, and so on, and that their meaning is woven from the thread of these external referents.

The title comes from Erna Brodber’s novel, Myal, which is the focus of Chapter 4 and in her novel refers to the untold history of cultural practices which have been used

not only to resist the dominance of colonial culture but also to heal those who have been damaged by the uncritical internalisation of that culture. I have used Brodber's words to refer primarily to the hidden histories of women's participation in resistance; the use of the word "now" points both to untold histories of the past and to their recovery in the texts of contemporary women writers.

RATIONALE FOR THE THESIS

As previously stated, resistance is a dominant mode of representation in literature from the Caribbean, and as the fictional, critical and theoretical material referred to in the following section demonstrates, many instances of resistance are not straightforwardly oppositional, nor are they heroic gestures of refusal and escape that are claimed, by some critics, to constitute the basis of liberation.¹ In this thesis I argue that Caribbean fictional narratives do create differences between male and female forms of resistance, but that these differences are neither categorical nor clear cut. By focusing on the way in which fictionalised representations of gender power mediate the character, effect and effectiveness of resistance, this study gives a new emphasis and a new direction to interpretations of themes of resistance and liberation in Caribbean fiction. The first section of this introduction begins by exploring the dominant trajectories that have emerged in the treatment of resistance in Caribbean literary criticism, and goes on to outline a theoretical framework for reading resistance; one which allows for a focus on its complex and contradictory nature and which uses gender as a category of analysis. The section ends by arguing that the literary sources of twentieth-century fiction, early slave narratives and colonialist

fiction, can also be used to theorise literary representations of resistance in fiction by contemporary women writers and to point to the entangled and unresolved nature of women's resistance to colonial and patriarchal domination.

A Critical Evaluation of Tropes of Resistance in Caribbean Literary Criticism

Most literary criticism which focuses on Caribbean fiction deploys figures of resistance in the development of a critical methodology. Renu Juneja argues that the formation of a Caribbean culture from the fragments of lost, forgotten or denied cultural forms, necessitates resistance. Resistance, she argues, is represented in Caribbean literature as a defining component in the process of cultural formation in the Caribbean: “[...] West Indian writers typically represent resistance as part of a larger cultural process which moves beyond a simplistic rejection of Western inheritance to a transformation of this inheritance through a process of indigenization” (Caribbean Transactions 5). Similarly, Simon Gikandi describes the process of self-definition in the Caribbean as one characterised by a “discourse of resistance and cultural transformation in which old African cultures become ‘modernized’ by African slaves as they struggle to survive in a hostile terrain [...]” (Gikandi 3). Citing Patrick Taylor’s definition of liberating narratives he argues that Caribbean writers’ radical reworking of the language and literary forms of colonial culture results in the production of a “narrative of liberation” which presents new epistemic and “discursive” possibilities (12).

Resistance as a theme and a textual strategy has been theorised by literary critics Selwyn Cudjoe and Patrick Taylor. In Resistance and Caribbean Literature, Cudjoe argues that “resistance served as the fundamental aesthetic-political quality in the

structuring of Caribbean literature” (56), and conflates literary representation with social reality:

Caribbean society, slavery, poverty, exploitation, racism and all the various negations that alienate the Caribbean people from themselves fashion social relations. Each work of art, and therefore each piece of literature must [...] propose a concrete liberation from these alien and destructive forms of oppression [...]. (60)

Whereas Cudjoe uses Russian Marxist cultural critics such as Boris Suchkor and Vladaimir Shcherbina, Patrick Taylor’s The Narrative of Liberation uses Fanon’s work as a theoretical model to formulate a distinction between narratives of anti-colonial resistance and narratives of liberation. The former, he argues, includes “mythic narratives” which “sustain reactive ethics and tragic circularity”. Narratives of liberation demand the transformation of oppressive social and political structures: “They recognise human agency and responsibility in an open and unknowable history” (70). Both critics suggest an unproblematic connection between literature and political and social reality. Cudjoe insists that “Political vision becomes the basic literary structure and aesthetic sensibility in Caribbean literature” (Resistance 72). He argues that it is not enough for a novel simply to reflect processes of resistance and liberation; the narrative must also engage with the “forward development of history” (265). In a more recent article Taylor begins by arguing that “[...] the main thrust of Caribbean writing has been directed towards reconstructing an emancipatory counter-narrative in opposition to the dominant European discourse” (“Narrative, Pluralism and Decolonization” 137). His analysis in this work compares texts such as Michelle Cliff’s No Telephone to Heaven, described as a work of political conservatism, which leaves the Caribbean, “[...] caught in a vicious circle, devoid of any future, destined

to imperial subordination” (143), with novels by Merle Collins and Sam Selvon. The latter, he argues, are narratives that “can open colonial history to the possibility of decolonization without excluding or effacing the plurality and differences within the Caribbean experience [...]”. He continues: “Recognising the terror of history, its closure is refused. To return to Fanon, decolonization is an open-ended process of entering history without relinquishing its multiple centres” (148-9). Like earlier Caribbean critics such as Bruce King or Edward Baugh who, in an early work, argues that both literature and its criticism are integral to the development of a national consciousness, Taylor too sees literature as part of a project of political emancipation and liberation.² Contemporary Caribbean women novelists and critics continue to position literary production within the context of the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism with the result, as I demonstrate in this thesis, that meaning continues to be inflected by political concerns and the struggle to reshape and transform history.

Literary, Cultural and Political Theories of Resistance that Inform the Literary Analysis of this Study

The following is an outline of the theoretical approaches to reading literary representations of resistance that will enable me to examine more fruitfully the extent to which tropes of resistance in Caribbean fiction are determined by ideologies of gender, and to analyse the challenge that contemporary women’s writing poses to those modes of representation.

Richard Terdiman’s study of resistance as practice and discourse provides a way of connecting Caribbean critics’ use of literature as a social text with my own attempt, in using and revising some of their assumptions, to advance the critical debate that inextricably links Caribbean literature to a political agenda of decolonisation, and that

views resistance, and its repeated representation in literature, as the defining characteristic of Caribbean culture. He argues that the counter-discursive text “plays a crucial role in any oppositional movement”:

[...] we can say that the blockage of energy directed to social change of the structural formation is an important condition of possibility for the textual revolution in which the intelligentsia invested some of the dynamism of that sociohistorical revolution which never occurred. In this sense, literary “revolution” is not simply an analogical formation, still less a trendy metaphor. It is the prolongation of a social process which was blocked off in more material arenas of productive activity and human struggle. Literary revolution is not revolution by homology, but by *intended function*. (80)

It is clear, as this quotation suggests, that Terdiman sees a connection between the failure of the revolution to produce social change - as he insists, “the dominant *still dominates*” - and literary production, into which that revolutionary energy and commitment is re-channelled. Importantly, and in a redirection of Jameson’s now much contested assertion that all “third world” literature is political allegory, he affirms the politically interventional and revolutionary intention of all oppositional literature.³

Using Terdiman’s definition of “counter-discourse”, Tiffin and Lawson emphasise the importance of textual representation as a site of resistance to the political and cultural authority of colonialism, focusing on what they term the “oppositional resilience” of post-colonial texts: “[...] the post-colonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power that resides in discourse and textuality; its resistance then, quite appropriately takes the place in – and from – the domain of textuality, in (among other things) motivated acts of reading. The contestation of post-colonialism is a

contest of representation” (10). As Terdiman’s study shows, however, the site from which counter-discourse or the oppositionally post-colonial text emerges is not just “motivated acts of reading” but language itself; Bakhtin’s dialogism therefore provides a framework for an analysis of novelistic discourse which foregrounds language as a repository of and a participant in the social, political conflict within which it is formed.

In this thesis I demonstrate that, rather than developing what Cudjoe describes as a more “intensely personal” agenda, Caribbean women’s writing situates itself within an established tradition of Caribbean literature that defines itself as politically oppositional or even revolutionary (Caribbean Women Writers 222). My intention is to demonstrate that Caribbean women’s fiction radically challenges established conceptions of revolution, resistance and liberation in male-authored fictional and theoretical texts and demands not only that new formulations of resistance which include women’s participation should be part of a redefinition of the “emancipatory” process, but that the process itself, as it is manifested in male-authored fiction, should be re-examined. In the process of that examination I will argue that Caribbean women’s writing represents resistance as an oppositional form that has to take into account the importance their women characters place on their duty of care to others, on the integral relationship between individuals, family and community, and on the need to confront patriarchal domination in the process of resisting colonial and neo-colonial authority.

Terdiman describes culture as a “field of struggle” and argues that Bakhtin’s focus on the struggle for meaning in language provides a particularly appropriate model for exploring, through literature, the implications of his definition of language as linguistic sign and social system. Counter-discourse emerges as the “properly

defined” function of a system of language which carries within it the conflicts and contradictions of the “social world”: “This inherently adversative character of all discourse is the foundation for [...] counter-discursive expression and conflict [...]” (37). I propose to use a theoretical model of resistance which emphasises the complex and contradictory contexts within which acts of resistance are often positioned and, by using gender as a category of analysis, to contest some of the more monologic and rigidly defined models of resistance used by the literary critics cited earlier in this section. Such a model of resistance is used to emphasise what Terdiman refers to as the “multivocality of any social or historical process” and the “hierarchized struggle in which it plays itself out” (40). In this thesis I will return to the work of Patrick Taylor and through close analysis of the fictional texts, interrogate Fanon’s gendered categories of resistance and liberation, using extensively and in some detail Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth and Studies in a Dying Colonialism to illustrate my argument. In addition, I will return to the work of theorists cited below, not in order to refine further the already much-contested distinction between oppositional resistance, properly counter-hegemonic resistance and liberation, but to open up new readings of the fiction on which I focus and to demonstrate that Caribbean fiction can offer a more nuanced and problematical ‘theory’ of resistance and liberation than existing theoretical and critical work suggests.⁴

In my analysis of fictional texts I focus on what James C. Scott describes as the “messy reality of multiple identities [which] will continue to be the experience out of which social relations are conducted” (43). Acts of resistance and their agents are mediated by, among other factors, history, class, and gender. These factors often act in contradictory ways so that, for example, a women’s engagement in an act of

resistance against colonial authority might involve her complicity in patriarchal systems that confirm her subjugation as a woman. An emphasis on the complex and provisional nature of resistance and the “multiple identities” of its participants, allows me to explore the ways in which, by focusing on characters hitherto marginalised in canonical Caribbean narratives of resistance, fiction by contemporary women writers interrogates the nature and processes of resistance.

Scott’s work explores “the unwritten history of resistance” arguing that although he and other academics had been caught up in what he describes as a “left-wing academic romance with wars of liberation” (28), history suggests that peasant revolts on a large scale have been rare and where they do appear, they are “crushed unceremoniously” (29). As Fanon⁵ too has argued, Scott points out that that a more certain result of peasant rebellion is a more repressive state apparatus:

Whatever else the revolution may achieve, it almost always creates a more coercive and hegemonic state apparatus – one that is able to batten itself on the rural population like no other before it. All too frequently the peasantry finds itself in the ironic position of having helped to power a ruling group whose plans for industrialization, taxation and collectivization are very much at odds with the goals for which peasants had imagined they were fighting. (Scott 29)

In the light of this, he suggests that a more profitable focus might be on “*everyday* forms of peasant resistance” which he cites as “footdragging, dissimulation, false compliance pilfering, feigned ignorance [...] and not least, cultural resistance”(29).⁶ As the examples of resistance in early Caribbean texts that I discuss earlier demonstrate, these acts point to the possibility of “real” gains despite the fact that these acts of resistance leave the symbolic order untouched (33).

Importantly, in relation to literature, Scott argues that one of the paradoxical gains of resistance movements has been “the memory of resistance and courage that may lie in wait for the future. In another echo of Fanon⁷ and again of particular significance to literature, Scott discusses the circular relationship between consciousness and action, arguing that “acts of resistance and thoughts about (or the meaning of) resistance are in *constant* communication - in constant dialogue” (38). Thus oppressed or subjugated peoples dream of rebellion; these dreams may or may not be realised but what is important is that even everyday acts of resistance can only be defined as such in relation to the consciousness of the individuals concerned, and in the articulation of shared values through informal dialogue. He comments that through the “culture that peasants fashion from their experience – their ‘offstage’ comments and conversations, their proverbs, folksongs, and history, legends, jokes, language, ritual, and religion – it should be possible to determine to what degree, and in what ways, peasants actually accept the social order propagated by elites” (41).

Homi Bhabha, whose work is used in Chapters 2 and 4 and Edward Said, among others,⁸ uses Fanon’s distinctions in his analysis of post-colonial texts. Unlike Helen Tiffin, who asserts that decolonising culture necessarily involves a “mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions” (“Post-Colonial Literatures” 23), Said makes a clear distinction between “decolonising” culture and resistance and argues that “[...] the partial tragedy of resistance, is that it must to a certain degree work to recover forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of empire (Culture and Resistance 253). Resistance culture involves the reinscription of colonial forms, whereas a culture of liberation creates new forms and new definitions of individual, nation and culture . The challenge for cultural theory is to take the struggle against colonialism, neo-

colonialism and imperialism beyond resistance “to a new level of contest, a synthesis represented by a war of liberation, for which an entirely new post-nationalist theoretical culture is required” (253).

With a slightly different emphasis, but making the same theoretical point, Gayatri Spivak articulates the problem of voice and representation in a “reverse discourse” model of cultural resistance. Citing Foucault, she argues that although liberation involves, by definition, decolonisation or the freedom from colonial authority, the “practice of liberty”, as distinct from liberation, is what enables a colonised people to create new structures for self-definition that do not rely on colonial structures or practices. Furthermore, self-definition that is predicated upon a reverse-discourse model necessarily excludes what Spivak defines as the voice of the subaltern who resides in the space that “did not share in the energy of this reversal, a space that had no firmly established agency or traffic with the culture of imperialism” (Landry and McLean164).

Less categorically than either Spivak or Said, Bill Ashcroft argues that resistance is “never a simple and transparent polarity” but is “necessarily a mediated act” (32). Benita Parry suggests that resistance is often situated between two theoretical agendas, one which proposes a “reverse discourse” whose objective is to restore “the colonised as subject of its own history” and the other, described as the project of a “postcolonial critique [...] designated as deconstructing and displacing the Eurocentric premises of a discursive apparatus which constructed the Third World not only for the west but also for the cultures so represented” (“Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance”172).

She cites the importance of acts and patterns of resistance which are less easily discerned and writes:

Since they were not calculated to achieve predetermined political ends or to advance the cause of nation-building, the anarchic and nihilistic energies of defiance and identity-assertion, which were sometimes nurtured by dreams, omens and divination, and could take the form of theatre, violated notions of rational protest. (173)

She asserts the legitimacy, however provisional, of representational models of “identity assertion” which draw on past or submerged histories on the grounds that they cannot always be condemned for restoring the “foundational, fixed and autonomous individual”. The value of these practices as acts of resistance is in their reworking and adaptation of the exigencies of contemporary realities. Further, as well as providing affirmation of a “coherent identity”, reverse discourses can function to expose the limits and vulnerabilities of dominant discourses (179, 177).

Using critical tools similar to Said, and drawing similar conclusions, she uses a reading of Fanon and Césaire to propose that the “nativism” described in these texts, and commonly denounced as a “simple inversion” model of resistance, can be interpreted as containing elements which are closer to the strategies of deconstruction and displacement proposed by a “postcolonial critique”. In her analysis of these writers she demonstrates that, taken as a whole, their work is situated somewhere between, in Said’s terms, resistance and opposition, and liberation.

The importance of Parry’s work to my own reading of the significance of gender in literary representations of resistance is that it offers a theoretical model for interpreting the complex identity of resistance, rather than a model which defines resistance according to fixed political or theoretical categories. What neither her essay nor Said’s work offers, is a method for examining the role of gender. Indeed there is

no single text which undertakes a sustained analysis of the significance of gender in representations of anti-colonial resistance.

Ania Loomba's Colonialism/Postcolonialism addresses the importance of agency in an analysis of anti-colonial discourse and argues that defining agency is often most problematic when focusing on women as resisting subjects. Loomba formulates the crucial questions: "[...] to what extent are we the products of dominant ideologies and to what extent can we act against them? From where does rebellion arise?" (231). Can a subject be both socially and historically constructed and able, potentially, to realise herself as a "subjectively centred" agent? In this thesis I examine the ways in which fiction by Caribbean women incorporates some of the uncertainties suggested by Loomba's questions, thereby problematising theoretical constructs of decolonising resistance and suggesting the compromised and "messy" identity of political resistance.

In echoes of R.Radhakrishnan's essay "Nationalism, Gender and the Narrative of Identity", Loomba argues that the spiritual or inner core of national cultures has often been represented as gendered. Thus, the passing on of oral traditions, folk tales and stories has been ascribed to women who are often represented as the keepers and preservers of oral knowledge rooted in a pre-colonial past. The woman thus signifies a link to the past and the source of the cultural identity of the post-colonial nation. This representation often serves to confirm women's invisibility and their absence from the public, political stage; it also results in perpetuating their subjugation by maintaining their invisibility through the uncritical reproduction and affirmation of the cultural forms that enforce their silence. Although Radhakrishnan and Loomba both use examples from Indian culture such as *sati*, as extreme examples of women's subjugation through the validation of past traditions, their examination of the

eneration of women's roles in private or domestic spheres provides a useful basis for re-reading texts by Lovelace and Lamming and for suggesting that the concerns raised in female-authored fiction demand such a re-evaluation.

Literary texts can also be used to theorise the complex, entangled character of resistance in Caribbean fiction. Early texts such as Mary Prince's slave narrative cited below, which point to the compromised nature of women's resistance, can function as important intertexts in representations of women's resistance in fiction by contemporary women writers, and indicate the framework of representation within which contemporary Caribbean women novelists write. Originally published in 1831, Mary Prince's slave narrative represents acts of resistance that are complex or at best symbolic and simply represent an opportunity for her to speak in her own voice. In one example, she describes intervening between her master and his daughter, whom he was violently abusing:

I strove with all my strength to get her away from him; for she was all black and blue with bruises. He beat her with his fist, and almost killed her. The people gave me credit for getting her away. He turned round and began to lick me. Then I said, 'Sir, this is not Turk's island'. He wanted to treat me the same in Bermuda as he had done in Turk's island. (Ferguson 67)

Here Mary Prince does, by her own account, manage to escape a full beating from her master, but the success of her refusal is predicated on her original act of defending her master's daughter; her beatings do not stop, although on one later occasion she does resist on her own behalf: "[...] at last I defended myself, for I thought it was high time to do so" (68). Her attempt at escape is a similarly constrained act of resistance: "So I went down to a neighbouring house and sat down and cried till the next morning, when I went home again, not knowing what else to do" (68). In part, these muted and

incomplete acts of rebellion can be attributed to the fact the Mary was a woman. As critics of African-American slave narratives have pointed out, while an archetypal slave narrative such as Frederick Douglass' equates acts of oppositional violence with resistance and with the achievement of masculinity and eventual liberation, female-authored slave narratives represent their acts of resistance as more compromised and less heroic.⁹ In her introduction to Prince's narrative Moira Ferguson suggests that Mary Prince's continued illness might have been feigned and that her taking of white male sexual partners can be interpreted as a form of "self-expression and a form of control over her circumstances" (13). These acts are forms of resistance that reflect the complex subject position that the author occupies in her own narrative. As black, female and a slave, she is voiceless and triply oppressed: by white men, white women and mulatto or coloured free men and women. Female slave narratives certainly point to the complex and contradictory nature of resistance but as this thesis demonstrates, such compromised acts of resistance are not limited to female enslaved or colonised subjects. While, as the works referred to in this section demonstrate, theoretical and critical studies of resistance are often concerned to define and categorise resistance in its purest expression, male and female authored texts of Caribbean fiction represent resistance as problematic, counter-productive and often effective only at the level of discourse.

In Caribbean colonialist narratives, the slave or the servant is often represented as resisting: Frieda Cassin's recently republished nineteenth-century novel, With Silent Tread, opens by describing the inhuman treatment of a servant/slave who is now a leper and reduced to begging. His former mistress ignores his plea for "a penny" and the black or coloured coachman beats him mercilessly. Minutes later, he leaps out and kisses the mistress' young daughter who is following with her elderly black nurse:

though powerless to resist the flogging, his act of revenge signals his refusal to accept the violence inflicted on him. He demonstrates agency and power, despite being constrained by subjugation and disease. The young girl later dies as a result of that kiss. Later in the novel, one of the characters suggests that the white Creole class live in fear of reprisals from their black servants. She says of their servant, Barys: "As long as she is with us we are comparatively safe. [...] But if we displease her by sending her away it is very probable that she would soon find means to poison us all" (101).

Although I have defined these actions as acts of resistance, because of their individual and specific nature they might also be construed as acts of revenge. It is the prevalence and relentless nature of these actions that transforms them into resistance: the daily acts of revenge or non-compliance serve to destabilise the dominance of the slave-owning class, creating a climate of fear, insecurity and ultimately non-productivity. The historian Bridget Brereton examines the overall effect of the conduct of black house slaves. She cites Elizabeth Fenwick's diaries as an example of 'private' testimony that demonstrates historical insights, in this case that individual acts of resistance were widespread and characterised the slaves' response to their subjugation: "Her slave domestics, hired from their owners, were lazy, self-willed and dishonest: 'pilfering seems habitual and instinctive among domestic slaves [...] I was almost mad with the provocations their dirt, disobedience and dishonesty caused me [...]'" (13). Brereton's citation from another diarist, Amelia Gomez, is evidence of the effectiveness of non-compliance as a strategy for resisting: "[...] this evil increases [...] quite wearing the spirits, as well as the body, it leaves no leisure for any agreeable occupation or even for necessary duties" (13).

Early twentieth-century fictional texts also represent the Caribbean as characterised by violent coercion and resistance. Forms of resistance range from violent, confrontational acts of political resistance, as in Vic Reid's New Day, to the use of textual strategies to signify resistance. An example of textual resistance in novels of the early twentieth-century, is the use of Creole dialogue to oppose the constraining dominance of Standard English, and as a means of bringing into voice individuals marginalised or made invisible by colonialism. Texts such as New Day, Minty Alley, Black Fauns and the slightly later The Lonely Londoners use Creole, as a dominant mode of narration, as a way of signalling resistance to colonial cultural and political dominance. Later works by the writers focused on in this thesis continue to refine and redefine linguistic representations of Creole; they also use modes of perception which derive from hidden, lost or devalued cultures as signs of cultural resistance and to disrupt expectations of linear chronology and coherence and re-imagine and re-inscribe the experience of colonialism and decolonisation.

Gender as a Category of Analysis and as a Mode of Representation in Caribbean Literature and Literary Criticism

By using gender as a category of analysis to examine male and female-authored texts, this thesis develops fresh interpretative strategies for reading canonical, non-canonical and unexamined works of Caribbean fiction. This section begins with a review of a representative body of literary criticism that focuses on Caribbean women's writing and the role of gender in Caribbean literary production. I demonstrate that there is an absence of literary criticism which uses gender as the dominant category of analysis in the treatment of male and female-authored fiction.

The theoretical model which follows, allows for a more productive focus on gender identities, gender roles and relations of gender power.

As critics have noted, Caribbean literary criticism did not, until the 1980s address either the emergence of a body of women's writing or fictional representations of gender identities.¹⁰ Because of a lack of attention to women's writing, recent anthologies have conflated women's literature with issues of gender, and by treating this work in parenthesis, have avoided the challenge that women's fiction might present to common assumptions about a literary tradition, its dominant themes and forms of representation. Where attention is paid to the contribution of women writers, their work is treated as a separate category that complements, but bears no textual relation to, male-authored fiction.¹¹ An example of this critical tendency is the second edition of Bruce King's anthology, West Indian Literature, which contains a section on women writers; their work is used not to destabilise King's introductory claims about "belonging", "order", wholeness or a coherent national identity, but to reinforce those assumptions by fitting unproblematically into the margins of a literary tradition. He does make the important point that the increase and influence of feminist politics in the later half of the twentieth century made possible the publication of women writers and gave their work a receptive audience, but his treatment of the subject of women in Caribbean fiction is constrained by his focus on literature's function as an unmediated mirror of society:

The lack of jobs, the difficulty of obtaining educational qualifications, the unwillingness of males to marry, the instability of marriages, the brutality of many relationships, resulted in West Indian literature having a long history of fiction concerned with the plight of women. (6)

Such criticism isolates “distinctive features” of Caribbean women’s writing (Juneja 22) and even where, as in Gikandi’s work or the work of Nana Wilson-Tagoe, critics suggest that these works have a significant interrelationship with male authored texts, this relationship is not explored.¹² In addition, these works often imply that *only* women’s writing privileges considerations of gender identities and relations.

This tendency to represent Caribbean women’s fiction as separate and distinct is reinforced in the, admittedly few, recent works which focus exclusively on Caribbean women writers. As a result there is an almost essentialist desire to identify differences between male and female authored texts, which are then represented as a function of the author’s gender. A notable example is Selwyn Cudjoe’s interview with Jamaica Kincaid in his edited collection of essays from the First International Conference of Caribbean women’s writing, where he describes “feminist discourse” as “intensely personal, a very interior kind of writing” (222). He suggests that such a discourse defines contemporary Caribbean women’s writing, whereas earlier writing by women participated in “a particular kind of public speaking about the Caribbean self and represents the culmination of a discourse that emphasized the collective rather than the personal self” (41). He cites Sylvia Wynter’s The Hills of Hebron as the novel which marks the end of this “first phase of Caribbean women’s writing” (41), and in his analysis of Wynter’s novel he betrays some ambivalence towards what he defines as the new agenda in women’s writing. Citing Wynter herself Cudjoe writes:

And if, as Wynter insists, Caribbean people were oppressed first as natives, then as blacks, before the question of gender arose, the relative importance of gender has to be considered in that light. And even though Miss Gatha

emerges as a powerful voice in the novel, she is powerful not so much because she is a woman but because of her status as a colonial person [...]. (42)

Whereas Natasha Barnes contextualises Wynter's anti-feminist position, arguing that, though not unproblematically, it reflects the tendency in Caribbean nationalism to see "feminist identity politics as deeply threatening" (35), in this essay, Cudjoe seems to be suggesting that a chronology can be attached to women's experience of oppression: women's oppression as women has not only been recently uncovered and articulated, but recently experienced as such. As King suggests and as my intertextual reading of women's fiction demonstrates, however, from their very early expressions in the novels of the 1920s and '30s, Caribbean writers have reflected a keen awareness of the particular character of women's subjugation and the central importance of gender difference to that experience. Furthermore, narrative concerns for either a "personal" or a "collective" self cannot be gendered in the straightforward way that Cudjoe suggests. As Merle Collins' work certainly shows, women writers remain concerned to refine their expression of the collective self, even at the expense of the development of a fully-realised individual consciousness.

Much literary criticism is still confined to production in journals: some journals, which focus exclusively on Caribbean writing, such as the Journal of West Indian Literature, are intermittent; others, such as ma comere, have been short-lived, and many new journals are not easily available outside their place of publication.¹³ A reliance on this mode of production for critical essays contributes to the compartmentalising of Caribbean literature into unconnected categories and militates against the possibility of interrogating those categories. By examining the interrelationships between male and female texts, this thesis brings a new approach

both to the reading of representations of gender categories and to existing scholarship that focuses on contemporary Caribbean women's fiction.

In the discussion that follows, I demonstrate that although critical anthologies that focus solely on women's fiction suggest a more complex representation of Caribbean female identity than those discussed above, there is an absence of critical work that represents women's texts as functioning in a dialogic relation to male and female authored novels in that tradition.¹⁴ While critical anthologies that focus solely on women's writing necessarily categorise and attempt to define its distinctive features, I do not want to suggest, in this section, that the critical position advanced in these works is therefore a reductive one. In some collections the introductory, framing statements are formulated as questions.¹⁵ Other critics, like Gikandi, emphasise the complex and "self-contradictory" subjectivities of the female protagonists of female authored texts.¹⁶ In her recent study that focuses on "Caribbean Migrant Women Writers", Isabel Hoving describes Caribbean women's writing as "irreducibly different". She continues: "One reason for this difference lies precisely in the fact that their writing takes shape by their engagement in complex, vehement dialogues with their many audiences, dialogues inevitably structured by power, violence and resistance" (2). Linked to a focus on complex subjectivity is the issue of form in Caribbean women's fiction. Susheila Nasta, describing fiction from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia, argues that there is a need to "[...] break through the notion of a literature of opposition [...] and make space for the expression of a 'multiplicity of perspectives' and literary poetics" (xvi). Equally, Nasta argues, critical strategies need to be developed which enable women's voices to be heard and which refuse the easy binarisms of male/female, black/white, colonised/coloniser and so on. O'Callaghan too points to the "multiplicity of narrative voices/perspectives

within a text” which, she argues “facilitate[s] the representation of a world of fluid boundaries” (Woman Version 6).

There is a concern among critics to represent a feminist critique of Caribbean women’s literature, but one that is grounded in the material circumstances of the work’s production. Perhaps the earliest representations of this concern, in the form of a full-length study, are Out of the Kumbula, and Cudjoe’s Caribbean Women Writers, discussed above. The editors of the former, Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savoury Fido, use the term “womanist”, Alice Walker’s redefinition of ‘feminist’, to define the approach that connects the wide variety of essays in the anthology. As the following quotation shows, not unlike King and a generation of earlier critics, the editors emphasise the social and political function of literature and literary criticism:

Literary studies are deeply involved with the creative values of a society and the art forms a society produces express, above all, those values. The fight before us then is to protect the womanist cultural elements which inform women writers, [...] as well as to connect with other aspects of the feminist and other political struggles to give women an equal share of socio-economic power. In this struggle, it is important to integrate intellectual pursuits with humane concerns [...]. (16)

Placing a similar emphasis on a politically situated criticism, Merle Collins argues that “[...] the most sensitive critic, the one with the keenest appreciation of the Caribbean woman’s story [...]” is one who is also interested in “[...] developing an understanding of the society that has produced the literature”. Part of that understanding involves a search for a “deeper understanding” of Caribbean women’s experiences (Framing the Word 9,11).

Some of the dangers of an approach that uses literature as a vehicle for explaining or understanding social phenomena can be seen in the work of early critics such as Baugh, King or Ramchand.¹⁷ Kathleen Balutansky connects the tendency to conflate fictional constructs and 'real' experience, with the preoccupation with authenticity. In a recent essay she warns against "[...] the conflating of women authors with their fictional characters under the rubric 'Caribbean women'"; this, she argues leads to "[...] viewing Caribbean women collectively as the text of a social document that reinscribes reductive and stereotypical notions of women's 'identity' [...]". She suggests that a more fruitful critical position is one which examines female protagonists in women's fiction as the "embodiment of female positions on Caribbean issues" (269). Balutansky's argument reflects the complex and difficult position that critics of Caribbean women's fiction try to negotiate; one which, as the above discussion suggests, is constantly being re-examined. The topic of this thesis might lend itself to a reading of fiction as a "social document": many of the works are autobiographical; they have been selected because of their explicit engagement with socio-political issues and furthermore, the novels engage with specific historical events as well as political events in the recent past. Despite a necessary awareness of the texts' own complicity in a network of social relations, I have attempted to focus on the linguistic and textual strategies used in the fictional works or what Gates defines as "its modes of 'representation'" rather than "the representative", or socio-political (Black Literature 4). My use of Bakhtin, discussed in the following sections, and Gates' theory of signifying, provides an opportunity to address the external referents within the texts through an analysis of its language and structure. It provides an opportunity, for example, not simply to demonstrate how texts such as Collins' celebrate Creole language but how the use of Creole repositions its speaking subjects

and forces an interrogation of language as ideology. Dialogism provides a critical approach to fictional texts that facilitates an engagement with the texts' social and political themes, through an analysis of language as a socially produced construct. By using an intertextual approach, influenced by Bakhtin, this thesis differs markedly from the criticism that focuses on the political *function* of literature and its role in nation building. It also creates a framework for opening up meaning in fictional texts, by positioning the work of contemporary women writers within a tradition of Caribbean literary representation, and by analysing the role and function of women in all these narratives in the context of the gender ideologies within which their roles are defined.

In this section I contextualise my own use of gender as an analytical framework, used to point to the interrelatedness of political narratives, narratives of discovery and fictional texts. There is an emerging body of single articles that focus on gender power and gender roles and relationships in Caribbean male-authored fiction. Articles by Sandhya Shetty, to which I return in Chapter 5, and Linden Lewis, examine representations of masculinity in Earl Lovelace's The Wine of Astonishment and The Dragon Can't Dance; Kwame Dawes' article explores the link between patriarchal culture and violence in Roger Mais' Brother Man. In addition, there is a section in Out of the Kumbla, which examines the representation of women in Roy A.K. Heath's novels and in the work of Wilson Harris. As this summary of an embryonic area of study illustrates, however, there is very little work which uses gender as a category of analysis in a range of male and female authored texts and which studies the interrelations between texts.

My use of the term "gender as a category of analysis" derives from Joan W. Scott's elaboration of the term in her article: "Gender: A Useful Category of

Historical Analysis”, Scott begins by analysing ways in which gender has been used, though not necessarily developed, as a category for historical analysis. In her introductory paragraphs she warns: “It has not been enough for historians of women to prove either that women had a history or that women participated in the major political upheavals of Western civilization” (1055) and continues to argue that the central question is rather: “How does gender work in human social relationships? How does gender give meaning to the organization and perception of historical knowledge?” She writes: “gender is the primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated” (1069) but she stresses the importance of recognising that structures of dominance and control are articulated in both personal and public domains; because of this there is a need to examine the role that gender plays in defining the connections and disconnections between the personal, subjective, public and social domains: “To pursue meaning, we need to deal with the individual subject as well as social organization and to articulate the nature of their interrelationships, for both are crucial to understanding how gender works, how change occurs” (1067). Of particular relevance to this study are her concluding comments, which focus on the gendered identity of public politics:

Power relations among nations and the status of colonial subjects have been made comprehensible (and thus legitimate) in terms of relations between male and female. The legitimizing of war - of expending young lives to protect the state - has variously taken the form of explicit appeals to manhood...and of associations between masculinity and national strength. High politics is itself a gendered concept, for it establishes its crucial importance and public power, the reasons for and the fact of its highest authority, precisely in its exclusion of women from its work. (1073)

In focusing on Caribbean literature which foregrounds political concerns, I propose to look at the way in which women's writing challenges the assumptions made in earlier male authored texts about precisely that relationship between "masculinity and national strength". I argue that the exclusion of women from active participation or involvement in the political discourses of liberation is a dominant feature of both male and female authored texts of the period up to the 1980s; the group of contemporary women writers on whom I focus and who emphasise the participation of women in their representation of political themes, are challenging not only women's exclusion from the "work" of politics but also the public/private opposition on which such exclusion rests. My interpretation of these texts challenges the critical approaches which insist on a dichotomised reading of Caribbean literature, one which reinforces the male/female, public/private binarisms that categorise male and female authored literary production. I demonstrate that, as Nana Wilson-Tagoe argues, contemporary women novelists have begun to "deconstruct divisions between domestic and public domains" by connecting sexual politics with "the wider politics of history and transformation" (251).

In a theoretical elaboration of this point Spivak interrogates the dangers of simply reversing the male/female, public/private opposition and foregrounding women writers' exploration of feminine spaces described by Cudjoe as "intensely personal". She argues that feminist theory characterises as a "private" space that which is marginalised within a masculinist discourse which privileges public and official spaces. In the process of reversing this opposition and marginalisation, feminism argues that the private sphere, the terrain of emotions, sexuality and so on is so important that a masculinist authority feels obliged to repress it. She states that "deconstructive" feminism does not simply desire a reversal of the public/private

opposition so that the marginalised spaces become central, but a “shifting limit” in the way that both are defined:

The shifting limit that prevents this feminist reversal of the public-private hierarchy from freezing into a dogma is the displacement of the opposition itself. For if the fabric of the so-called public sector is woven of the so-called private, the definition of the private is marked by public potential, since it is the weave, or texture of public activity. (“Explanation and Culture” 30)

The fiction I write about suggests that Caribbean women's writing does not simply reinscribe or reverse the spaces marked out by a predominantly male-authored tradition but actively engages with it to create new spaces and new definitions of political resistance and liberation.

Despite Joan W. Scott's dismissal of the work of feminist psychologists Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan, I intend to draw on Gilligan's work to define what I interpret as the persistence of a “duty of care”, used by writers to inform the relations of their women characters to others and to their understanding of and participation in public politics. Scott objects to what she defines as Gilligan's “literalism” and her too limited focus on family relations as the site from where gender identities are produced. She argues that gender roles and identities are produced by more than the actual structures of family: they emerge from symbolic systems that operate outside nuclear households, in other words, in and through language. It is through language that societies, “represent gender, use it to articulate the rules of social relationships, or construct the meaning of experience. Without meaning, there is no experience: without processes of signification there is no meaning” (1063). Scott, like Spivak, argues that there is a need constantly to examine the binary opposition of male/female, masculine/feminine that feminist thinking wants to oppose; Gilligan and

Chodorow, on the other hand, rely on descriptive and universalising theories to reiterate already fixed gender categories (1065).

Gilligan's study, In A Different Voice is, as the title suggests, a study of gender difference that reflects, though not explicitly, Luce Irigaray's assertion that: "One of the distinctive features of the female body is its toleration of the other's growth within itself without incurring illness or death for either one of the living organisms".

Irigaray continues, distinguishing between male and female culture: "Whereas the female body genders with respect for difference, the patriarchal social body constructs itself hierarchically, excluding difference" (45). While, as my references to Spillers below indicates, I have avoided potentially essentialist notions of gender identity in favour of more "materialist" and historically situated readings of gender,¹⁸ I do use Gilligan's work in Chapters 2, 4 and 5 as a way of exploring women's motivations for specifically compromised acts of resistance and to examine the complex relationship between care and a commitment to others, and a masculine "ethic of rights" as outlined in the findings of Gilligan's study. One of Gilligan's interviewees uses a phrase, "the sound of one hand clapping", a version of which is also used as one of the subheadings in Collins' novel Angel. In Angel the phrase reflects one of the idiomatic sayings, spoken by the women in the novel, and used to inform the principles by which the women characters live. Gilligan's subject, a doctor, describes the basis on which she makes ethical judgements in the following way:

By yourself there is little sense to things. It is like the sound of one hand clapping, the sound of one man or woman, there is something lacking. It is the collective that is important to me and that collective is based on certain guiding principles, one of which is that everybody belongs to it and that you all come away from it. (160)

Gilligan defines the responses of the doctor to questions about ethics and her motivations for becoming a doctor as ones founded on an “ethic of nurturance, responsibility and care”. She comments: “To this aspiring maternal physician, the sound of one hand clapping [is]...a human absurdity, the illusion of a person standing alone in a reality of interconnection” (160). In contrast, she argues, in male adult development, emphasis is placed on achievement and success, and “relationships, whatever their particular intensity, play a relatively subordinate role in the individual drama of adult development” (153). Despite Scott’s claim, however, Gilligan’s research does not merely describe and leave in place these binaries: one of her conclusions is that a masculine concept of identity that gains authority from success and achievement needs to be expanded to “include the experience of interconnection”, and at the same time, the principle of nurturance and care needs to include the masculine ethic of truth, fairness, justice and the “rights” of the individual. As the novels of Collins and Brodber show, although their characters cannot be rigidly defined according to the kind of gender distinctions defined by Gilligan, they can be used as a way of analysing one of the subject positions that the older generation of women characters occupy and which defines the character of their acts of resistance.

In a more historically specific analysis of gender identity, Hortense Spillers examines how gender distinctions in slave and therefore post-slavery cultures are blurred by the experience of slavery itself. The “Middle Passage” she defines as “nowhere at all” and argues that “under these conditions, one is neither female nor male, as both subjects are taken into account as quantities” (“Mama’s Baby” 661). During the period of African slavery in America, but also as Spillers suggests, “in both indigenous African cultures and in what becomes her ‘home’” the African woman slave “performed tasks of hard physical labor - so much so that the

quintessential 'slave' is not a male, but a female" (661). She also argues that the right of the father to "name" his offspring was denied the African male slave, but at the same time the mother, the more concrete physical presence, was usually lost or destroyed. To that extent, therefore the category "feminine" as defined by patriarchal culture, was not a description available to female slaves. Throughout her essay, Spillers problematizes the "traditional symbolics of female gender", and the importance of her work, and of Susan Willis' introductory remarks in her work Specifyin', is that they both provide a concrete, historical dimension to an analysis of gender roles, identities and relationships in male and female authored texts.¹⁹

Dialogism and Intertextuality as a Framework for Reading the Interrelatedness of Caribbean Literary Production

In order to examine both the linguistic and structural features of the fictional and theoretical texts and the ways in which they derive meaning and significance from interactions with a complex web of Caribbean literary, political and theoretical voices that can be described as intertexts, I propose to use a theoretical model of intertextuality that draws primarily on the work of Bakhtin but incorporates critical theories that have been influenced by or strongly echo Bakhtinian dialogics such as Henry Louis Gates' theory of signifyin(g) and Evelyn O'Callaghan's model of "version(ing)". I propose to use aspects of these literary theorists, in conjunction with my own reading of Bakhtin, to argue that the fiction of contemporary Caribbean women writers effects a radical re-voicing of canonical Caribbean texts, revising and

resisting its dominant tropes of resistance and liberation by re-inscribing a differently gendered construction of resistance and the process of liberation. This section includes a discussion of key concepts such as “influence” and the “already uttered” that inform my reading of Caribbean fiction and which derive from Bakhtin’s theories of novelistic discourse. It also addresses the applicability of dialogism to an analysis of traditionally excluded categories of analysis such as gender and race.

Graham Allen argues that modern literary theory regards all texts as “built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature”; intertextuality has become such a crucial term in critical practice because it “foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life” (5). He cites Kristeva’s translation of Bakhtin as a work which, in the process of translation, “transforms, revises and redirects” the original (35) and summarises her coinage of the term “intertextuality” as related to that process. As Allen observes, both Kristeva and Bakhtin share the notion that texts “contain within them the ideological struggles expressed in society through discourse” (36). Thus utterances are shaped by competing ideological forces which create meaning or compete to subvert or change meanings. These are not, as Allen emphasises, external influences that can be studied as background contexts, but intertexts, intrinsically woven into the meaning of the texts or utterances themselves:

If texts are made up of bits and pieces of the social text, then the ongoing ideological struggles and tensions which characterize language and discourse in society will continue to reverberate in the texts themselves [...] As such, texts have no unity or unified meaning on their own, they are thoroughly connected to ongoing cultural and social processes. (36-7)

Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein also argue that Kristeva's development of the term "intertextuality" was itself "a complex, intertextual event, one that involved both inclusion and selectivity". Although, as Allen suggests, Kristeva uses a "semiotic" approach to the study of texts, Clayton and Rothstein argue that semiotics is displaced in her work by her use of Bakhtin to construct a more explicitly ideological critical theory. At the same time, her approach to Bakhtin is itself "mediated by the texts of Derrida and Lacan, so that her account of Bakhtin, as well as of semiotics, is destabilized". Kristeva, they argue, replaces Bakhtin's "word" with "text", thus textualising Bakhtin's terminology and changing his ideas "just enough to allow the new concept of intertextuality to emerge" (Clayton and Rothstein 18-19).

In his essay, "Discourse and the Novel", Bakhtin distinguishes between speech as "transmission" and speech as "representation" without substituting, as Kristeva does, one for the other. His separate but related use of these terms suggests an important interconnection between the "everyday" speech of a speaking person in "real life" and speech as representation "fixed in writing"(338). This interrelationship between the spoken word and the word as text is developed throughout this essay and is the focus of the sub-section "The Speaking Person in the Novel":

The speaking person and his discourse in everyday speech, we have said, serves as a *subject* for the engaged, practical transmission of information, and not as a *means* of representation.[...] But this emphasis on engaged discourse does not exclude certain aspects of representability. During everyday verbal transmission of another's words, the entire complex of discourse as well as the personality of the speaker may be expressed and even played with (in the form of anything from an exact replication to a parodic ridiculing and exaggeration of gestures and intonation). [...] everyday episodes involving the same person,

when they become linked, already entail prose devices for the double voiced and even double-languaged representation of another's words. (339-40)

Conversational speech, he argues, comes with its own quotation marks. Speakers explicitly mark their words as belonging to someone else with phrases such as "people say", "he says" and so on (338). Speakers refer to public opinion, to anecdotes told by others, to well-known proverbs and aphorisms and they give the voice of these utterances new meanings, emphasis or "accents" as they speak them. Thus, at least two voices function in a large proportion of every speaker's speech. In order to determine meaning in this double voiced or double languaged exchange, each speaker relies on external factors such as the identity of the speaker, the audience, the context of the speech, or what Bakhtin describes as the "entire complex of discourse", in order to determine meaning.

The term "utterance", in Bakhtin's work, is used to define a unit of language and reinforces the idea that a word is produced by specific individuals and given new meaning when uttered in new social or historical situations: meanings are not fixed, but are endlessly transformed, re-inflected and renegotiated in new situations and by new speakers. Every word has an "internal dialogism": "the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object in a dialogic way" (279).

It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents. The word, directed toward its object enters a dialogically agitated and tension filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group; and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic

layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.

(276)

Each object is defined in ways which reveal a multiplicity of value judgements, points of view, histories and social contexts and this “dialogic orientation” is the property of “*any discourse*”(279). The “artistic prose” writer more than any other writer, however, is aware of the contradictory values and assumptions contained within the word and its social contexts. The external influences and contexts that shape meaning are described as social “heteroglossia” and it is these, as well as the internal dialogism of the word, which the prose artist “elevates” into representation: “The prose artist elevates the social heteroglossia surrounding objects into an image that has finished contours, an image completely shot through with dialogized overtones; he creates artistically calculated nuances on all the fundamental voices and tones of this heteroglossia” (278-9).

The text is thus woven from the internal conflicts and contradictions inherent in every word, from the external interconnections between the social and ideological contexts which shape meaning, and from its interrelationship to other texts; it is the assimilated “other” in discourse. The extent to which the prose artist manipulates this heteroglossia varies between texts and with different stylistic effects. Caribbean novels, as with much marginalised discourse, self-consciously manipulate the social heteroglossia within which words achieve meaning; the “dialogised overtones” of words and the “other” within words are all highlighted by these writers whose work demonstrates an acute awareness that, as Dale Peterson points out, “articulation is a primary act of cultural intervention” (91).

The Importance of Literary “Influence” in an Analysis of Intertextual Relations Between Caribbean Literary and Non-Literary Texts

One of the terms Bakhtin uses to draw attention to the interrelationship between written texts or the “word fixed in writing” is “influence”. The term, though often conjoined with studies of intertextuality is nevertheless one that is contested, particularly by feminists and post-modern critics. As Susan Stanford Friedman points out in her essay, “Weavings: Intertextuality and the (Re)Birth of the Author”, “influence” carries with it notions of origin/originality, genius and authorial power. “Intertextuality” she argues, is used oppositionally by Kristeva and Barthes in part, to theorise a resistance to the colonising, hegemonic impulse of “influence”, a concept which is central to exclusionary projects of canon-formation. The emphasis in these theories of intertextuality is on the text as a polyphonic site where diverse and conflicting voices struggle, resist and co-exist. Bakhtin’s use of the term “influence” does not carry with it suggestions of passivity and dominance but connotes active, constructive and productive engagement with not just one influence but several. He states that the influence of one discourse over another is one which prompts the revision and development of “already uttered” modes of representation and the creation of new forms of expression that come already “freighted” with meaning (331). The struggle for influence within the consciousness of an author is, he argues, essential to creative expression in the novel and is the “fertile soil for experimentally objectifying another’s discourse” (348).

A theoretically legitimate concept of influence is essential to my approach to this study, not least because the term can be used to emphasise the historical specificity of the novels and their relation to other historically situated texts. The political themes

and concerns, the ideological contexts that inform these novels, and the literary forms used by the women writers in this study place their work firmly within Caribbean traditions of literary production. Importantly, contemporary women writers are, unlike earlier male writers, less influenced by colonialist fiction and less concerned with the need to work within, while opposing, European canonical literary strategies. The challenge for contemporary women writers concerned, as were previous generations of Caribbean writers, with the ever repeated tragedy of revolutionary betrayal and the unfinished narrative of political liberation, is to represent these “already uttered” themes in different ways. It is, in Bakhtin’s words, to produce “a further creative development of another’s (more precisely half other’s) discourse in a new context and under new conditions” (347).

Dialogics, Gender and The Literary Margins

There is an established tradition of what Helen Tiffin calls “canonical counter-discourse” (Post-Colonial Literatures 22) and a growing body of literary criticism that plots intertextual relations between Caribbean literature and English canonical texts. Tiffin and other post-colonial critics such as Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths use, in separately –authored work, Terdiman’s concept of counter-discourse to refer exclusively to resistance which “returns the gaze of the imperial text” (Ashcroft 35). Much attention continues to be paid to the use and function of Shakespeare’s The Tempest as an intertext in Caribbean fiction and to its reinscription of the Prospero/Caliban relationship; intertextual relations are also plotted between canonical texts of Victorian fiction such as Jane Eyre or Little Dorrit.²⁰ John Thieme’s monograph focuses on Naipaul’s use of a wide range of literary allusions: including Conrad, Dickens and popular writers such as Marie Corelli. He states that

Naipaul's work includes allusion to calypso, to Hollywood and European cinema and forms of Hindu culture. The effect, he writes is a: "[...] repudiation of narrow nationalistic concerns in favour of a broad-based view of culture which ignores traditional divisions and eschews any form of provincialism"(11).

Like Belinda Edmonson's Making Men, which begins with an exploration of the connection between literary constructs of Victorian nationalism and the novels of Naipaul and Lamming, and continues by exploring contemporary Caribbean women's subversion of those patriarchal constructs of nationalism, Kathleen J. Renk's work examines the way in which Caribbean women's "decolonising" fictions oppose the supremacy of Victorian patriarchal structures and the "myth of the family, as it appears in Victorian nineteenth-century discourse" (8). The novels on which she focuses are described as explicitly "anti-nationalist" and experimental in form and structure whereas the Victorian realist text, the model for early novelists such as Claude McKay, perpetuates "[...] static configurations of gender, race, colour, identity, family, and nation" (152). The decolonising fictions referred to in this study include work by Dionne Brand, Michelle Cliff, Jamaica Kincaid, Erna Brodber and Jean Rhys, and with the exception of Brodber, are written by women who, as Renk herself points out, migrated from the Caribbean before the beginning of their adult life. She argues that these women writers, apart from Rhys, were "enabled by their Caribbean precursors" and that "Caribbean nationalist texts serve as the foundation for these women writers" (12). She does not, however, investigate the specific or intertextual relationship between earlier male authored text and women's fiction, although there is some analysis of McKay's Banana Bottom and a brief reference to G's mother in Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin, as the prototypical Caribbean

mother. These works investigate how contemporary Caribbean women's fiction 'writes back' to English canonical fiction.

There is, however, very little criticism which undertakes a study of intertextual relations between texts in a Caribbean literary tradition, and none which is both intertextual and provides a sustained analysis of gender identities, roles and relationships. Although Belinda Edmondson's Making Men does not take a specifically intertextual approach, her work represents an originary moment in its focus, in one chapter, on points of comparison between male and female writers. Like Sandhya Shetty, she argues that in the texts on which she focuses, "acts of resistance themselves are associated with the masculinised characteristics of violent agency" (107) and it is this that Caribbean women writers Paule Marshall, Michelle Cliff and Jamaica Kincaid, oppose. In this study, my intention is to contribute to this very new area of scholarship by using gender as a category of analysis in order to plot the complex interrelationship between texts *within* a body of twentieth-century Caribbean literature, and to demonstrate how gender ideologies shape and transform representations of resistance and liberation.

Mary O'Connor argues that Bakhtin's work offers a "theory of co-existent subject positions which we take up in relation to the various discourses that are active in the world [...] They allow for a model of intersecting ideologies, in other words, a connection with history in society, as well as a model of connecting with others" (201). An awareness of "co-existent subject-positions" is evidenced in the "double-voiced discourse of feminist texts" which O'Connor connects, in black women's fiction, to a racialised "double-consciousness" (202). Her analysis focuses on the multi-vocal quality of a narrative voice that articulates multiple selves realised in dialogue with others:

The self produced for the moment must necessarily redo itself for the next encounter. In the moment of so-called knowing itself in language, it must revise that knowledge because one's language is always handed down and always addressed to another. (202)

Mae Gwendolyn-Henderson also focuses on the multi-vocality of African-American women's fiction but chooses what she describes as Hans-Georg Gadamer's less confrontational model of dialogism as a way of theorising these texts. She argues that the "interlocutory character of black women's writing" is a means of describing, not just its relationship to external discourses, or the "generalised Other [but] a dialogue with aspects of otherness within the self" (146,147). She defines a culturally specific dialogism, and one that is also able to represent dialogue with and within constructed and emerging subjectivities, as "speaking in tongues":

[...] black women must speak in a plurality of voices as well as in a multiplicity of discourses. This discursive diversity, or simultaneity of discourse, I call "speaking in tongues" [...] a practice associated with black women in the Pentecostal Holiness church, the church of my childhood, and the church of my mother. (149)

Caribbean women authors write within a similar complexity of relations. Their work does not, as O'Connor writes, simply oppose its exclusion in male writing but reveals and examines the "unvoiced exiled world of women [...] in all its variety" (217). In his discussion of the work of Merle Hodges and Zee Edgell, Gikandi writes:

"Rejecting the common notion of a subject whose identity is defined and fixed by the dominant patriarchal culture, Hodge and Edgell posit a self that is defined by ideological ambiguity and a self-contradictory identity" (203). The work of women novelists on which I focus opposes, reinscribes and transforms white, male-authored

texts of colonial domination: The Nelson West Indian Reader in Erna Brodber's Myal; legal documents used by colonisers to subvert customary and orally inscribed property and inheritance practice in Merle Collins' The Colour of Forgetting; religious and European literary texts in Collins' Angel, Beka Lamb and Myal. They also speak to a tradition of male-authored texts as well as to contemporary discourses in the growing body of Caribbean women writers. Their work repeats the "already uttered" themes of resistance and liberation in Caribbean literature, and at the same time points to unexamined sites of meaning within these well-trodden areas of representation. Female subjectivity is problematised, not merely substituted in the texts' representation of these themes, and multi-vocal narrative strategies are used to reflect not just the impossibility, but the undesirability, of a unified and coherent female subject.

Dale Peterson points out that the emergence of Bakhtin's works in the European and North American academy coincided with a re-evaluation of African-American literary texts that had been excluded from the Black canon because they did not seem to be expressly concerned with issues of race. What critics missed in these texts was their "irreverent double-talk" that made meaning through indirection. Peterson cites Henry Louis Gates as the critic who, most influentially, led a critical re-appraisal of vernacular discourse which exploits the slippage and instability of African-American vernacular expression, "[...]from the behind-the-back double-talk so joyously celebrated in the slave tales of the Signifying Monkey to the complex intertextuality of Ishmael Reed's pastiches of represented Blackness" (93). Peterson writes:

Had he lived to hear it, Bakhtin would have delighted in the significant crossover that has now occurred between book-smart definitions of "signification" and street-smart appreciations of "signifyin(g)". Finding useful

an elaborate dialogic pun, Gates has devised a mature theory of African American discourse patterns that depends upon rapid, context-specific apprehensions of “signifyin(g)” significations. (93)

The aspect of Gates’ Bakhtinian theory that Peterson focuses on, is its function as a means of revealing a “hidden dialogicality within modes of narration” (94).

“Signifyin(g)” is also used by Gates as a way of plotting intertextual relations between texts thereby reconstructing African-American literary tradition or charting what he calls “relations of signifyin(g)” (Black Literature 290).

Gates uses two figures, Esu, from Yoruba mythology and the African-American Signifying Monkey, to frame his repetition and revision of “Bakhtin’s metaphor of double-voiced discourse” (The Signifying Monkey 131). The former, Esu, speaking with two mouths “serves as a figure for the nature and function of interpretation and double-voiced utterance” whereas “Signifyin(g)”, the term that derives from the language of the Signifying Monkey “functions as a metaphor for formal revision, or intertextuality, within the Afro-American literary tradition” (xxi). Gates uses both these figures to foreground the “double-voiced” quality of African-American texts which speak both to Western traditions of literary production and traditions of black literature in America. In addition, in his focus on the Signifying Monkey and on the practice of “Signifyin(g)” he points to the importance of the vernacular as a point of connection and disconnection, using his theory of “Signifyin(g)” to demonstrate, “[...] how the vernacular informs and becomes the foundation for formal black literature[...].” (The Signifying Monkey xxii).

Gates’ theory is used in the final chapter of this thesis, which focuses on post-modern revisions of history and narrative; the post-structuralist influences which inflect his work make it particularly appropriate to the argument developed in the

closing chapter, which foregrounds the ambiguities of Caribbean vernacular word play and interrogates the relationship between language and meaning. The language of Signifyin(g) and the body of poems that forms the Monkey's text is one which self-consciously exploits the ambiguities of language: it celebrates the "free play of language" itself. Its function is to playfully repeat and revise already uttered words in its own repertoire of poetic word games, and in the process of repetition, to expose the multiplicity of meaning in each signifier. Signifyin(g) as oral word-play depends on sound for the elaboration of meaning, using rhyming and punning to redirect the intention of particular words. Gates signals the connection between this black vernacular practice and post-structuralist theories:

In opposition to the apparent transparency of speech, this poetry calls attention to itself as an extended linguistic sign, one composed on various forms of the signifiers peculiar to the black vernacular. Meaning, in these poems, is not proffered, it is deferred, and it is deferred because the relationship between intent and meaning, between the speech act and its comprehension, is skewed by the figures of rhetoric or signification of which these poems consist. (53)

Gates uses his theory of "Signifyin(g)" to point to the earliest examples of a double voiced textual strategy, the slave narratives, and to examine textual strategies used to make the "white written text speak with a black voice" (131). More recent fiction he examines, such as Reed's Mumbo Jumbo or Alice Walker's The Color Purple signals its dialogic relation with other literary voices within the same, as well as different, literary traditions. All the novels which form part of my thesis self-consciously construct a dialogue with other discourses of post-colonial representation as well as with colonialist narratives: they incorporate what Bakhtin defines as the "concealed speech" of the other, which serves to "unmask" the hidden meanings in the discourse

of the other (304). They also point to new possibilities and new meanings: configurations of resistance and liberation which are not dependent on the achievement of masculine self-assertion; models of resistance which centralise women's experiences of care; narratives which refuse teleological models of national liberation.

Musical Intertexts and Caribbean Literature

In Chapter 4 I use the work of cultural theorist Dick Hebdige, whose book Cut 'n Mix, reflects the influence of theories of intertextuality, to examine the significance of Brodber's use of musical intertexts in her novel Myal. Hebdige's use of the term "dub" refers to the practice, begun in Jamaica in the late 1960s, of producing 'new' music by rearranging the tracks of the original song. On the whole, this was done in two ways: by foregrounding the drum and bass sections of the original track, usually called the dub version, or by overlaying the track with a commentary or "talk over" by a DJ, a practice known as "toasting" (Linton Kwesi Johnson 398-402), which effects a celebration of the original even while creating a space for parody, political or social commentary, or a general updating of the lyrics. The isolation of the drum and bass could be said to represent a revoicing of the emphasis, in African music, on rhythm and percussion, particularly since the popularity of "dub" coincided with the rise of the Black Power movement in the Caribbean. The "dub version" can also be seen as a self-conscious affirmation of oral storytelling practices, where each "version" of the story changes with the telling, and more significance is attached to the newest "version" than to the form of its original conception. Hebdige links the production of "dub" to the dynamic, mixed and overlapping cultural heritage of the Caribbean.

My use of Hebdige deliberately recalls Evelyn O'Callaghan's work, Woman Version, which begins by formulating a theory of Caribbean women's literature that interrogates notions of originality. She argues that Caribbean women's writing should be approached 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) [...]" (11). In fact her work is less concerned with an examination of the way in which fiction by women writers "plays with/subverts" the male dominated canon of Caribbean literature and much more concerned, as she states in the introduction, to test the applicability of what are largely European literary theories to her analysis of Caribbean women's fiction. There are no specific references to male-authored canonical texts, nor are the novels read intertextually; it is theoretical practices, not earlier texts in the tradition of Caribbean fiction, which are cut and mixed to suit the specific cultural purposes of her analysis.

I have used this introductory chapter to demonstrate that the argument in the chapters that follow will provide a new critical perspective on the treatment of themes of resistance and liberation in Caribbean fiction. By using gender as an analytical tool, this thesis offers new interpretations of the "already uttered" themes of resistance and liberation. Its dialogic approach to the function of gender power in a wide range of Caribbean narratives signals its departure from earlier criticism of female-authored texts that treat this work either in isolation or only in relation to other women's writing. The theoretical material outlined in this chapter functions as a form of critical "heteroglossia" and provides the context from which the new meanings articulated in this thesis, emerge. Rather than close down interpretations of the text by making it fit into a single theoretical approach, several theoretical works are used in an attempt to produce 'original' interpretations of canonical and new or non-canonical fiction. In



addition, as the second chapter demonstrates, throughout the thesis, a range of 'primary' material is used in order to illustrate patterns of representation that emerge from selected fictional and non-fictional narratives; these also form part of the 'theoretical framework'.

Through an analysis of the interrelatedness of male and female fiction that uses tropes of resistance and liberation, this study demonstrates that contemporary women's fiction serves both to consolidate a Caribbean tradition of novelistic production that intervenes and attempts to advance the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism, and to point to significant absences in that literature's representation of resistance. Although my work centres on two novels by Merle Collins, her work and the work of the other contemporary Caribbean women writers on whom I focus, is read in the context of a broad range of male and female authored texts that cover nearly a century of fictional writing in the Caribbean. The critical attention paid to these works varies widely: although the work of male-authored fiction by Lamming and Lovelace might be considered 'canonical', there is little criticism of Lamming's Season of Adventure or Lovelace's The Schoolmaster or Salt, all of which I discuss in some detail in subsequent chapters. There is a significant body of articles that addresses the work of Erna Brodber and Zee Edgell's Beka Lamb, but other fiction by the Caribbean women writers who are the focus of this study has received little or no critical attention: Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron, for example, published in 1962, is not mentioned in an essay by Edward Baugh which surveys Caribbean literary production in the "Sixties and Seventies".²¹ As these critical omissions demonstrate, this study intervenes in existing scholarship in the field of Caribbean literature by repositioning critical focus on Caribbean literary

traditions and by using hitherto neglected work to reconfigure an emerging literary tradition.

I treat the theme of resistance as broadly as possible, focusing on different ways in which resistance is enacted and on the different conditions and possibilities of resistance in texts that cover a wide range of literary periods: I demonstrate that resistance determines and is determined by the different and sometimes contradictory subject positions that male and female characters occupy. The thesis begins by arguing that Caribbean novelists, writing in the twentieth century, have often used language and fictional structures to signify political resistance to colonialism. Collins' use of Creole, and her radical and creative transformation of the *bildungsroman* in her novel Angel, is used to demonstrate how the central importance given to women's voices in her fiction determines both the nature and the effect of her re-inscription of formal literary structures. Her novel is discussed in relation to fiction by George Lamming, Merle Hodges, V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon; I examine the ways in which the novel, Angel, radically extends the formal transformations of its literary predecessors, and use these earlier novels to provide a framework within which the formal, literary challenges that Collins' text represents, can be contextualised.

The third chapter elaborates on this discussion of Collins' novel by focusing on the dialogic relation between themes of resistance in Collins' novels and Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin. A dialogic reading of the novels of Collins, Lamming and of Fanon demonstrates that, through the exclusion and silencing of women's voices in discourses of anti-colonial resistance, male-authored texts of resistance, though more complex than often suggested in critical work, present a narrow and constraining narrative of resistance and liberation. The model of resistance that Collins' novel

represents, reflects the dialectical nature of resistance and is, by contrast, inclusive, plural and less rigidly defined.

Chapter 4 focuses on texts which use the black woman's body to signify colonial abuse, domination and violence and as the site of its resistance. It positions the work of contemporary female writers Brenda Flanagan and Zee Edgell within the context of narratives of discovery, of slavery and colonialism and of anti-colonial fiction from the 1930s to Earl Lovelace's more recent novel, The Schoolmaster. I demonstrate that fiction by these two women writers moves beyond the oppositional binaries of resistance to transform the figure of the violated female subject by empowering her to resist both her sexual domination and the political structures that endorse the exploitation and abuse of her body. In the following chapter I argue that the role of cultural resistance in the decolonising process is complex and contradictory, moving dialectically between regressive and progressive forms; this argument is developed by returning to Fanon's work and by focusing on three novels: Season of Adventure by George Lamming, Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron and Erna Brodber's Myal. In a dialogic reading of these three texts I demonstrate that in their focus on gender identities and relations, they extend and problematise the more dogmatic, theoretical texts of cultural resistance. Through Brodber's recuperation of Lamming's character Fola and her recovery of the negative representations of indigenous African-centred cultural forms in Wynter's novel, her text offers a complex representation of cultural resistance which is hybrid, inclusive, and transformative, and which gains meaning through its extension and elaboration of the dominant themes and figures in earlier narratives.

The concluding chapter returns to a consideration of Collins' work and argues that her latest novel, The Colour of Forgetting, dialogises her earlier novel, returning to

and challenging its political concerns and problematising its modes of representation. By reading Collins' novel in conjunction with Earl Lovelace's Salt, a novel with similar concerns and which uses similar textual strategies, I argue that these texts present different articulations of history and resistance and that the difference in these representations are the function of the writers' use of gender identities and relations to shape their narratives. This final chapter is used to emphasise the open-ended and incomplete character of fictional resistance: Collins' novel, I argue, both confronts colonial historiography and its silence on the struggles of the marginalised and raises unsettling questions about the effectiveness of oppositional struggle. Her work points to the need to continue the process of decolonising resistance, while forcing a reconsideration of the terms within which such a struggle is undertaken.

¹ This claim is inferred in the work of Cudjoe and Taylor, following Fanon, and is returned to in this and other chapters.

² Bruce King ed., West Indian Literature (London: Macmillan, 1995)4-7; Baugh, Critics on Caribbean Literature 143.

³ Fredric Jameson "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" Social Text 15 (1986) 69.

⁴ Several critics have discussed at some length different categories of resistance to colonialism, or of resistance from the margins. Neil Lazarus' Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction analyses Fanon's distinction between resistance and liberation at length, advancing an argument which is similar to Patrick Taylor's The Narrative of Liberation; in Using the Master's Tools, Needham points to the desire, in theoretical work, for a pure and "uncontaminated" resistant subject and subject matter, which leads to a continual probing of Fanon's distinctions. Similar discussions can be found in Jonathan Dollimore's article, "The Dominant and the Deviant", where he argues that critical theories which search for pure versions of resistance assume an "impossibly essentialist criteria of transgression and resistance" (189,190). Spivak too attempts to refine the definition of resistance her essay "More on Power and Knowledge" (Landry and Mclean ed.161).

⁵ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth 119-50.

⁶ The problematic nature of these everyday acts of resistance under slavery has been explored in early twentieth century African American fiction and by critics such as Houston A. Baker Jr. (1987) who examines the uses of the mask as a cultural weapon and structural device in the work of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance and more radically in Booker T. Washington's autobiographical works. David Theo Goldberg, cited in Parry (1994) writes of acts the resistance used by plantation slaves: 'slow work and malingering undermined the plantation system but reinforced the stereotype of laziness; self-mutilation increased labour costs but steeled the stereotype of barbarism.'

⁷ Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth 40

⁸ See for example, Patrick Taylor's work cited above and Neil Lazarus' discussion of Taylor in Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World 90-6.

⁹ See Valerie Smith, " 'Loopholes of Retreat': Architecture and Ideology in Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*" 213; Jean Fagan Yellin compares Jacob's narrative to Douglass' and to her brother's later work in her "Introduction" xxxvii-lx.

¹⁰ See Evelyn O'Callaghan, Woman Version 2; Merle Collins' "Framing the Word" Framing the Word, ed. Joan Anim-Addo (London: Whiting and Birch, 1996) 7.

¹¹ See Renu Juneja, "Intersecting Culture and Gender: Fiction by West Indian Women" in Caribbean Transactions; Louis James, "From Castle to Kumbia Women's Writing in the Caribbean" in Caribbean Literature in English.

¹² See Gikandi 201; Nana Wilson-Tagoe 223.

¹³ Ma Comere is one such example; others are small axe, Sargasso and wadabagei.

¹⁴ Recent examples of work which makes reference to women's fiction but omits a discussion of how an analysis of gender categories might shape representation in male and female-authored fiction is Catherine A. John's Clear Word and Third Sight: Folk Groundings and Diasporic Consciousness (2003) and Wilfred Carty's Whispers From the Caribbean (1991).

¹⁵ Joan Anim-Addo x,xii; Merle Collins, "Framing the Word" 8; O'Callaghan, Woman Version 8.

¹⁶ Gikandi 203; O'Callaghan, Woman Version 6.

¹⁷ See Baugh and King cited above and Kenneth Ramchand The West Indian Novel and its Background 4-6.

¹⁸ The term "materialist" is used as defined by Newton and Rosenfelt xxi, and Sara Mills 155.

¹⁹ Susan Willis argues that "The history of black women in this country is the history of a labor force".

6; Erna Brodber makes a similar point in Perceptions of Caribbean Women 1982 26.

²⁰ See Louis James Caribbean Literature in English 4-5; Lilian Feder Naipaul's Truth 45; Helen Tiffin "Rites of Resistance: Counter Discourse and West Indian Biography" 28-46; Nadi Edwards "George Lamming's Literary Nationalism: Language Between the Tempest and the Tonelle" small axe 11 59-76; Peter Hulme "The Profit of Language: George Lamming and the Postcolonial Novel" in Recasting the World 120-36.

²¹ Edward Baugh "The Sixties and Seventies" in Bruce King ed. West Indian Literature (London: Macmillan, 1995) 63-75.

Chapter 2: Political Resistance and Narrative Transformation in

Merle Collins' Angel

This chapter examines the proposition that despite Collins' use of a traditional narrative form, the *bildungsroman*, itself revised and revoiced by earlier generations of Caribbean writers, her novel, Angel takes that form to its limit, working within its established boundaries to resist and subvert conventional expectations of traditional novelistic production. By using this literary form, Collins constructs a dialogue with other Caribbean writers in order to interrogate but also to confirm the existence and validity of Caribbean traditions of fictional representation. I explore the dialogic relations between Collins' novel and earlier forms of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, focusing in some detail on Naipaul's A House For Mr. Biswas, Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin, Sam Selvon's A Brighter Sun and Merle Hodge's Crick-Crack Monkey. I argue that Collins' narrative tests the boundaries of a traditional novel form; it exposes and struggles against the "other" within each word, each representative figure, and each text both oral and written, which it assimilates. The result is not only a polyphonic novel but also a novel that resists easy definition or classification. Her use and revision of the Caribbean *bildungsroman* and her innovative use of Creole as a way of narrativising women's resistance to colonialism and neo-colonialism, links Collins to earlier generations of Caribbean writers who use forms of Creole to signal an act of resistance against the authority of the colonial word. Her work builds on and extends earlier writers' use of Caribbean linguistic expression by further exploiting its range and function in Caribbean discourse and, through language, problematising social and political relations. In addition, her use of

women's voices to articulate the experiences of colonial oppression, resistance and revolution radically transforms representations of resistance in Caribbean fiction.

Better known as a poet, Collins wrote her first novel, Angel, in 1987 as a means of reflecting on the "trauma" of events in 1983 when the Grenadian revolutionary Government (The New Jewel Movement) of 1979 was brought to an abrupt end by an American military invasion. In an interview with Betty Wilson she describes her reasons for writing the novel:

I think 'Angel' also came at a period when I was looking at, looking back at, that whole period of Grenadian history and kind of looking behind headlines at the things that were happening [...] 'Angel' is definitely the product of 1983 and of the crash of October 1983 [...] and about the whole of that trauma and my moving out and looking back at it all and feeling that, as so often happens the focus remains on the principle actors [...] (102)

Although the focus of her novel is political change in Grenada from the 1950s onwards, the "principle actors", the political leaders or figures who might be at the centre of the public discourse of politics, are marginalised and the central spaces of the novel are dominated by the voices of ordinary people, far removed from the political centre. As a result, as Collins herself says, the product is a very different kind of book from the one she had been encouraged to write. The turmoil, confusion and incomprehension that had characterised Grenada post-1983 had meant that Collins was being asked to write a political biography/autobiography that would reveal something of the "truth" of these seemingly inexplicable events because, as Collins herself says in a later publication, "I was very much part of what one called the political process. I believed in some kind of revolutionary change for my island home

[...]” (23). People felt that in the light of her activities both as an artist and as a political activist, she could shed some light on the events of 1983:

I remember that when I first talked about ‘having to write this’ some people encouraged me, saying that I should , because they felt I knew a lot. I would have a story to tell. They were talking about a different kind of writing.
(“Writing Fiction” 23, 25)

This “different kind of writing” would have taken the form of either a political analysis, of which Collins herself says there have been many¹ or of political auto/biography, with the author at the centre of her own narrative. The choice of genre, literary rather than political, reflects her decision to place political ideologies and analysis to one side in order to focus on the ordinary, individual lives that these texts had ignored. She writes of needing to find a way to interpret the silence that followed the “Grenada tragedy” which continues to affect subsequent generations: “[...] there is a generation which was not even born during the conflict but which is influenced by the silences and the intensity of emotion regarding the subject of the conflict [...] the effects won’t go away simply because people bury themselves in silence about those issues. The oral tradition is strong. History becomes myth becomes history again” (“Grenada - Ten years and More” 76)

Collins’ narrative and its subject are autobiographical, but she rejects what Jo Malin, in her study of women’s autobiography, describes as the “traditional” biographical voice that “chronicle(s) great deeds and accomplishments” and which characterises male auto/biography. Malin argues that male texts traditionally “approach a monologic and authoritative voice” whereas women’s autobiographies can be defined as a “mother-daughter text” and function within a “nonhistorical or

nonheroic” context (9). Although, like the mother-daughter autobiographical texts that Malin describes, Collins opts for a focus on “the daily particulars of a life” (10) that are everyday and unremarkable, she does so within a specific political and historical context. Her engagement with political themes and her representation of the interconnection between the public, the political and everyday life, connects her novel quite explicitly to traditions of Caribbean novelistic production, rather than to traditions of women’s autobiographical forms that Malin describes.

The Caribbean *Bildungsroman*: *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *In the Castle of My Skin* and *Crick-Crack Monkey*

As I demonstrate in the discussion that follows, Caribbean novelists have often used the *bildungsroman* form to represent the impact of historical, political and social change on the lives of the ‘ordinary’ person, emblematised in the figure of the text’s protagonist. While Collins’ decision to use what she terms “fictitious re-creation” to re-examine and *re-present* the events of major political and historical significance is significant, it is not without precedent. A tradition of fictional representation which represents political and historical themes through a focus on marginalised characters such as children, women and working-class men, all of whom inhabit the closed spaces of the urban ghettos or yards, or small rural communities, is well established. Political concerns, even moments of great political upheaval, are addressed or represented through the perspectives of these characters and not the “principle actors”. Where political figures feature, as they do quite frequently, they are often fictionalised and marginal to the narrative centre, where the focus is the lives of otherwise marginal groups. There are exceptions of course, the most notable being Naipaul’s

Ralph Singh, the protagonist of his political novel The Mimic Men, who returns to the fictional island of Isabella to take up a prominent position in the newly independent government. Ganesh, in Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur, rises from a doubly or triply marginalised position to assume political centre stage, whereas although in The Suffrage of Elvira the narrative focuses on Surujpat Harbans, the electoral candidate for the rural constituency of Elvira, he and his family are marginal figures in the political drama of independence. John Hearne's Voices Under the Window and Peter Abrahams' novel This Island Now both set in Jamaica, are other examples of political novels which focus on the workings of government; and Abrahams' epic novel A View from Coyoba is, like Milton McFarlane's Cudjoe the Maroon, untypical in its focus on actual historical characters and, in the case of Abrahams' novel, in its epic structure. The tradition of representing political concerns obliquely and through the ordinary lives of the 'folk' begins with the literature of the 1930s. Such representation can be found in McKay's novel of rural Jamaica, Banana Bottom, in the 'barrack-yard' stories of the 1930s, and is continued in the canonical novels of the Fifties and Sixties by George Lamming, Roger Mais, Michael Anthony and Samuel Selvon, among others. In these novels, child and women characters function as metonyms for the colonised subject whose identities are concealed in colonial representation. The protagonists of Alfred Mendes' novel Black Fauns, written in 1935 are women. The significant male character, Snakey, is represented as irresponsible and self interested. He is someone who sexually exploits and dominates the women of his mother's yard. In these texts the ideological concerns of the novelists are represented through the narrative structures and the language of their fiction which seeks to give voice to subjects who have been marginalised or hidden from colonialist modes of representation. Like Collins' novel, these texts present

“History” in the spaces of the everyday, spaces which are, “crisscrossed and swept, ravaged and convulsed, by a History that bears the faces that poor people see: the periodic or dynastic upheavals of the ‘great’ that we write textbooks about , but that the peasantry learns through rumour, in hope and trepidation” (“Import-Substitution” 189).

Giving voice to the “peasantry”, however, is not always as straightforward as Jameson, cited above, suggests. The representational significance of the figure of the peasant or the ‘folk’, in early Caribbean literature, has been problematised by critics such as Gordon Rohlehr, writing in the early 1970s, and more recently by Reinhart Sander and Belinda Edmondson.² In the introductory comments to his study The Trinidad Awakening Reinhart Sander, referring to the short stories published in the Trinidadian journals of the 1930s, Trinidad and The Beacon, comments on the writers’ use of these peasant and working-class characters. He points out that the 1920s and 30s were periods of intense political upheaval. All sections of the Trinidad middle classes were “clamoring for a greater say in the country’s administration and for constitutional reform to the Crown Colony system”, while working-class people, particularly those in the docks, were agitating for industrial reform and better wages for working people. The writers were all political radicals who supported political reform and who had been influenced by a growing radicalism in Europe and America; their support for radical political ideologies influenced their choice of subject, literary form and language; most prominent writers elected to use Creole dialogue and, in the case of Mendes’ Black Fauns and James’ Minty Alley, to further emphasise the use of Creole by giving prominence to dialogue. Sander states that: “The writers laid great stress on the independence and vitality of the women who lived in these yards and tried to reproduce their creole speech”, and while the authors were almost always

middle class, their stories were “concerned exclusively with the lifestyle and culture of the lower classes, especially the urban proletariat living in the slums or the barracks-yards of the city” (9).

The writers’ commitment to radical political ideologies, enmeshed in the languages, structures and forms of the fictional texts, combined with an incipient nationalism, itself receptive to new literary forms and a literature that could adequately define a newly emerging nation, and contributed what Sander describes as a “literary awakening” in Trinidad in the 1930s. He writes, quoting Daniel Guerin:

A Caribbean culture only started to come into being when [...] a minority split away from the middle classes and made contact with the people, turned its attention to their problems, studied their customs, their beliefs, what of the African inheritance people have kept alive, and voiced the people’s aspirations and anger. (8)

While the use of fiction to give a voice to “the people’s aspirations and anger” was clearly a goal of these writers, as Sander argues, the class difference between the authors and their subjects produced serious contradictions in their fiction and is the cause of some of the limitations of this early writing.³ Too often their work represents the ‘lower’ classes from a narrative point of view which is inescapably middle class; no attempt is made to examine the relationship between the narrator and the object of his narration. This is certainly true in the case of Mendes’ novels; Black Fauns, for example, which represents the women within the yard as separate and sealed off from the public area of politics and the political and social agitation that determined the period. The women characters work hard and they are conscious of sexual and gender oppression but they make no attempt to resist. Women bear their subjugation and work within it; their resilience is used to signify the creativity and indomitable spirit

of the Trinidadian people but they are denied the kind of agency that would lead to resistance. They do not participate as agents in their own liberation from either domestic subjugation or political oppression.

Later fiction of the early period of Caribbean novelistic production, the 1950s and 60s, such as Samuel Selvon's A Brighter Sun, Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin and Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas, retain the culture of the 'folk' as the central focus of the narrative and this becomes a hallmark of a distinctively Caribbean tradition of fiction. The protagonist of each of these representative novels and of several other novels of the period defined as *bildungsroman* is either autobiographical, as in Collins' novel, or very closely identified with the controlling narrative point of view; by treating the folk as both subject and object of representation these texts narrow the narrative distance between the narrator and the community represented. As Pouchet Paquet observes, most Caribbean fiction from the 1950s onward focuses on "West Indian society, on self-discovery and self-definition" and the writers, particularly of this period, were often motivated by a strong sense of social responsibility:

[...] the literature of the fifties is demonstrably sensitive to the general social condition. More often than not, the exploration of the private self or the individual experience is tied to an exploration of the interdependence of private and public worlds; to an exploration of the individual's relationship to the inherited structure of values that dominates his society. (King 53)

In addition, the literary values and traditions of the metropolitan centre formed a significant part of the "inherited structure of values" that dominated Caribbean colonial society of the Fifties; it is unsurprising then, that so many Caribbean writers used, and continue to use, a definitively European literary genre, the *bildungsroman*

as a mode of representation. In a footnote to her essay “Revolutionary Developments: Michelle Cliff’s “No Telephone to Heaven” and Merle Collins’ “Angel”, Maria Helena Lima notes the continuing attraction of this literary form for Caribbean novelists. She writes: “most colonial authors, in an attempt to bring a ‘new’ self into being have paradoxically chosen the *bildungsroman*”, and cites twenty Caribbean authors writing from the period 1914 to 1989 who use this form for one of their early novels. One of the attractions of this form is precisely that it allows for a representation of social and political change through a focus on the individual life; in this way both the colonised nation and its subject are brought into being through representation.

Bakhtin describes the *bildungsroman* as a fictional form which is usually structured as autobiography or biography but where the protagonists’ personal development is set in the context of her/his social experiences. These social experiences are “bathed in the light of becoming” and inform and are informed by the “hero’s” personal development. He provides a detailed analysis of the five forms of the genre; the most important form is, he argues, the one that describes the hero’s emergence in the context of :

[...] the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to another. The transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being. (“The *bildungsroman*” 23)

Although Bakhtin is referring to the Enlightenment period, with its notions of linear or historical time as opposed to cyclical time and its ideas of the world as “knowable”, as the new historical period that demanded new literary forms, a similar sense of a

transition between epochs can be said to have influenced the pervasive use of this nineteenth-century form by Caribbean novelists more than a century later. The form is used, in these novels, to explore the tension between political transformation and the creation of new social and personal identities.⁴

Paradoxically, however, as well as its attraction as a genre that allows for an interconnection between the private and the social spheres, the *bildungsroman* also provides Caribbean writers with a means of maintaining a distance from historical and political change, even as it seeks to represent it. In his study The Way of the World, Franco Moretti argues that, in the nineteenth century, this literary form coincided with and celebrated the rise of bourgeois individualism and assisted in the creation of a bourgeois personality. The focus on the individual was made possible by the novel's concentration on the "bland rhythm of everyday life". The minutiae of the everyday was made narratively interesting and thus the reading of the novels became, according to Moretti, a "calm passion" (vi). History, the turbulent revolutionary history of nineteenth-century Europe, was kept "*at a safe distance*, separating the destiny of the individual from the great collective waves of the nineteenth century" (vii). The novels, he writes, "opt resolutely for the private sphere (which is also, of course, the scene of their reading), with its stubborn, 'realistic' capacity to survive the tempests of social conflict" (x). Within the context of this fictional private sphere, he argues, the "ordinary" individual assumes the greatest importance; the major themes of the novel are consolidated into an individual personality which in turn becomes ever more complex and "polyparadigmatic" (42). Each experience strengthens the individual's personality. The outside, public world is only significant insofar as it amplifies and enriches the individual personality and the personal, domestic sphere of his existence. Moretti's discussion of the role and function of dialogue in the

“*bildungsideal*” of Austen or Goethe illustrates both the opposition and the allusive interconnection created in these texts between the public and private spheres.

Linguistic exchanges, he argues, become strategies for deflecting from the change and disorder in the outside world that threaten the order and harmony within the family, and for opposing the revolutionary fervour of the pamphlet or political speech. The novel “[...] chooses to pass over revolutionary fractures in silence[...] because they affect that particular sphere of action – the centralized power of the state – in relation to which the culture of the novel, in contrast to that of tragedy, is the victim of an unmistakable and very real taboo” (52).

Despite recognisable similarities, there are several formal differences between the classic texts of what Moretti terms the nineteenth-century “*bildungsideal*” and the Caribbean version of this novel form; when taken together these differences suggest not, as Lima argues, simply the transformation of a colonial genre, but what Raymond Williams defines as an “emergent” cultural form.⁵ Encoded in the formal characteristics of this “emergent” genre is not a deflection from political realities but an actual dialogue with historical narratives of resistance to colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. In addition to a clearly defined socio-political sub-text, the defining features of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, though treated differently in individual texts, can be described as the thematic representation of loss, dislocation or fragmentation; the problematisation of the individual’s emergence; the conflict between the individual and the community and the multi-vocal quality of the narrative.

In the early forms of the novel in the Caribbean the individuality of the hero, his “becoming”, is represented as simultaneously his connection to the ‘folk’ community and his separation from it. These novels provide the literary context within which

Collins writes: the fictional motifs and modes of representation are the forms which her text both uses and seeks to resist. In the following discussion I trace the literary form of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, from Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas, which could be said to represent the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, to Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey, demonstrating in the last section of the chapter, both the "influence" of these texts on Collins' Angel and the way in which her revised form of the *bildungsroman* shapes her representation of political resistance.

Despite its more conventional use of realism, Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas is characterised by representations of loss, dislocation and disintegration, and these themes are structured around the problematic relationship between the emerging individual and his necessary separation from family and community. Although Naipaul's novel uses other genres, such as newspaper reports, anthropological discourse and educational texts in the way which is characteristic of the novel as a genre, A House for Mr. Biswas does not have the multi-vocal quality that characterises other Caribbean novels. Its focus on the emerging individual is closely controlled by the third person narrator, whose point of view closely mirrors that of Mr. Biswas himself. His community, the Trinidadian East Indians, emerges through the consciousness of this character; changes in the society are perceived through the changes in Mr. Biswas. The novel's minute attention to detail creates what Bakhtin describes as an "absolutely concrete reality" and an impression of a particular place at a particular time; the narrative does not use either impressionistic or symbolic landscapes and does not represent mythic versions of the historical past. Although other ways of representing reality are alluded to through the novel's references to the philosophical works of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus and the religious texts of the Ramayana, these texts have a thematic rather than a stylistic significance; the works

which influence the novel's structure and mode of representation are those of

Dickens. Naipaul writes:

He read political books. They gave him phrases which he could only speak to himself and use on Shama. They also revealed one region after another of misery and injustice and left him feeling more helpless and more isolated than ever. Then it was that he discovered the solace of Dickens. Without difficulty he transferred characters and settings to people and places he knew. In the grotesques of Dickens everything he feared and suffered from was ridiculed and diminished, so that his own anger, his own contempt became unnecessary, and he was given strength to bear with the most difficult part of his day. (374)

Dickens' realism provides not only a model for novelistic representation but also an alternative to political theories and political engagement and it is the narrative's refusal to engage with contemporary, local political developments and formations that makes possible the thread of optimism in the novel, and allows for a linear, progressive plot structure. It is this that distinguishes Naipaul's novel from other major works of Caribbean literature that utilise this genre. In this novel, the world of colonial Trinidad is condensed into the private worlds of its hero, Mr. Biswas, who, despite repeated failures and losses, does progress from the seeming nothingness of his origins to semi-independent selfhood. The material and psychological changes he experiences mirror and serve to represent the social and political changes of the wider society. There is an almost complete absence of reference to the newly formed political and social structures of the immediate society, 1930s Trinidad. The further chaos and nihilism that might spill into Biswas' personal worlds through reference to the already corrupt political structures and processes that would shape the island's

future, is prevented by the containing structure of the novel and its resolute focus, as in the *bildungsroman*, on the private spheres.

Despite the highly hierarchically structured inner spaces of Hanuman House, described by Cudjoe as “feudal” (V.S.Naipaul 51) and by Rohlehr in a much earlier work as autocratic and totalitarian (*The Islands in Between* 134-5), the decay Biswas perceives on his first visit to the house behind the shop, and other signs of decay signify the decreasing importance of the Hindu culture Trinidadian ‘East Indians’ brought with them to Trinidad. At the same time that the novel represents the decay of the cultural values and structures of the past, the crumbling and insecure structures of the new establishments that populate rural towns like Arwacas suggest that the future for the individuals who remain in a colonial society without the security of their original cultures is precarious. There is nothing to replace the security provided by the now-lost cultural forms. The new houses in Arwacas are described as “ambitious, incomplete, unpainted, often skeletal, with wooden frames that had grown grey and mildewed [...]” (193), and Mr. Biswas’ own early attempts at house-building produce similarly flawed structures which, soon after they are erected, completely disintegrate in either the storms, as with his house at Green Vale, or in fire, as at Shorthills.

Critics are divided in their interpretation of the significance of these repeated signs of loss to the narrative as a whole. Positivist readings of the novel such as Anthony Boxill’s argue that Biswas’ achievement is comparable to Pip’s in *Great Expectations*; he achieves something out of nothing. In a more recent work, Peggy Nightingale argues that “[...] the effect of the society as a whole on an individual’s life is seen as deeply tragic. And yet, Mohun Biswas’ struggle for self-respect and freedom provides one of the most optimistic notes in Naipaul’s writing” (44). In contrast, Judith Levy’s Lacanian reading of Naipaul argues that Mr. Biswas fails in

his attempt to reconcile his denial of the past with the establishing of a self. The repeated yearning for the house, signifies, for Levy “the repeated demand of the lost part of the self, origin to be accounted for and appeased”. He fails to recreate a myth of the past of his lost origins and to order the reality of the present through what is revealed in the novel as the illusory power of the written word (3, 4). Homi Bhabha similarly emphasises Biswas’ failure by focusing on patterns of loss and circularity in the structures of the narrative. He argues that the narrative reveals a tension between discourses of realism which foreground “the values of individualism, progressivism, and the autonomy of character” and the discourse of fantasy, revealed in Biswas’ fantasies of escape and so on, which “faces the traditions of realist discourse with a spectacle of loss and failure unparalleled in its social and generic history” (“Representation” 117,118). The text’s uses of realism cannot absorb the failures and trauma that the fantasies project; Mr. Biswas desires to achieve selfhood but is met with a void.

Despite his repeated failures, however, his successes are neither illusory nor unexceptional. In fact it is precisely the singularity of his achievement of a job as reporter on the Trinidad Sentinel that strengthens the novel’s representation of his individuality.⁶ His intellectual activities, though increasing his dissatisfaction, offer him a certain liberation from the more mundane activities of the Tulsi family. His literacy and his literary and artistic achievements win him privileges at his aunt’s house and from Mrs. Tulsi whose tolerance of his disregard for her authority conceals a secret admiration for his intellectual achievements. Despite the decaying structures that he continues to inhabit and despite his mortgaged independence he does progress, develop and emerge as an individual distinct from the masses of Tulsis, or from the semi-literate or illiterate characters such as his brothers.

In contrast, Lamming's concern for the political and social institutions about which he writes, make his representation of G's achievement and his emergence as an individual far more problematic than Biswas'. The society he leaves behind is on the verge of crisis and is almost doomed to failure in the hands of politicians such as Mr. Slime. Naipaul's silence on the local political context of Biswas' world is emphasised by the fact of Biswas' role as a newspaper reporter during the 1930s, a period characterised by labour unrest by the emergence of national politics. Apart from two references to Shekhar's involvement in local politics and to the ineptitude of the civil service, the political context for the novel is provided by the "war" (World War Two) which is referred to as an abstract phenomenon; the radicalisation of nationalist politics in Trinidad during this period is represented in the references to Owad's interest in socialist politics. Biswas remarks of his workplace: "But within the world of the office every part of the world was near" (326). The "world" that the narrator refers to however, is the world outside Trinidad, not the world of an emerging nation. Biswas' achievement can be used to signify the integrity of individual achievement which can be separated from its immediate and local context; it is not marred by Naipaul's portrayal of the cynical opportunism that characterises early political leaders, and the prospect of anarchy and failure that their rise to power bring, serving in his early political novels, The Suffrage of Elvira or The Mystic Masseur, to undermine individual achievement.

Although Lamming uses the same fictional form, his ideological emphasis is different from Naipaul's and his revision of the form is more radical and challenging. The tension between the desire to represent the self-voicing and fully achieved subjectivity of the protagonist, G, and at the same time, to create what Lamming describes as a peasant "sensibility", through the restoration of "the West Indian

peasant to his true and original status of personality”, results in a more problematised representation of the relationship between the individual and his community (Pleasures of Exile 88-9). In his first novel, In the Castle of My Skin, the voice of the first person narrator G, is the retrospective voice of the returning native who narrates his own early dislocation and increasing alienation from the village life which he now seeks to recover in writing. His individuality is defined by his difference from the village folk and his gradual alienation from them, through education and a desire to connect with the world outside the village enclosures. G’s is an embryonic West Indian bourgeois personality and this aspect of his identity is as much the focus of his novel as is the personality of the West Indian peasant. The movement away from the folk community towards bourgeois individualism, is accompanied in this and other texts by an aggravated sense of loss and by fragmentation and alienation which as Gikandi has argued, is a defining thematic and stylistic feature of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*. As Gikandi observes, in Lamming’s text this loss is signified by the flood, which occurs on G’s ninth birthday and which carries away houses in the village. Images of loss are repeated in the text and are reinforced in the final scene of G’s farewell to the land.⁷

Whereas Naipaul’s novel reproduces the *bildungsroman*’s privileging of the individual by, in Jameson’s words, prying “the nascent text away from the family itself and allow[ing] the novel – as the registration of the new and unique, to come into being as though for the first time [...]” (“Import-Substitution” 173), as several critics have noted, Lamming’s novel struggles to resist the controlling narrative consciousness of the individual, his first person narrator, G.⁸ Unlike the classic text of the *bildung*, the social events and experiences are not, to paraphrase Bakhtin, completely bathed in the light of G’s becoming. While in Gikandi’s analysis of

Lamming's novel he contests Lamming's assertion that there was no "central individual consciousness" but rather a collective consciousness, that of the village, he does recognise Lamming's attempts to disperse the narrative voice through the use of other characters' interior monologues, and streams of consciousness. Lamming employs storytelling narrative devices to narrate, for example, the story of Bots and Bambina. As I argue more fully in the following chapter, this account, narrated by Boy Blue, is shaped by his youthful perceptions and the non-linear, digressive style of oral storytelling structures. These voices displace the narrative control and authority of the autobiographical subject. As Gikandi argues, however, this control is not entirely lost - in part, he argues, because "Lamming cannot simply repress the individual consciousness, for doing so would affirm the will to power of a colonial discourse whose authority depends on the erasure of the colonial subject" (75). Thus, he argues, Lamming's narrative is torn between the need to establish a "semiotic space and a form of linguistic practice in which self, language, and desire can be represented without being mediated by the colonizer" and the distrust of all language because of its function as a tool of colonialism. The boys are fearful that their language, the Barbadian dialect and the adolescent idiom, expressing as they do the world-view of the colonised, is an inadequate means of "asserting the individual's coming to consciousness" (81). Since self-hood cannot be conceived entirely through the use of the Barbadian idiom, it has to be achieved by negotiating a variety of linguistic and narrative forms. Despite Lamming's representation of the fractured consciousness of his subject G as a precondition of the narrative, and despite the dispersal of his identity, his voice and presence, as Gikandi and ten Kortenaar point out, dominate the narrative.⁹ More importantly, in relation to Collins' novel,

expressions of G's subjectivity control and shape the narrative and become its focalising centre.

Although they do not utilise multiple narrators to the extent that Lamming does in his first novel, other texts in the tradition of the Caribbean *bildungsroman* self-consciously manipulate the double-langued character of what Bakhtin defines as "the utterance" and its potential as a narrative tool in novelistic prose. Mark Looker notes, for example, that whereas Selvon's novel A Brighter Sun had been defined by early critics and reviewers as a "mildly exotic *bildungsroman*", the novel can be more accurately described as multi-vocal; its narrative is shaped as much by the many competing voices of the communities "at the margins of the text" as by the voice of its central character, Tiger, whose growth to maturity structures the narrative. Looker argues, in an echo of similar claims Lamming makes for his own novel, that the different communities represented in the novel - the urban, rural, peasant, bourgeois and professional - are "as much a focus of the novel as is the character himself" (22).

Both novels exploit to varying degrees what Bakhtin defines as "heteroglossia", dialogised in the novel. The novels focus on and interrogate the conditions that give words meaning, drawing attention to the difference that linguistic registers make, and creating unexpected juxtapositions between literary and non-literary genres. The authors manipulate the double langued character of each utterance, and of each genre within speech and written texts. These novels reflect what Bakhtin describes as the defining characteristic of the novel form, its stylisation of the double voiced or double langued character of the word in speech:

Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [...] can enter the novel [...]. These distinctive links and

interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization - this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel. (263)

In works of Caribbean prose cited here, the creation of a multi-voiced narrative is used to represent the society's fragmentation, its loss of village communities and traditions, and of original cultures and cultural practices. In Selvon's novel, the juxtaposition of fictional and historical/sociological genres which characterises the beginning of several chapters, serves to highlight the distance between the worlds of the colonial powers which are shaping the island's destiny, and rural Trinidad, the small enclosed world which is the focus of the narrative. Although these contrasting speech genres effect a dramatic contrast in the narrative, Selvon's novel, unlike Collins' work, does not actively engage with the competing ideologies or world views that each of these languages reflects. In the following example, the voice of one of the third person narrators, the voice of history, describes the arrival of American troops on the island and hints at the way this arrival is changing social and political relations:

United States personnel arrived, and the construction of bases provided work at high wages - higher than anyone had ever worked for before. [...] The city was crammed as the Yankee dollar lured men away from home and family. Politically a new constitution came into force, increasing the number of elected members to the Legislative Council by two and reducing the strength of official representation from nine to three. At the end of March the Stars and Stripes waved over Trinidad territory. (17)

Although the reality of the villagers' relationship with the Americans is represented as more complex than that depicted by what Gikandi describes as the "dead prose" of the

above account, the character of the relationship is not contested by the subjects of the narrative. The other languages of the narrative, the dialogue of its characters and the third person narrator who voices their lives, confirm this semi-historical account by the description of the lure of work provided by the Americans: “‘Twenty dollar ah week!’ Boysie told Tiger. ‘Dat is plenty money, yes. [...]’”. It is, in the economy of the village, “plenty money” and enables Tiger and Urmilla to build a house, buy new furniture and, for a time at least, escape their dependency on the land. In this example, the characters do not articulate an alternative or opposing version of these social and political transformations; it is almost as if another register is needed to contextualise their lives, one capable of political and historical expression.

Although, as Looker argues, the novel does focus on the different communities represented in the novel, their representation is controlled by the third person narrative voices; there is no conflict or dissonance between the historical voice, which introduces individual characters or communities, and their self-articulation. A clear example of the way that the characters, as individual subjects, are interpellated by the ideologies of this third person historical voice can be seen in another example, the introduction of Tall Boy to the narrative. The majority of the community of Chinese immigrants to which Tall Boy belongs, are described by this voice as prosperous shopkeepers or launderers. The narrative continues: “The key to their success lay in hard work and the very little with which they could make themselves comfortable” (50). Tall Boy emerges as a successful shopkeeper whose success is due to his thrift; the third person “insider” narrator comments: “Tall Boy was no miser, but he believed in cutting expenses down to a minimum. [...] The children ... he didn’t have immediate plans for the future; the main thing was to have money for them when they grew up to open their own business” (62). And in his own words, he insists on the

importance of constantly checking his accounts: “ ‘Mary’, he called, ‘anybody take anything and yu forget to mark it?’ Mary came and together they went over the accounts” (61-2).

Gikandi’s assertion that Selvon “wants his readers to realize that his subjects, their claims for uniqueness notwithstanding, struggle to define themselves against the already existing images and modes of knowledge which repress subjectivity altogether” (116) is true perhaps in relation to Tiger, who emerges in part as an individual subject who seeks to define himself against the dominant discourses of his world. He is determined not to be one of the older generations of Indians whom the narrative describes as never having left the village. The other significant characters, however, exist within the ideologies of the official discourses that construct them. As in the novels discussed above, Tiger’s individuality is achieved through his separation from his community; he loses connections with his family and with the Hindu culture that they seek to maintain. By the end of the novel, he also begins to experience his separation from the village community where he has established a distinct and separate identity and the novel closes with his expression of a desire to be elsewhere, to escape the “sameness” of the culture he inhabits. Tiger’s emergence as an individual, however, is not treated optimistically; the novel ends, as with other “Caribbean novels in this genre, ambivalently, with the character on the brink of an uncertain transition.

In contrast to the work of even some recent critics such as Thomas Michael Stein¹⁰ whose work serves to re-affirm Caribbean literature’s marginal status, critics such as Gordon Rohlehr, writing in 1972, argue that Caribbean novels exist dialectically within colonial traditions of novelistic production. These texts are not inadequate versions of European models but reflect the “instinctive groping for an

architecture, appropriate to expressing the crucial tensions in West Indian society between the group, and the privacy of the individual soul”(42). He compares the fluidity of form used to represent the narrative of G’s becoming in Lamming’s novel and his use of choral voices in the narrative with the forms of narrative in Selvon’s early work:

As in a dream, all the characters are fragments of a single consciousness so that character eventually flowers into character, voice into voice, and all voices, natives of the author’s person, meet and melt into a single voice of history. (“The Folk in Caribbean Literature” 33)

Despite the experiment with voice that characterises these examples of male-authored Caribbean *bildungsroman*, in all three texts the consciousness of the protagonist dominates and controls all points of view within the narrative. In these novels, authorial control is, as Edmondson has argued, linked to the assertion of masculine authority. To concede narrative control to voices which are completely dispersed and fragmented would be to concede the achievement of masculine agency and to deny the colonised subject the possibility of realised male self-hood within a narrative whose objective is to assert its independence from colonialist inscription.

A later female-authored novel, Merle Hodge’s Crick-Crack Monkey is, like the male-authored narratives referred to here, similarly preoccupied with the interiority of its protagonist and her emerging self-consciousness. As Gikandi writes, Hodge’s novel “[...]was the first major novel by a Caribbean woman – in the period after independence – in which the writer assumed the consciousness of her subject and gave it expression”. It is a first person autobiographical narrative which, as the title suggests, focuses on orality and storytelling.¹¹ Although what Gikandi describes as a “quest for a voice”, is represented as a social, political and a personal endeavour, the

narrative's exploration of this quest takes place entirely within the consciousness of its protagonist. Relationships are represented in terms of their contribution to what Moretti, describing the European *bildungsideal*, defines as the "development and consolidation of the individual personality" (42). The opening scene introduces the narrative's exploration of "voice" or language as a social construct. The young Tee hears the disembodied words of a woman we later learn is her aunt: "We will take the children, somebody said firmly in a voice that sounded like high heels and stockings. And an old voice was wailing: 'Poor li infant, ohhh lam of Gord [...]' (2). As the narrative progresses, these opposed voices – the Creole and Standard English – struggle for possession of Tee's physical body and of her consciousness, and it is the drama of this struggle that is the basis of the narrative.

The use of Creole in the narrative serves as a sign of the vernacular culture that the narrative valorises. The untranslated title, "Crick-Crack Monkey", is given full authority to speak for itself. As well as representing the "crick-crack" or storytelling monkey in performance, as Hodge herself points out, the "monkey" of the title has "all the associations of aping and imitation [...] and is intended to call attention to the inauthenticity of Tee's adopted colonial world".¹² Tee's mimicry of the colonial culture of her high school and her Aunt Beatrice's family leaves her feeling trapped, alienated and unrealised. She is caught between the disappearing vernacular culture of her Tantie in rural Trinidad and the middle-class colonial culture of the capital, which expresses itself in Standard English. From this conflict emerges the double-voiced quality of the narrative and the doubleness of its protagonist, who attempts self-articulation through the opposing registers of two worlds and cultures.

Unlike earlier narratives, however, Hodge's text examines the gender identity of different storytelling practices and in this way signals some of the preoccupations that

dominate Collins' later novel. Ma, the grandmother, occupies the role of what Nana Wilson-Tagoe ascribes to mothers and grandmothers who have "[...] transmitted what has always been a muted and submerged culture in women-centred forms often excluded from the domain of formal historiography" (255). She is a woman alone, the head and the centre of a large, female-dominated extended family. As well as being economically self-sufficient and an active participant in the life of the region, she assumes the responsibility and care for all her grandchildren and is the custodian of the orally recounted records of her family's history. In contrast, the male characters tell stories that confirm their masculinity and express a desire to escape to another world. They re-tell the Western films they have seen as if they had experienced them; one of the group, Manhatt'n, tells stories of an imagined life in America. His audience's response, "crick-crack", is a sign that they know they are participating in a storytelling event. Unlike Ma's storytelling, which links her grandchildren to their past, the young boys' stories allow them to imagine a future with their own restored agency and fully realised masculinity. Their present is characterised by hopelessness and entrapment, whereas in the narratives of their future they are white, victorious, violent conquerors (7-8).

Like A House For Mr. Biswas and In the Castle of My Skin, Crick-Crack Monkey opens and closes with representations of loss. The opening scene describes the funeral of Tee's mother who had died in childbirth; very soon afterwards her father "went to sea" and at the end of the novel, Tee herself leaves Trinidad to join him in England. Loss is a defining trope of the narrative, however, not just a figure used to enclose the novel. Tantie and the female-centred, oral culture of the village are lost to Tee even before she is ready to leave Trinidad and join her father in England. And while it is true that, as Gikandi claims, the mother in Lamming's text is notable for her

prolonged silence and subordination to the son's quest for identity, the recentering of women as "custodians of an oral tradition" in a female-authored novel such as Hodge's, is more problematic than he implies. Although Hodge celebrates and preserves Tantie's language in the text, it is threatened by the process of social mobility, with which Tantie herself colludes, by sending Mikey, Tee's cousin, abroad and by agreeing to send Tee to a prestigious school in the capital.

When Tee returns to Tantie's house to say farewell to the village, she finds a drunken Tantie whose strong Creole speech, with its muscular, anti-feminine aggression, is slurred. Tantie's farewell speech to Tee, the content of which expresses progress as personal loss, is a garbled anti-climax: "Hush everybody hush! Speech time, speech-time! Hush allyu tail lemme make the goin' away speech [...] Drink an' spread joy allyu, for my chirren is goin unto the Golden Gates" (111). If Tantie's Creole speech serves as a metonym for an African-centred, village consciousness, then that consciousness is dissolving by the end of the novel. Tee is left without the affirmation of Tantie's language and culture; she leaves too without the name of Ma's grandmother, whose name she was to inherit. Ma had remembered the name before she died and had passed it on to Tantie who "hadn't even bothered to remember it" (110). The note of resentment in Tee's retrospective account is unmistakable and her sense of alienation is acute; she feels disinherited by Tantie and disremembered by the village itself:

Everything was changing, unrecognizable, pushing me out. This was as it should be, since I had moved up and no longer had any place here.

But it was painful, and I longed all the more to be on my way. Ma gone; the shaddock tree dried up as if with Mikey gone it no longer had any function. (110-11)

As this quotation shows, Tee is left with no option but to leave Trinidad, the site of her intense alienation and multiple displacements. Elaine Campbell cites Hodge's novel as marking a provisional point of departure for the Caribbean novel form. While the premise of her argument is an oversimplified representation of what she describes as the dominant themes and figures of Caribbean prose forms, the alienated protagonist caught between a culture dichotomised as (African) West Indian on the one hand and European on the other, she does point to the problematic nature of the use, in Caribbean fiction, of European forms. Her concern in the essay is to register the problem of form and she concludes by citing Maureen Warner-Lewis' pronouncement that the "West Indian novel has seen its day and that West Indian literature has now turned to other genres for expression" (143). Campbell adds that a more optimistic reading of Warner's comment that the form is exhausted might be found in work from emerging Caribbean women writers, who, she hopes, will abandon the clichéd theme of the dichotomised heroine and thus breathe new life into a worn and tired form.

In the following section I argue that an intertextual reading of Merle Collins' Angel, demonstrates that Caribbean novelists' continued revision of that form continues to give creative expression to themes of personal change and development, and political transformation. As the discussion that follows shows, Collins' novel firmly places itself within a tradition of Caribbean novel-writing, and in doing so affirms the importance and influence of that tradition on contemporary writing. In her focus on women's voices and on their participation in formal and informal discourses of political resistance, her novel, extends and radically revises some of the tradition's dominant motifs, suggesting both the continuing relevance of earlier preoccupations and their transformation within the context of a changed historical context. The final

sections of this chapter are used to examine the formal structures of Angel and the ways in which the novel presents a resituated focus on language both as a symbolic and a socially-constructed system. Her fiction develops a more complex representation of traditional forms of realist fiction and provides a structural framework within which re-presented themes of resistance and liberation can be located.

Merle Collins' Angel: A Polyphonic Revoicing of Caribbean Fiction

Despite the negative predictions of Campbell and Warner-Lewis, several contemporary women writers continue to choose a European bourgeois literary form, the realist novel, as their primary mode of representation and to use that form to resist, in complex and subtle ways, its conventions and modes of representation. Their female authored *bildungsroman* revise and resist not only colonial modes of representation, but forms of representation that are being continually transformed in traditions of Caribbean cultural production. The theme of cultural dichotomy, while not as central as in earlier texts, still haunts the edges of their narrative. The cultural oppositions that the texts erect are more subtly shaded, however, and issues of class are situated not only in relation to colonialism but within the context of decolonisation and the emergence of post independent nationalist cultures; the communities in which the protagonists of contemporary women writers exist, are not structured along such diametrically opposed cultural lines as Hodge's novel suggests. Texts such as Collins Angel, Edgell's Beka Lamb, Michelle Cliff's No Telephone to Heaven and Jan Shinebourne's The Last English Plantation still represent the achievement of selfhood in part as a struggle against the dominant cultural values of colonialism; however,

their protagonists, with the exception perhaps of Clare Savage, in No Telephone to Heaven, are able to negotiate and resist its dominance more successfully because their position in the community is more secure, and because the community itself has successfully negotiated, and continues to negotiate, its own resistance to the cultural values of colonialism. Social mobility, one of the key themes of the *bildungsroman* and the one that makes possible narrative tensions, conflicts and resolutions, remains a key theme of these contemporary novels, as does the theme of childhood and the heroine's problematic growth to maturity and self realisation.

John Beverley addresses the issue of form in post-colonial and 'Third World' writing, suggesting that revolutionary struggle makes the need for new forms of representation more urgent. A new form, he argues, is needed to express the new relations of power that have emerged after decolonisation and to articulate in new and appropriate ways issues of identity and issues of individual and social consciousness that have emerged as a result of these shifts of power. He describes the *testimonio* as one such narrative form:

By *testimonio* I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a life or a significant "life" experience. (13)

He suggests that revolutionary struggles in Vietnam, Cuba and Latin America have prompted the emergence of this form of representation as a way of bringing national and local struggles to the attention of the wider world. While Beverley stresses that the *testimonio* is a "postfictional form of literature with significant cultural and political repercussions"(26), and one concerned with "sincerity rather than

literariness”, the form itself has attracted considerable critical attention from literary and cultural theorists, whose concern is to determine what constitutes a *testimonio* and how one might demarcate a boundary between fiction and non-fiction, between the *testimonio* and the “testimonial novel”.¹³

While not engaging with theoretical debates concerning the *testimonio*, Maria Helena Lima does use its characteristics, as defined by Beverley, as a means of indicating points of departure between Collins’ novel Angel and other models of the post-colonial *bildungsroman*. Lima’s use of the form *testimonio* to describe Angel’s narrative structure accords with her more optimistic reading of the novel’s revolutionary themes. It is certainly a useful way of reading the novel’s attempt to voice the consciousness of the community from which the individual, autobiographical subject emerges, but whereas Lima’s interpretation of the term stresses the fact that the polyphonic variation of the *testimonio* is made up of accounts by participants in the same event, thus achieving a “documentary quality”, as I demonstrate, Collins’ narrative’s revision of the *bildungsroman* is more complex than that, involving literary, historical and contemporary political voices which are outside the participatory community. Her novel marks a departure from the multi-vocal quality of the novels of Lamming and Selvon cited earlier, and the ambiguity of language and meaning is more self-consciously manipulated than in a “documentary” text. Collins’ is a self-reflexive literary narrative that self-consciously displays its interrelations with and disconnections from other literary forms and earlier traditions of Caribbean literature. To that extent, it allies itself more closely with the transformations and revoicings of literary genre and form that are the mark of Caribbean literary production than the *testimonio*, the form of which, according to Beverley, “implies a radical break with the novel and with literary fictionality as

such” (24). The novel Angel exists in dialogic relation to earlier and contemporary traditions of Caribbean novelistic production which are themselves dynamic and emergent but which, unlike Angel, create meanings from the interconnection with their literary precursors in the English literary canon.

In an essay entitled “Orality and Writing: A Revisitation” Collins seems to confirm that many more voices and “influences” are at work in her narrative than might be found in a *testimonio* and she points both to its self-conscious literary quality and its re-articulations of existing fictional traditions:

My own novel, *Angel* (1988), incorporates something of the idea of the *bildungsroman*, a form to which I was introduced in the education system, but also tries to make use of orality, the dimensions of which I did not encounter in that education system to shape the *bildungsroman*...Had to diverge, that is, from what I had learnt of the nineteenth-century British novel but at the same time employ techniques used there as well as in the African novel, the Caribbean novel, and in the voices of Caribbean oral storytelling. So that what emerges is truly a mixture of formal and informal education, attempting to privilege the voices of oral narrative, yet perhaps contradicting that privileging by the very method of presentation and perhaps even more so by the voice of analysis today. So the admixture continues. (42)

The opening of Collins’ novel announces its separation from some of the defining characteristics of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, itself a genre marked by difference and transformation. The most striking difference, established in the opening pages, is its rejection of the form’s defining tropes of disruption, absence, loss, or alienation. There are no signs of problematic or lost origins or a disrupted connection to the past. In contrast to Lamming’s novel, which begins with an event of natural destruction, the

flood, and to representations of loss in Naipaul, Selvon and Hodge, Collins' novel opens with images of personal and cultural affirmation. Images of destruction which dominate the opening signify not a dissolution or loss of self but the emergence of a post-colonial self, born out of the destruction of colonialism and the resistance of the peasant workers. It is the community, the mother, grandmother and other family members who narrate the protagonists becoming; her emerging consciousness is rooted in the culture of her extended family and community. Their voices reveal their awareness of the ways in which the social and political forces in their immediate lives, Grenada in the 1950s, shape their individual and collective identities and determine their future. These images of collectivity are also used to signal the novel's insistence on political resistance as a collective and inclusive process, one that demands the engagement of ordinary men and women.

Angel's family house, the only one to remain standing after the storm, serves as a metonym for the strength and security of Angel's own family; this house functions as a site of community and family solidarity, the place where the past is recalled and shared. At the opening of the novel, Angel herself is represented as constantly in the care of her mother; she clings to her mother, Doodsie, during the fire and again when she retreats from the public spaces of the plantation to the protection of her house, where she prays for Angel's future (5,6). Unlike the protagonists in the novels cited earlier, Angel does not appear as an articulate, conscious and self-voicing subject, however, until her arrival in "Third Standard".¹⁴ The narrative's account of the years prior to this moment subsumes her subjectivity in its representation of the village community and its place in the wider political context of Grenada. Whereas, as Gikandi points out, G's voice dominates his self-articulation and his mother is silenced in the narrative's representation of his becoming, in Collins' novel, this

narrative emphasis is reversed and Doodsie's voice, and later in the novel, voices from the community, are used to articulate Angel's becoming.

Angel: problematising an individual's becoming

Bakhtin describes the role of language in shaping consciousness in the following way: "I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee" (Allen 20). The novel demonstrates that consciousness, like language, is shaped in social contexts and in relation to others; Angel's self-awareness is inseparable from her awareness of the dialogising voices of others that shape her becoming. Even as the novel represents the growth to maturity of its heroine, it problematises the possibility of an individualised subject, which is the creation of and essential to the bourgeois novel. Significant events in her childhood are represented either wholly from the point of view of her mother or from the point of view of the third person narrator who diverts attention from Angel, the subject, in order to point to the broader, more generalised issues that derive from the particulars of her experiences. The description of Tommy's sexually charged approach to Angel is emblematic of a narrative strategy that de-privileges the subjectivity and individualism of its protagonist in favour of a polyphonic voicing of her growth to selfhood. It also illustrates the way in which the form of the narrative is used to reflect the dominant themes and concerns of the novel. The scene is introduced with the heading, "Hol you hen..." and it leaves the end of the popular idiom, "me cock outside", unstated. It introduces the narrative's focus on issues of gender and sexuality and points to the inextricable connection between resistance to colonial dominance

and resistance to patriarchal structures that condone the abuse of women. The “heading” is a popular saying, one which emphasises the freedom, authority and sexual attractiveness of the “cock” and the dangers this presents to young girls. As the saying suggests, however, the “cock” is irresistible; the mothers need, not only to protect their daughters but literally, to hold them back. The interaction that follows opposes this idiom with the voices of the women who, as the heading of the subsequent scene suggests, “ha to hol one another up”, that is have to help each other to survive poverty and hardship and to resist the predatory advances of men.

Although in this scene Angel seems to be emerging as a speaking subject, the voice she uses to represent her self is her mothers. It is her memory of Doodsie’s voice which enables her to articulate a refusal of Tommy’s sexual advances:

“No!” Angel backed away. “No! No! No!”

Angel was suddenly shouting, backing away, her right hand holding up the bag threateningly. Her mother’s severe, warning face was clear in her mind.

(73)

The reference to her as “The child” in the paragraph immediately following her experience with Tommy further confounds expectations that this form, the otherwise conventional *bildungsroman*, would deliver a fully autonomous speaking subject. The scene closes with an emphasis on the care and support that the mothers give to each other; Doodsie immediately tells Tommy’s grandmother of the incident and as usual, she has the last word: “De Day you interfere wid er, is de day ah cut out you blasted neck”(75). The community the women provide for each other and their children empowers Angel and provides her with an opportunity to speak of Tommy’s attempted transgression. At the same time that this incident places Angel at its centre, it serves to reinforce the importance of the narrative’s dominant themes of care and

female solidarity, which emerge from a strong community, confident of its culture and committed to its survival. As Cousin Maymay says: “We caan let one another sink. Is you, is me. We ha to hol one another up!”

In another early example, Angel is described by her mother as “growing nicely” but “Rude like the devil”; although she is the subject of their conversation, extended discussion of her personal development is sidelined in favour of a more general discussion by the women about the dangers that girls have to face from predatory adolescent boys. Their thoughts about her future are subsumed into their concerns about the future of the girls in the community. When Angel approaches in an attempt to catch her mother’s attention, she is roughly brushed aside and the doll she is carrying thrown into the corner; this action reflects the narrative’s repeated desire to diminish the space Angel occupies in the text in order to prioritise the mother’s voice and to focus on her subjectivity. Doodsie’s consciousness, rather than Angel’s, is examined, through her dialogue with the other women, through the expression of her unarticulated concerns and finally through her violent rejection of Angel. The scene, which begins “Angel was growing nicely” is therefore only nominally about Angel; having established her presence, the narrative turns its attention to Doodie’s anxiety about her daughter, to general issues about young girls’ sexuality and to the suggestion, in the emphatic whiteness of the doll, that colonial values still obtain.

Angel’s white doll prefigures the narrative’s concern with issues of female identity and self representation, introduced in the way of all Caribbean *bildungsroman* when the subject enters school. This motif continues to appear in the novels of contemporary women writers such as Zee Edgell who uses Beka’s entry into a selective school as a vehicle for exploring the effects of white colonial cultural dominance on her emerging sense of herself as a black young woman. In Hodge’s

novel this cultural confrontation, which marks a significant point in the process of Tee's alienation, occurs while she is still in "Third Standard. Hodge dramatises the split between Tee's selves by creating her fictional double, Helen:

Thus it was that I fashioned Helen, my double. She was my age and height. She spent the summer holidays at the sea-side with her aunt and uncle who had a delightful orchard with apple trees and pear trees in which sang chaffinches and blue tits, and where one could wander on terms of the closest familiarity with cowslips and honeysuckle. (61)

When Angel enters Standard Three, she is teased by her classmates for being a "country-bookie". Unlike Tee's cousins, however, who adopt an Americanised, therefore more Standard version of Trinidadian patois, Angel's companions urge her to use a more urbanised and pronounced form of patois: " 'Ah don know. Ah tink/ We always tellin you not to say "Ah don know". It sound real country. Why you caan say, "Me en know"?"' " This marks the beginning of her sense of her difference; in later scenes, however, this difference is represented more dramatically as Angel is confronted with the values held by the privileged, colonial culture of the school. Like Tee's Aunt Beatrice, Doodsie discourages the use of "patwa" at home, to the extent that Angel comments, "'Ah don' even know Patwa'" (91). It is significant that in the later novel, however, this awareness of a dual reality between home and school occurs later in the protagonists' development and that its effect is less devastating than in Hodge's earlier text. Collins locates this as part of an adolescent crisis which occurs once Angel has entered high school. She becomes fascinated by the school song, which celebrates an English spring, and with Christmas when she longs to play the part of an angel:

She felt all the joy of the season of spring. The Christmas plays she also loved, and would have liked to be an angel in one, but angels were white, or at least very fair. They might laugh at me, she thought, but ah woulda really like to be an angel. I mean, she corrected herself in her thoughts, I would really have liked to be an angel. (113)

The significance of the protagonists' perception of her otherness is treated differently in Collins' novel; Angel is not, like Tee, torn between one side of her family which endorses the cultural values and practices of the village community and the other, more metropolitan side which endorses the colonial values of the school and church. At the same time, Collins does not simply reverse the terms of cultural opposition, by foregrounding, not an alienated individual but a triumphant, Caribbean-centred community. Even as the villagers endorse and consciously preserve, in their "saracca" and in their language, a vibrant oppositional culture, as the following example demonstrates, colonial values still penetrate the village and are absorbed by its people.

When Angel asks to straighten her hair, Doodsie resists, refusing to accede to the values that Angel is beginning to adopt. In this scene, she is aware that Angel, walking ahead or behind her, is doing so out of shame for her mother's "work-stained" hands and though hurt, she continues to walk with her head held high, while hiding the source of her daughter's shame (114). However, at the end of the novel, in an ironic redirection of their relationship, it is Angel who, after three years at university in Jamaica has developed a more African-centred consciousness of herself, and is determined to keep her hair natural and "unstyled" and Doodsie who feels that Angel should change her appearance so that she looks like someone who has achieved success in terms defined by the dominant culture:

Look at that big, baggy, shapeless dress. Look at you head! Like it don't see comb in years. What is that? Black power? Black dirtiness! With the education you have in you head, when for you to make youself look nice and move about in a way to make people respect you, look at you! (174)

Angel does not voice her own feelings in the aftermath of this argument with her mother; instead it is Doodsie's voice which reports this encounter from her point of view in a letter to her friend Ezra.

In later scenes the absence in the narrative of the means with which to read Angel's subjectivity becomes more marked and more problematic. While driving alone after a particularly hostile confrontation with her father, Angel re-voices her mother's words, reliving tales of her mother's experience in domestic service. She does not reflect on the content of the argument, her role in it or her feelings in the aftermath. The narrative turns from Angel to focus on Doodsie, and on Angel's struggle to understand who she is and the source of her mother's impatience. Before she remembers this confrontation, she had been thinking of her father who, content to be in the house on the hill, reminds her of a house slave. She is brought up abruptly as she remembers her own time on the University campus in Jamaica when she too wanted little to do with politics; she just wanted to "bow head" like her father. Now, it is the memory of her mother's courage which gives her pleasure in the aftermath of her own confrontation but which also further fuels her anger at her mother's exploitation by her employers and now, by inference, her father. The scene is not used to point to Angel's developing self-consciousness; she had reacted with similar anger when, at fourteen, she had first heard the story. Rather it is used to place Angel in history and by doing so to diminish, rather than heighten, her role in relation to the history of her foremothers.

Angel's political consciousness emerges from the voices of other students who theorise the revolution, from the sound of the radio playing the line from the song, "Black man get up stan up on you feet!" (154), and from Doodsie's voice speaking to her across time and place, denouncing "Leader" (157). Her own articulated consciousness literally emerges in dialogue with these voices; she expresses this transformation in dialogue with another's voice, in a letter to her friend Janice: "But I get so really angry about all of this poverty all around. It just have to be immoral that some have so much and others could barely drink hot water. And all of this study! I get angry when I think about church, and about school and everything" (167).

Although it is not entirely clear that, as Patrick Taylor argues, Angel takes "the line of the party" ("Deconstruction and Revolution" 15), the narrative as a whole does endorse the revolutionary party, New Horizon, and Angel's point of view is, as he suggests, constantly subverted by the opinions of others who confront her about the unravelling of the revolutionary government. In one such instance Angel's uncle, on his return to Trinidad, tries to suggest that the people who supported Leader in the past were not "damn asses", as his opponents of Angel's generation seem to assume, but poor people who thought he would help them. He says: "But he really did start off as though he wanted to do something for poor people [...]" Much later in the narrative Angel's words echo her uncle's; she opposes the condemnation of Leader's supporters and visits the children of one of them, Eva, while she is in prison. In response to the comment that "Leaderite" people are all "one ban o tief", she says: "Eva only supporting Leader because is he alone she could remember from time doin anything for her". Doodsie expresses satisfaction that her injunction to understand the other point of view is being heeded: "It good to see how in the struggle allyou talking

about you understand how people could get fooled an support people who not really workin for them!” (221).

The conflicting points of view in the dialogue increase as the novel progresses and people struggle to understand what has happened to “we Revolution”. Clearly the narrative attempts to reflect the confusion felt by the people at this time, and this creates an “unresolved” quality, the term used by Bakhtin to describe the effect of a polyphonic text. In Allen’s reading of Bakhtin, he writes:

Like the tradition of carnival, the polyphonic novel fights against any view of the world which would valorize one ‘official’ point of view. One ideological position, and thus one discourse above all others. The novel, in this sense, presents to us a world which is literally dialogic. (24)

The world represented in Angel, particularly in its closing scenes, is “literally dialogic”. Events, Collins seems to suggest, unfold as a series of different perspectives and can only be represented as such; every event in the past can only be constructed through processes of interpretation and each interpretative act generates further amplification or contradiction. The ‘reality’ of the past cannot be represented except as a web of discourse and counter-discourse. And as the political landscape is rapidly transformed, an exploration of Angel’s consciousness is almost entirely subordinated to the narrative’s concern with the representation of that transformation from multiple points of view. As I indicate above, Angel is a key participant in these exchanges and in the process of political change but the narrative refuses to privilege her point of view; her subjectivity continues to be expressed through references to other characters in the community, to her mother and to her family. While Lamming’s attempt to create a novel which articulates the consciousness of the community is hampered by the historical factors which shaped its production, including the

necessity to claim masculine agency, Collins realises what Lamming set out to achieve, a narrative which voices the collective consciousness of the village while de-privileging the narrative of the individual's becoming.

Oral and Scribal Intertexts and their Counter-discursive function in the Novel

Angel

Angel is a "novel" in the Bakhtinian sense; it is a text which *resists* and revises the literary tradition within which it is situated. Michael Holquist writes:

[...] "novel" is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system. Literary systems are comprised of canons, and "novelization" is fundamentally anticanonical. (xxxi)

Her novel does not simply repeat or mirror the conventions of the traditions within which it situates itself but extends the limits of these forms and "literary systems", self-consciously dialogising traditional narrative styles and structures. Its refusal to privilege the point of view of its protagonist can be read as an oppositional use of the *bildungsroman* form and as a further extension of the problematised, fragmented protagonist of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*. Similarly, its use of what Carolyn Cooper describes as the intuitive understanding of the people rather than a single authoritative voice, to narrate versions of political and historical events, places Collins' novel within the tradition of the multi-vocal Caribbean narrative, but her novel extends and stretches this multi-vocal quality and can be defined as closer to the "polyphonic", "anticanonical" novel described by Bakhtin.

In the closing sections I elaborate on the dialogic quality of the novel by tracing the way that intertextual relations serve to add layers of meaning to the narrative. The

voices at work within the text, as well as being actively engaged in dialogue with earlier and contemporary literary texts, also engage with religious, historical and educational texts and with Caribbean traditions of orature. Collins' text uses language to resist the dominance of Standard English and its power to shape reality, direct judgements and construct systems of values. Her use of Creole constitutes a celebration of the narrative potential of Creole languages, not just as expressions of character or as a vehicle for representing significant themes and ideas in the novel but because those languages contain within their structures the very tensions and conflicts that shape the society they are used to describe. Her novel draws attention itself as a work shaped by language.

Her work reflects what Bakhtin defines as the social hierarchies implicit in language and her creative manipulation of these hierarchies adds layers of complexity to her work. Bakhtin describes a contested relationship between a "unitary" or "standard" language such as Standard English which "opposes heteroglossia" and which does not acknowledge the role of context in shaping and determining meaning. He describes a unitary language as "an expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language" (The Dialogic Imagination 270). This language imposes order and limits on linguistic expression, dictating what is correct and incorrect. The language Bakhtin uses emphasises the ideological nature of this process and its attempts to seal language off from contamination by other forces and to quell the dynamic, multi-voiced and combative quality of the many and ever increasing dialects produced in "living heteroglossia" (272). He describes the formation of a unitary language as one which involves the "enslavement" of other languages or the "incorporation of barbarians and lower strata into a unitary language of culture and truth" (271). At the

same time, he argues, the utterance cannot be confined by the centripetal forces of a unified language: every utterance participates in the “unitary language” (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia. Each word that is uttered contains within it traces of other words “about the same object, the same theme” and it is within this context of multiple meanings and ambiguity that a word is shaped and “individualized” in a literary text. The word cannot fail to respond in some way to these traces within it (internal dialogism) and to the external meanings brought to the word by the listener (270).

The language of non-literary genres in the novel dialogise with the Creole dialogue and the unexpressed thoughts, also represented in Creole, of its central characters. The epistolary genre is used, as Lima demonstrates, to emphasise the solidarity of the community even with members who have migrated. Doodsie writes letters to Ezra, who has gone to work in Aruba; Simon writes back home to Grenada from New York; Angel writes letters from the University campus in Jamaica to friends left in Grenada. The letters are also historical documents; Doodsie re-reads aloud the letters she sent to her sister as a way of reminding Regal, her brother and one of “Leader’s” supporters, of the corruption he exhibited in the days before he took over leadership of the country (17).

There has been some discussion, among the few critics of Collins’ work, about the significance of the epistolary form. Isabel Hoving argues that the older women in the novel acquire Creole through the process of letter writing: “The oral is not the quality of an older generation, as Western studies of orality suggest, but it has to be gained through the very act of writing” (128). Maria Helena Lima states that the letters in the novel are written in Creole, and Cooper notes that they are written “in the voice of the

people”, reflecting in an intimate context, the events occurring in the domain of public politics. (“Grenadian Popular Culture” 63). The form of the early letters, certainly in the case of Doodsie, is not Creole but a self-conscious attempt to use a formal, Standard English, epistolary register that contains within it traces of Creole. Contrary to Hoving’s observation, orality *is* the “quality” of the older generation and their letters reflect the difficulty they have switching from an oral to a written register which, they are conditioned to believe, should be Standard. It is certainly the case that, as Hoving argues, the oral is not opposed to writing, that “orality can be appropriated by a vernacular community that has become literate” (128), but as I demonstrate, this reflects an ideological commitment to the “vernacular”, in the narrative and in the society it represents, rather than individual desire.

Doodsie wrestles with formal conventions of letter writing learnt at school and her anxiety is evident as she starts to write: “Doodsie shifted the pen around in her hand, looked across at the bedroom door, looked up at the ceiling. Cobwebs. Must use the straw broom up there. Tomorrow”(6). She is reluctant to perform in a language in which she is not confident. Her first sentence, with its grammatically accurate structure but ambiguous use of the adjective “fine”, shows her limited success in imitating formal conventions of letter writing: “I hope this letter reaches you as fine as it leaves me” (6). A later sentence demonstrates her continued attempts to control a formal register: “To tell you the truth, Ezra, the country need a shake up like this, even though I know the kine of person Leader is.” And although her language becomes more and more Creolised the more impassioned she becomes in her critique of “Leader”, she is always conscious that she is writing a letter using a language other than the one she uses in speech. Doodsie shows her awareness of the ideological distinctions between languages within the narrative of the letter, when she

incorporates another character's dialogue: "all behin he head nice" but returns to Standard English to express a more formal opinion of public events; "I know we need a change but not in this way. I don't know where it all will end" (7).

Much later in the novel, as she sits down to compose another letter to Ezra she thinks ruefully of her children teasing her as she begins to write: "Mammie dat look like school book ting. Write as if you know er, non!" (206). As a result she begins to adapt the formal register to her conversational, everyday language beginning with the sentence: "How's tings girl" (206), in stark contrast to the opening of the letter referred to above. This letter, one of only two in the novel written entirely in Creole, is used to demonstrate a more developed and conscious resistance to colonial cultural values. She acts on her children's words during a period of heightened national self-consciousness, represented in the novel as the time immediately preceding the coming to power of the revolutionary government. Collins juxtaposes all instances of the epistolary genre with the bold type headings of Creole idioms and proverbs. Angel's letter home, written in a more confident Standard English register than her mother's, is prefaced with the words: "You of age to see after youself now!" The two utterances literally brush up against each other in the text highlighting the resistant quality of the Creole text and pointing to the inadequacy of a colonial language, the formal register of the letter, to properly express the world represented in the novel.

Christian hymns and prayers are used to represent the function of religious language as a means of coercion and oppression under colonialism. Doodsie does not use Creole in her prayer, although it is not entirely grammatical: "Let me see her go through school properly and make something of herself. Lord, just spare me let me see her grow up in a proper family, please God" (8). Ma Ettie's prayer, which uses Biblical language, also carries the values of docility and acceptance; as the workers

burn the plantation, she prays for the safety of the landlord and his children. Religious texts, the epistolary form, colonial educational texts such as the school song (113), and English literary texts such as Keats' "To Autumn" are all forms of what Bakhtin calls "authoritative discourse" which "strives [...] to determine the very basis of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour". It is the language of power and dominance located, as with colonial language, "in a distant zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers" (The Dialogic Imagination 342). Unlike Selvon's experimentation with genre, which results in a simple juxtaposition of voices in the narrative, Collins uses the language and structure of her novel to resist the ideological dominance of colonial language forms, not only through her use of Creole but in the novel's use of other popular genres such as Reggae and Calypso songs, political songs, and songs and chants that originated in Africa such as Melda's Carriacou chant. A radio announcement is used to narrate the overthrow of the neo-colonial government of Leader, and the response to that historical event is voiced by individuals who claim ownership of the overthrow: "'Woy! Makome! We do it!'" (231). Their use of "Makome" (macomere) affirms the sense of community and involvement felt by the women; they represent themselves as agents in the larger historical narrative. Melda's African chant: "'Ah want to hear my African drumming/ Give me my African chant'" (231), is used to signify her awareness of the connection between their struggles for true independence and equality and the earlier struggles of the slaves. The blowing of the shells and the drums are other voices used to emphasise the connection of the past to the present and the potential, in the present, for the recovery of a lost past.

Reggae is used as an example of indigenous music that radically challenges the musical values and conventions of European music: it is used to voice Angel's growing awareness of the oppositional potential of cultural nationalism. Because the words of the song, "By the Rivers of Babylon" are taken from the Bible (Psalms) in the Old Testament, they carry with them the experience of exile and captivity. Their meaning is re-appropriated in this song to refer to the Africans' experience of captivity, enslavement and colonisation; in the novel the song is juxtaposed with the "flipside", a song celebrating the Macabee Version of the Bible, which as the song says: "belong to de black man" (140-2).

Other forms of music are used in the novel to voice the people's celebration of the revolution but also to suggest that the revolution will both value and transform indigenous, non-Standard forms of expression. An example of this transformation of the value of oral, popular cultural forms can be demonstrated in the novel's representation of the calypso. A popular "pre-revolutionary" calypso is the "Egg Nog" calypso (144), a racist vilification of the Vietnamese people, which Angel condemns. After the Revolution however, radical, political calypsos which the Leader had banned are revived and new calypsos, usually invented spontaneously, are used to reflect the new mood of jubilation, as the expectant crowd welcomes the possibility of a revolutionary government. Carolyn Cooper observes that Sister Miona's poem, itself a historical and political narrative which "encapsulates the preconditions of a revolution" uses calypso rhythms and idioms ("Sense Make Befoh Book" 58). In this way, the calypso form is given narrative authority and is used to signal the heightened cultural awareness that accompanies political change. Other forms of "authoritative discourse" are transformed in the process of revolution. The hymn "When the roll is called up yonder/ I'll be there" (89) is used in its conventional

context as a hymn to accompany the burial of Ma Ettie and is later transformed and its meaning revised in the context of the revolution. One of the characters says of Leader's ousting: "Come lewwe sing a funeral song for he and he crucifix!", and the crowd sings: "Now de roll is called up yonder/And you'll be there"(211).

The novel replaces a central narrative consciousness with the voices of oral and literary culture forms, and with the dialogue of both main and anonymous characters; all these voices are used, some contradictory and conflicting, others confirming a particular point of view, to depict a nation at moments of historical transformation and crisis. The protagonist, Angel, emerges with her nation at the "border of two epochs", but her voice competes along with many others for narrative control. An intertextual reading of Collins' novel, which sees the relationship between Angel and its precursors as uncontested, might interpret the figure of the fragmented protagonists as one which, like G, Tee and Mohum Biswas, represents the cultural and political fragmentation of the colonised state; these protagonists also function, in part, as metonyms for the still emerging but unformed nation state. Unlike earlier narratives, however, the silences created by the dispersal of the protagonist's consciousness, are replaced by the narrative voices of the community. Angel's text of becoming, her self-defining "utterance" is, like the word in speech, inseparable from the heteroglossia that gives it meaning; the novel refuses to privilege the identity of the fragmented individual, emerging into uncertain independence and selfhood, and focuses instead on the collective consciousness of the community, voiced by a multiplicity of individually distinct voices. A dialogic reading of the relation between the novel and its precursors suggests that, like words in language, the relation that Angel has with earlier forms of the Caribbean *bildungsroman* is complex, resisting and even

oppositional; even while it is using the forms of earlier novels in that tradition, it is struggling to transform them and to give them new ideological and creative emphasis.

Carolyn Cooper points to the use of songs and proverbs in the novel and argues that these are “cunningly presented as operating beyond the domain of the controlling creativity of the individual novelist [and] suggest yet another level of authentication of Collins’ fiction. The truth she articulates is not only her personal vision [...]” (“Sense Make Befoh Book” 177) As I suggest above, however, the novel demonstrates that there is no authentic vision, no single “truth”, however it is expressed. Although the narrative suggests that Angel and her brothers are close to the political centre, they do not offer a privileged insight into the crisis at the centre of the party; their closeness does not give them narrative authority or ownership of the truth. Theirs is simply one voice among many. Even the government minister, who speaks at the zonal council meeting, is represented as subject to the voices of the people. He is forced by the people to use popular language: ““We want yu to break it up! We don want you to wrap up nutting in big word so da we caan understand”” (249). The minister’s compliance invokes, in the novel another “utterance” in another non-fictional context. It echoes very specifically speeches of Maurice Bishop, the revolutionary leader on whom “Chief” is based and who, in one example, when explaining systems of borrowing, says: “First you could go borrow, go by a bank, go by a Nenen or a Macume and say: ‘Well things well hard. Ah begging you please, lend me the hundred nuh man please”” (Searle, *Words Unchained* 115) He continues, justifying his own dialogised voice: “A government has to balance books just like any family has to balance books” (115). Searle also suggests that Bishop’s strategy is an attempt to minimise the distortions of language for which the former Prime Minister Gairy (Leader) was famous. Collins’ narrative style could be interpreted as an

endorsement of Bishop's language strategy; it positions her novel within the revolutionary discourse constructed by Bishop's government but the authority she grants to other, sometimes opposing, points of view allows her to move beyond the limitations of that potentially monologic discourse and to offer a more challenging, and more revolutionary narrative.

If, as Bakhtin argues, all language has the quality of the "already uttered", then meaning can only be negotiated in relation to history and to the changing contexts of the present. A "polyphonic" novel such as Collins', exploits what Bakhtin describes as the "chemical union" that is created by the ideological clash and conflict generated by speech. Her novel enters into a dialogic relationship with other novels in the tradition of the Caribbean *bildungsroman* and demonstrates that the tradition is itself dynamic, limitless and actively engaged in reformation. At the same time that her work signals its connections to traditions of Caribbean fiction, in its focus on women's voices and women's lives, it suggests the need for new narrative strategies, ones which do not converge around and therefore endorse the development of an individual 'heroic' male subject. As well as an act of textual resistance, the narrative structure of Angel reflects the novel's own emphasis on the need for more democratic structures of political resistance and a re-gendered, and more inclusive vision of liberation.

¹ Collins cites the following: Crozier 1987; Ambursley and Dunkerley 1984; Brizan 1984; La Rose 1985; Mandle 1985; Mills 1988; Thorndike 1987 and Meeks 1992 in Grenada - Ten years and More; Memory and Collective Responsibility" Caribbean Quarterly 74-5. I refer to others in Chapter 5.

² Belinda Edmondson, Making Men 58-77.

³ Hazel Carby also comments on this in "Proletarian Revolutionary Literature" 41-4.

⁴ Other critics such as Feng Pin-chia in her work The Female Bildungsroman by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston, have argued that the attraction of the form for contemporary 'ethnic' American women writers is that it provides the basis for the articulation of a distinctive racial, culture and gender identity.

⁵ Williams defines an "emergent" literature as one which challenges the ideas and values of the dominant culture and is concerned with the "affecting" present before it becomes the "fixed" social past. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature 133.

⁶ See Lillian Feder 27-9.

⁷ It is important to acknowledge other readings of the flood in Lamming's text. Mary Donnelly for example argues that the flood represents G's birth and signifies his attachment to his mother and to the village community of his mother's land.

⁸ In his essay, "George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin: Finding Promised in the Land", Neil ten Kortenaar struggles to define Lamming's narrative style, describing it variously as "ungainly [...] formless and raw" (43), a style which expresses "the inchoate" and conceives of the "hitherto unimagined." Chinosele accepts Lamming's assertion that the village is the novel's central character (71).

⁹ ten Kortenaar makes a similar conclusion 47.

¹⁰ Stein describes Lamming's use of third person narrative voices as "irritatingly obtrusive" and as a detraction from the voice of the autobiographical subject. In contrast, critics such as Sandra Pouchet Pacquet 252, Fredric Jameson in "Import Substitution" 184, as well as those cited in my own chapter see Lamming's use of multi-vocality as innovative and ideologically motivated.

¹¹ 'Crick-Crack' is the phrase used to announce the telling of a story; it also frames the audience's response to significant moments in the story.

¹² Simon Gikandi 210.

¹³ See Jameson "Import-Substitution" and Linda Hutcheon "Rethinking the National Model" 20-21.

¹⁴ 'Third Standard' is also a defining moment in Hodge's novel (54) but for the autobiographical subject, Tee, the process of alienation and separation from her community has already begun and this experience of Third Standard serves to confirm that process.

Chapter 3: Confrontational, Counter-Discursive and Symbolic Acts of Resistance: Merle Collins' Angel and George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin

Collins' novel, as the last chapter demonstrates, interacts dialogically with earlier male and female texts within the Caribbean literary tradition, resisting, re-appropriating and rewriting formal, linguistic and structural aspects of that tradition. Although, as I argue in the preceding chapter, Collins' use of language and the structure of her novels enact a form of resistance both to the Caribbean novels which precede it and to the dominance of colonial linguistic and literary modes of representation, Collins' intervention is not just at the level of form. Her text situates itself within and against post-colonial narratives of resistance, intervening to insert considerations of gender, and of female agency and authority. This chapter continues a dialogic reading of Collins' novel, focusing on its extension and revision of themes of resistance and national liberation in Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin, and in Fanon's "Concerning Violence", "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" and "Algeria Unveiled". The first two texts, chapters from The Wretched of the Earth, represent the most masculinist and the most popular of his studies of decolonising resistance and national liberation. These function as significant intertexts in Collins' novel Angel and are integral to the novel's representation of resistance and liberation.

Lamming's work exerts a strong creative "influence" on Collins' first novel; she repeats some of its dominant concerns – with the inner spaces of village life, with everyday, symbolic and counter-discursive acts of resistance, with the emergence and effectiveness of violent and confrontational acts of resistance. At the same time, in her revision and repositioning of these forms of resistance, she problematises his

marginalisation of women's contribution to all forms of anti-colonial resistance. In addition to their focus on anti-colonial resistance and on the importance of village community, itself an oppositional force, both texts examine the use of language and test the limits of conventional realist fictional forms. As well as the experiment with voice, referred to in the preceding chapter, Lamming's novel also uses digressive oral storytelling structures to disturb the surface coherence that characterises the conventional novel form. These oral narratives, as I demonstrate in the discussion that follows, are used to affirm the indigenous culture of the village and to represent acts of resistance that are effective at the level of discourse as well as experience.

In my examination of Collins' novel I argue that her focus on women's engagement with all forms of resistance exposes the absence of women's participation not just in the examples of Fanon's work I use in this chapter, but also in Lamming's novel. Collins' focus on women is, in part, enabled by the historical context in which her work is produced and by the increasing interest paid to women's cultural production and to the recuperation of women's roles in public and political discourses. In addition, her work reflects but also, as my analysis demonstrates, interrogates the figure of "the new Grenadian woman" who was being "steered" through the revolutionary period, a "militant[...] who emerged from the guts of the people [...]" (Searle, Struggle Against Destabilization 24).

I use Homi Bhabha's terms "hybridity" and "mimicry" to describe the discursive acts of resistance that dominate the early scenes in Lamming's novel; the use of Bhabha also serves to historically situate Lamming's text by illustrating the way in which resistance in his narrative both depends on but also contests, narratives of colonial authority. Although, as Benita Parry has argued, these concepts define anti-colonial resistance only in so far as it is predicated on and articulated within the

dominant discourses of colonialism,¹ his theory of resistance can be used to point to the extent to which Lamming's novel is itself heavily enmeshed in discourses of colonialism. Using the work of Chatterjee and Radhakrishnan, cited in the introductory chapter, I demonstrate that whereas Lamming's novel replicates the gendered divide between the public/private or political/personal dichotomies, Collins' novel successfully contests and deconstructs this divide, illustrating the mutual imbrication of these spaces. In doing so, Collins presents a new model of anti-colonial resistance, one which places women's involvement at its centre and is characterised by the multiple identities these characters occupy and by their preoccupation with community and the interconnection of individuals. The chapter begins and ends with Fanon. I open by challenging critical readings of themes of resistance in In the Castle of My Skin which rely only on a Fanonian interpretation of confrontational resistance and liberation. In the last section of the chapter, I focus on the dialogic relation between Fanon's essay and Angel and, with an emphasis on the representation of gender in both texts, trace the echoes, revisions, subversions and repetitions of Fanon in Collins' novel.

Confrontational and Counter-Discursive Acts of Resistance in Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin

As I argue in the discussion that follows, recent interpretations of Lamming's novel have focussed on its representations of confrontational resistance, whether on a small scale, such as the boys who watch as their fowl-cock sheds his droppings on the white man's head, or on a larger scale of organised revolt such as the peasant riots of 1937. Patrick Taylor describes Lamming's first novel as one which has "remarkable structural parallels" with Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (Narratives of

Liberation 189). He focuses on the similarity between the texts' representation of colonialism, anti-colonial and liberating violence, and the possibility of liberation. Patrick Taylor defines Lamming's novel as a "liberating narrative[s]" whose challenge is to "transform the sociopolitical totality so that lived history becomes open possibility". His analysis of In the Castle of My Skin focuses on its representation of colonialism and the emergence of a neo-colonial "dependent bourgeoisie" (192) and on Lamming's critique of "cathartic violence". He writes: "[...] the 'seeds of revolt' are present in the colonial situation from the beginning", sown by male figures, the boys, "taunting a white man with fowl droppings on his suit or in the form of direct confrontation between the colonizer (or his agent) and the colonized" (191).

Although Taylor describes the incident with the fowl droppings and more specifically the villagers' ambush of the landlord as potentially liberating, he accepts that these moments also mirror history and represent the "tragic misadventure of neo-colonialism" (191). He describes the villagers' failure to attack the landlord as a failure of the men to assume "mastery" of their own position: "Their final action contrasts sharply with that of Fanon's colonized, who eliminate the colonizer. The men in *Castle* are on the threshold of that leap or risk of life that according to Fanon (following Hegel) would be the condition for the assumption of their humanity" (195). For Taylor, the violence of the rioting is a cathartic violence, an act of revenge which is not accompanied by a "leap of consciousness" that is a necessary condition for liberation. He writes: "[...] it is not anticolonial violence per se that is liberating but, rather, the assumption of one's own destiny with all the risks that that entails. This process involves a leap of consciousness and must therefore be clearly distinguished from the process of catharsis" (197). The men's consciousness of the

liberating potential of their actions would transform their rioting from cathartic violence to violence imbued with the “will to act, to organize the struggle for recognition in a particular historical situation” (203).

Supriya Nair’s later study also focuses on the riots as the significant scenes of resistance in the novel and although she seems to accept Gates’ cautionary words about the tendency to “universalise” Fanon (“Critical Fanonism” 142), she nevertheless notes the similarities between the political positions of the two writers. Her work refers, in the most part, to Fanon’s essay “Concerning Violence”; she argues that:

Fanon’s schematization of apparently “random and senseless acts of violence” takes on the attributes of a ritualistic but confusing ceremony, an elaborately picturesque sequence of events in which the repressed anger of the natives simmers until a particular moment and then erupts in explosive violence.

Lamming’s novel runs remarkably parallel to Fanon’s later theorization.

(Caliban’s Curse 96)

Turning specifically to the history of Barbados, she argues that the riots of the Thirties “in themselves wrote an ambiguous text of revolution” (101). They brought the conditions of poverty to the attention of the governing classes, and in the case of Barbados, led to the organisation of the first trade unions and later the Barbados Labour Party that, according to Nair, marked the workers’ entry into the arena of national politics.

As Nair suggests, whatever the formal institutional gains for the peasants of Lamming’s novel, the riots resulted in betrayal and loss:

The events that follow the riots in the novel do not lead one to infer that the new social order has in fact met the demands that led to the disturbances.

Slime's entry into the colonial structures of power through his manipulation of the collective Friendly Society and Penny Bank set the stage for the next act in the colonial drama - neocolonialism. (102)

Similarly, she argues that, in the novel, "the need to make history foreshadows Fanon's scheme of inevitable violence. The desire on the part of the boys to stone the headmaster forecasts the later eruptions of the strikes and riots" (100). Transgressive actions, signified by the rioters' invasion of the stores, are prefigured by this desire of the boys, the scenes of the storm and the boys' "invasion" of Creighton's hilltop "castle". Nair notes Lamming's later desire to revise the anti-climatic ending of the novel in which the riots are dissolved by Slime's intervention. She writes: "[...] Lamming regrets the cancellation of violence in the village when the workers' plan to kill Creighton is foiled by Slime's intervention" (101). This regret is occasioned by the actual failure of political revolution and prompts a desire for textual intervention which, as Lamming states in his introduction to the novel, "would signify the symbolic end of a social order that deserved to be destroyed" (101). Lamming's comments reflect his desire to produce what Terdiman describes as a counter-discursive text, into which all the energies of the failed "sociohistorical revolution" are diverted and which creates a conclusion that revolutionary action intended but did not realise.²

Nair points to the absence of resistance among the villagers prior to the scenes of rioting. She writes:

Though the villagers in Creighton village live in poverty, there is little in the beginning of the novel that suggests direct individual or collective rebellion. Rather, the Sunday School teacher's advice to her son represents the other extreme: "There's nothing for us to do [...] but rejoice in our bondage". (86)

She further argues that signs of resistance are also absent at the level of discourse, citing Trumper's conversation at the end of the novel as the only conversation among the boys that contests imperial versions of history and as Nair suggests, "recalls Fanon's conception of history as written by the settler". Importantly, Nair attributes this critical, resisting insight to the "race consciousness" acquired through his separation from the village and his experiences in the U.S. The model of resistance used in these critiques is based on a Fanonian, or what can be defined as a masculine, model of anti-colonial resistance that reflects what Ania Loomba describes as the "stark oppositions of colonizer and colonized" ("Overworlding the 'Third World'" 308). Despite Simoes da Silva's employment of Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" to define the boy's "grammatical inaccuracy" as an act of resistance, he too argues that in Lamming's fiction "[...] the peasant remains beyond the political realm, unable to contribute in any meaningful way to the changes demanded by the postcolonial moment" (32).³ Interpretations such as those cited, overlook the text's representation of the complex interconnectedness between the coloniser and the colonised, the dominant and the dominated, as well as what Bhabha suggests are the contradictions inherent in the discourses of the dominant.

Both critics do refer to the smaller, explicitly violent or confrontational acts of resistance and interpret these as simply a figurative foreshadowing or rehearsal of the novel's own grand narrative of resistance - the rioting of the workers and the attempt on the landlord's life. The lives of the peasants of Creighton Village could be interpreted differently, however: as consisting of small, circular acts of resistance which are part of their everyday survival, rather than acts which symbolise a linear progression from limited resistance to final liberation. These acts might not be said to represent the evolving of the villagers' consciousness towards the moment of

liberating violence, but as “everyday” resistance and, as James C. Scott argues, as ends in themselves. While Scott’s focus is as much on events and institutions as on discourse, his emphasis is similar to Bhabha’s: he argues that “everyday” resistance is often unconscious or covert and is not concerned with “systematic de jure change” but with “immediate de facto gains”(33).

Covert acts of resistance are evidence that the acquiescence of the oppressed group masks forms of resistance which are not always either visible or part of a larger narrative of conscious, political resistance. It is thus possible to interpret the boys’ fantasy of stoning the schoolmaster, discussed below, not, as Nair argues, as a textual strategy used to link their action to the violent resistance of the rioters, but as a waking “dream” and an act of resistance, complete in itself but determined and constrained by their identity as children and as dependants outside of relations of labour and production.

Bhabha uses the terms “hybridity” and “mimicry” to define significant aspects of the counter-discursive strategies of colonial resistance on which he focuses. He writes:

Resistance [...] is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power - hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth. For domination is achieved through a process of disavowal that denies the *difference* of colonialist power - the chaos of its intervention as *Entstellung*, its dislocatory presence - in order to preserve the authority of its identity [...]. (“Signs Taken for Wonders” 172)

In other words, colonial authority is undermined from within the texts of its own master narratives; in seeking to exert their authority over the colonised, such texts necessarily deny their own “dislocatory” and transformed presence in their new location, the culture of the colonised. He goes on to argue that the “traces of what is disavowed” or aspects of difference in the culture of the colonised are “repeated as something *different* - a mutation, a hybrid” (172). This mutated, hybrid identity, generated by cultural difference, and repeated in the culture of the colonised, functions as a form of resistance by representing the “terrifying” threat to colonial authority that that authority itself generates: “Hybridity represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification - a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (174). Bhabha lists the stereotypical behaviours and types that signify the projected fears of the coloniser: “the *inscrutability* of the Chinese, the *unspeakable* rites of the Indians, the *indescribable* habits of the Hottentots” (173). The appearance of these “discriminated subjects”, themselves the product of the coloniser’s disavowal, unsettles and disturbs the “texts” of colonial authority. The effect of hybridity as a mode of resistance is to dissolve and displace the authority of the coloniser, rendering it “unsustainable” (179).

The encounter with the colonised also transforms the colonial text into a hybrid object, one which has lost its full authority. Hybridity thus describes the transformation of the master/slave binary in the colonial encounter; in the very process of enforcing colonial authority the coloniser creates the potential for the empowerment of the colonised and his own disempowerment. Although, as Parry argues, such a model of resistance denies the colonised agency, defining resistance only as a product of texts that represent the point of view of the coloniser (colonial

texts in particular), Bhabha's model does provide a means of reading the more subtle ways in which the characters in Lamming's novel destabilise colonial authority through acts of resistance which are neither intentional nor conscious nor politically motivated.

The intrusion by the boys into Creighton's garden is one such incident in the text, which does not simply prefigure later events of conscious resistance such as the scenes of rioting, but serves to unsettle and perhaps ultimately drive out the key figure of colonial authority, Mr. Creighton. Though an act of resistance, as this event is performed it is not, to quote Bhabha "necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the 'content' of another culture" (172). In Ma's retelling of the account of the intrusion narrated to her by Mr. Creighton, it is clear to the reader, though not to her, that as a means of avoiding being implicated in sexual relations with the landlord's daughter, the sailor accuses the boys of sexual assault. She repeats the landlord's account to Pa:

The vagabonds try to force rudeness on the landlord's daughter. [...] they nearly outlaw the landlord's daughter. 'Twas a good thing, Pa, twus a good thing one o' the sailors wus there on the spot to save her business. She ain't thinkin' no more 'bout what goin' to happen than the man in the moon, an' then out come those three wicked brutes to tear her to pieces, and twus only the grace of the Almighty God who let the sailor be where he wus, or they would have make a mess o' the child. (180)

It is evident that the sailor and the landlord have co-authored an authoritative text, which records events of that evening not only for the purpose of fixing relations

between the coloniser and the colonised subjects but, through its repetition to Ma, who will repeat it to Pa and who would usually “find out and even correct who was wrong” (176), as a means of maintaining order. Although this is Ma’s reinterpretation of the landlord’s words, it is clear that he has transformed the boys, merely spectators in this scene, into Caliban figures - the violent and ignoble savage: the potential rapist. The discriminated subject, here the black rapist, preys on the modesty of the white woman and his transgressive sexuality emerges to oppose the white sailor’s honour. In the original encounter between the landlord’s daughter and the sailor, he pulls her closer to him so that they become “as one” and he assures her that he will protect her safety. He says to her: “England expects every man to know his duty” (168). In contrast to that assurance, the appearance of the boys as Caliban figures in the sailor/landlord’s later narrative causes the landlord to feel that his authority has been dissolved: “It knocked at the roots of his world. It made him feel that nothing would be too big, too wicked to be attempted against him” (176). Both the event itself, but more significantly, his own rewritten (colonial) text of the boys’ original, transgressive act of resistance, produces the horror that so unsettles him he is forced to consider leaving.

There are other examples of resistance in the early scenes in the novel which are neither confrontational nor even conscious acts of resistance and are in part dependant on the incomplete authority of colonial law. Dominant figures, such as the teacher, live with the fear that they are being exposed by those who are otherwise subservient to them. The boy says:

They can’t prevent themselves from hearing just as they can’t prevent themselves from remembering. An’ the head teacher as much as gets it in his head that my mother’ll tell me what she hears when she comes home in the

night. [...] 'Tis the same everywhere. Tom's mother who work with the white doctor, an' Boy Blue grangran who wus the Governor's cook. They hear what's happening, an they all sort of get a front seat in the white people business. (42)

Like the servants in Cassin's fiction, Lamming's servants who are otherwise powerless, become resisting, subversive enemies, able to make the dominant fearful, to undermine their power and authority. Although in that moment the knowledge that the servants acquire makes them powerful, the head teacher's fear of the boys' own knowledge of him makes him reinforce more brutally his authority as head teacher. In the school-yard, the private space outside his dominance and influence, the boys dream of revenge, of making history, of stoning the teacher and demonstrating that, despite his attempt to cow them, they are not quiescent: they demonstrate "multiple levels of resistance, active and passive, to the inscription of colonial discourse" (Simoes da Silva 50). These acts of resistance, carried out in the everyday lives of the villagers, form a pattern in the narrative that reveals the villagers to be beyond the absolute control of colonial ideologies. The fact that the boys' dreams are not concretely transformed into actions can be interpreted as an example of the power of repression. The boys are aware of the head teacher's potential to use force even before he uses it so violently to beat the boy; furthermore, the memory of this beating will serve to restrain future attempts at resistance; in its aftermath, the boys can only dream of violent resistance but they are aware that to act on their dreams would be to make history of their otherwise unrecorded intentions: "He got power and authority here, an whatever he do or not do, people will be on his side. In a matter like this we won't have no supporters at all. We'd be making hist'ry I'd we stone him" (40).

In the event, of course, the boys do not stone the headmaster and their fantasy of rebellion serves only as evidence that the structures and institutions that are put in place to enforce colonial dominance do not completely control the dominated/colonised at the level of ideas or of consciousness. There are several other examples of resistance which take place in whispered conversations, such as the boys' whispered stories of the old woman, who had told them that the people of Barbados were once slaves and that indeed she had once been a slave. Her narrative acts as a counter-discursive, resistant text which opposes the teachings of the school teacher, and although her story is, like the later rioting, unable fully to contest the colonial narratives propagated by the school which deny the existence of slavery, its very presence in the narrative suggests that it has successfully infiltrated the boys' imagination and will be tested against later knowledge and experience: "It was disturbing. Thought of not being free. How could you bear it?" (49).

Other examples more specifically illustrate Scott's claim that there exist in most societies "situations in which the mask of obsequiousness, deference, and symbolic compliance *may* be lifted". He writes: "The realm of relatively 'safe' discourse, however narrow, is a necessary condition for the development of symbolic resistance - a social space in which the definitions and performances imposed by domination do not prevail" (328). In these "narrow spaces" Bhabha's concept of mimicry can be used to demonstrate the complex nature of the villagers' resistance and to illustrate the extent to which the narrative suggests that compliance with colonial religious or moral authority masks their refusal of that authority. Bhabha describes the process of imitation, transformation and, even mockery, as "mimicry": defined in this way, it is a "mode of appropriation and resistance" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 201). The process of "mimicry" restores agency to the colonised subject by unsettling and

opposing colonial authority, not just by the transforming imitation of the text but by the subtle questioning which asserts an opposing, indigenous culture. Although the “book”, the transmitter of colonial values that the native is required to repeat and obey, remains, its authority is devalued:

[...] the book retains its presence but it is no longer a representation of an essence; it is now a partial presence, a (strategic) device in a specific colonial engagement, an appurtenance of authority. [...] Deprived of their full presence, the knowledges of cultural authority may be articulated with forms of ‘native’ knowledges or faced with those discriminated subjects that they must rule but can no longer represent. (176)

The boys’ accounts of the stories of Jon, Susie and Bambi, and Bots and Bambina, reveal their awareness that marriage is an institution imposed on the village by the colonial institutions of the church, or the white European anthropologist, who firstly records and documents the lives of the villagers and then seeks to impose values and limits on their social relations. Even though they appear to concede, the villagers’ response to her encouragement to marry is an instance of resistance: “Some say they had no time for all that bullshit, but others say they had nothin’ to lose” (127). Both Bots, who tossed for his legal wife, and the villagers, who marry because they had “nothin’ to lose”, mimic the white woman’s religious/anthropological text which insists on marriage as the only legitimate institution within which to have children. Their repetition and mimicry, however, serves to undermine the validity of the institution, devaluing its claim on their lives but also demonstrating that though they appear to be accepting the moral authority of this white woman’s “book”, they are in fact resisting its real value. Although the boys seem to be accepting the authority of

the anthropologists' texts, the questions which accompany their 'acceptance' serve to transform that text.

The boys' own narrative continues beyond the white woman's apparent success, by describing the aftermath of the marriage. Whereas before, Bambi had lived "real splendid together" with the two mothers of his children in family structures completely sanctioned by the villagers, after his marriage these relationships erupted in chaos, division and violence which continued even after his sudden and early death. Trumper comments: "Like Bambi an' Bots an' Bambina. They live alright for God only knows how long, an' as soon as one get marry to the other, it don't matter who marry who, as soon as they is that marryin' business, everything break up, break right up" (134). He continues to confirm this practice as alien to the villagers by saying that marriage "aint make for the villagers".

In contrast to Glyne Griffith, who argues in his analysis of this scene that it represents the villagers "voicelessness and discursive failure" (145-52), I would argue that the narrative uses oral, storytelling structures, often said to characterise Caribbean women's texts, to subvert and re-inscribe the white woman's anthropological text which seeks to exert moral authority by claiming that unmarried couples such as Bambi and Bots/Bambina, by living together, are living in "mortal sin".⁴ The boys' repetition and revision of her original edict empties the institutions it values of all authority. The purpose of their counter-discursive narrative is to destabilise the authoritative text of the colonial anthropologist and to reveal the disorder and chaos brought about by the imposition of colonial institutions. It also serves to re-voice and legitimise the indigenous cultural practices of the village. Whereas critics such as Nair and Taylor focus on the narrative's representation of violent and explicitly political resistance and its failure, an analysis which foregrounds unconscious acts of

resistance or resistance which is not politically motivated, uncovers the text's more complex and nuanced opposition to colonialism.

The Role and Function of Women in Lamming's Narratives of Resistance

Despite the complex representation of resistance in Lamming's novel, its "personalizing of socio-political issues"⁵ and its focus on everyday, counter-discursive as well as public acts of resistance, women in the novel are excluded from both the public and the private arenas of resistance. The private spaces inhabited by the mothers are dominated by their domestic and maternal concerns. The yard functions in the novel to seal the women off from history. Patrick Taylor comments that one of the women characters, Mrs. Foster, remains trapped within the "nigger status" conferred by the colonialists: she believes the myths of white superiority which the school teaches and is grateful to the white landlord, but calls the black overseer a "bad-minded son-of-a bitch".⁶ Whereas the women remain imprisoned by colonial mythology, the men and boys sow what Taylor describes as the seeds of revolt which, as da Silva argues, are "indicative of the new political currents affecting the relationship between the colonial master and his subjects" (51). This particular scene of Mrs. Foster's humility and gratitude to the landlord is emblematic of the women's roles in the narrative. They are represented as enclosed in the inner spaces of the village which is itself outside the main stages of political action. As Miss Foster tells the women the story of how the "fowlcock had mess in the gentl'man face" (12), they listen, "horrified". The women do not represent themselves as agents even within their own narratives: they are not conscious of the significance of the changes they

recount to each other. They are caught in events that move with cyclical repetition and their focus is the narrow confines of their domestic lives.

The three were shuffling episodes and exchanging the confidences which informed their life with meaning. The meaning was not clear to them. It was not their concern, and it would never be. Their consciousness had never been quickened by the fact of life to which these confidences might have been a sure testimony [...]. The men at cricket. The children at hide and seek. The women laying out their starched clothes to dry. (17)

The women's lack of political consciousness is made more acute because they are sealed off from the public spaces of work, such as the docks; they are not, like the shoemaker, engaged in commerce, so they do not interface with the outside world. They are not teachers or preachers. Their stage is the yard, which is itself enclosed by fences; they hang out washing, chastise their children and gossip within that enclosed space; their views on the world, in the case of G's mother or Ma, are transmitted in the private spaces of their small houses outside the arena of political activity described by Thumper as "external relations". The old woman, Ma, who confesses "I don't understand full well what it mean by politics and so on" never leaves the confines of her house. Her scepticism of Mr. Slime, though ultimately well-founded, is based on her conservatism and her separation from the world. She distrusts his schemes because her deep-rooted and literal Christian beliefs do not allow her to attach importance to material things; she refuses to attach any importance to the issue of land ownership: "I won't worry my head 'bout the land 'cause 'tis always more trouble than profit, an' in yuh ol' age as you is an' me there be other things we got to think 'bout. Think 'bout the other land, Pa" (79). The women are among the villagers who exist outside of the spaces where political confrontation can take place; they

remain trapped in their incomprehension. “The villagers were quiet and frightened within[...]the incidents in the city were simply beyond them”(183). The women fear that the rioters do not belong to the village, that they are “intruders” (197).

Although Lamming has said that his portrayal of the village was meant to oppose the generally held view that the villagers were “very ordered, very conventional, very conservative”, in every incident of confrontation and resistance, his women characters are represented as cautious, conservative and uncomprehending. Mr. Foster explains to the women that the rioting that seems to have come as far as the village “had something to do with the landlord”. The women’s response is to defend the landlord: “The women said it wasn’t fair. Mr. Creighton hadn’t done anybody anything” (191). As evidence of his integrity, Miss Foster repeats the story of her visit to the landlord and his gift of half a crown: “The women shook their heads and said ’twas true, he hadn’t done anybody anything” (191). In the “the war” between the old and new landowners – Mr. Creighton and Mr. Slime- the men participate actively and vocally in defending their homes. Apart from the unnamed woman who calls the dogs on the “strange man” who comes to evict the villagers the women are, like Miss Foster, restrained in their responses. Whereas Mr. Foster threatens the man: “I’ll pitch your arse in the street”, Miss Foster stands quietly, distressed by events, remaining in the house “in case Mr. Foster attempted to do anything rash” (235).

Merle Collins’ Angel: Contesting the Exclusion of Women in Male Authored Narratives of Resistance ⁷

Several post-colonial critics have addressed what Gikandi suggests is a dichotomised relationship between the personal and the political, the public and the private. Critics such as Partha Chatterjee and R. Radhakrishnan have examined the

role of nationalism and of gender in the reification of these distinctions. In his study of post-colonial nationalism, Chatterjee argues that the colonised territories of Africa and Asia had created their own domain of sovereignty long before they began to develop formal anti-colonial strategies. This domain is one he terms the spiritual or the “inner” domain, one bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. It includes the areas of language, the family, and women's agency within the institution of the family. By contrast, he describes the material domain as “the domain of the ‘outside’ of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology. A domain where the West had proved its superiority [...]” . Chatterjee uses the terms “inner” and “outer” as a more accurate means of describing, in the post-colonial context, the distinction made in liberal political ideology between the public and the private and argues that the more dominant Western institutions become in the outer domain, the more urgent the need to cultivate the inner domain as a site of resistance and opposition. What is significant about these two domains as defined by Chatterjee, however, is their mutual imbrication. Although the nationalist elites sought to preserve intact the cultural characteristics of the inner domain as a means of defining and preserving cultural or national difference, it was impossible to maintain an “indifference” towards the character of this cultural sphere. As a result, the character of both domains changed as they adapted to each other: “each domain has not only acted in opposition to and as a limit upon the other but, through this process of struggle, has also shaped the emergent form of the other” (The Nation and its Fragments 12).

In the essay “Nationalism, Gender and the Narrative of Identity” R. Radhakrishnan uses and responds to several aspects of Chatterjee’s work primarily by emphasising the importance of gender as a category of analysis in any discussion of the spaces marked out by nationalist discourse. In so doing, Radhakrishnan seems to reject

Chatterjee's discussion of the mutual transformation of these spaces and insists on their dichotomous relationship:

[...] the place where the *true* nationalist subject *really is* and the place from which it produces historical-materialist knowledge about itself are mutually heterogeneous. The locus of the true self, the inner/traditional/spiritual sense of place is exiled from processes of history while the locus of historical knowledge fails to speak for the true identity of the nationalist subject. (85)

The figure of the woman, therefore, signifies a link to the past and the source of the cultural identity of the post-colonial nation: “[...] by mobilizing the inner/outer distinction against the ‘outerness’ of the West, nationalist rhetoric makes ‘woman’ the pure and ahistorical signifier of ‘interiority’” (84). This representation often serves to confirm women's invisibility and their absence from the public, political stage; it also results in perpetuating her subjugation by reproducing and maintaining the cultural forms that enforce her silence. The outer discourses of nationalism fail “to speak for its own people” and woman too becomes a symbol of this failure, of the failure of nationalism to properly represent its inner reality, itself as it “*really is*”.

Caribbean novels of the early period reproduce the gendered and discrete character of the inner/outer or public/private dichotomy, as defined by Radhakrishnan. The yard in these novels is the “domain of sovereignty” of the colonised; at the same time it is a site where resistance to what Chatterjee describes as the “normalizing” function of the colonial state apparatus can be practised. The ‘yard’ is used to celebrate the vibrancy of the Creole language, the indomitable spirit of the women and the spirit of collectivity that ensures the survival of poor female-centred

communities. In Lamming's novel the village and the shared yards are the main sites from which the Caribbean peasant emerges, brought into history in his novel

(Pleasures 39). Again, these domains are women and child-centred spaces. Women often parent without fathers; the boys and the elderly Pa participate in storytelling, providing a counter-narrative to authoritative discourses of colonialism. Food, as represented in the extended scene in which G's mother prepares cuckoo and saltfish, also serves to signify the distinct cultural identity of the colonised and, as Baugh argues, represents "values attaching to the concepts of tradition, community, self-respect, creativity and work" ("Cuckoo and Culture" 25). Simoes da Silva focuses on a more complex interpretation and argues that this scene represents both the women's unconscious desire to reproduce the illusion of stability that colonialism provided and a "threat to the hegemonic centre" (100-1). However, whereas the boys' interventions are used to contest colonial authority and demonstrate an awareness, however unconscious, of "external relations", the narrative's representation of the mother's act of cooking, and the dialogue that accompanies it, suggesting a determined focus on her domestic domain and an unwillingness to engage with the outside world, unproblematically reproduces the inner/outer dichotomy that serves to undermine the counter-hegemonic value of the mother's actions.

Nana Wilson-Tagoe suggests that Lamming's novel serves to affirm the indigenous culture of the villagers and the importance of community: "The organic world of women steeped in legend, song, and shared rituals, and the inner world of children, a world of dream, mystery, curiosity, and personal identity, represents [...] the possibility of political action as the source of freedom" (80). As I have argued, Lamming's novel does use the voices of the boys to demonstrate the power and

effectiveness of discursive acts of anti-colonial resistance but apart from the stories of slavery told to the boys by an unnamed old woman, Lamming's women characters do not articulate symbolic, counter-discursive or material acts of resistance; in fact, they represent the "conservative" peasant who is opposed to resistance. In Collins' novel, however, although the women are similarly constrained by poverty and by their domestic roles, they emerge from the inner domain and from their roles as keepers of legend, ritual and oral folk culture to participate in all forms of resistance to colonialism and neo-colonialism and contest institutions that would seek to limit their participation in the public domain. As with the earlier Caribbean novels, Collins' text foregrounds the yard as a women-centred space. Although all the women in the narrative work, much of the significant action relating to this older generation of female characters takes place in either the house or the yard. As in Creighton village, the villagers of Hermitage in Collins' novel have a similar spatial relationship to the landlord, in this case De Lisle. The yard and the village can also be seen to function as a spiritual or inner domain where the cultural practices that define the villagers difference from colonial institutions are validated. While her novel clearly signals its connection to these traditions of representation in the Caribbean novel, it also develops and extends those figures, giving new or altered meaning to the dominant and recurring themes of political and cultural resistance. As Patrick Taylor seems to suggest, Collins' novel belongs neither to the categories of novelistic discourse produced by "an older nationalist generation dependent on European discourse" nor to a contemporary generation of post-colonial writers whose work contains ironic readings of "colonial historiography" ("Deconstruction and Revolution" 16, 13). The latter category of writers eschew what Taylor describes as "emancipatory narratives"; they are deconstructive "post-modern works which present fragmented subjects and

fractured histories[...] worthy of their historical period” (14). Collins’ work overlaps both categories; it does not, as the last chapter demonstrates, place at its centre a unified, self-conscious subject, and the multi-vocal quality of the narrative is, particularly in the more contemporary scenes, fragmentary and disruptive. At the same time, however, her novel does not completely reject the themes and structures of earlier emancipatory narratives but engages with them to produce a re-gendered narrative of the post-colonial nation.

These texts from the earlier nationalist period such as Lamming’s novel function, in Bakhtin’s words, as an “internally persuasive discourse [...] affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with one’s own word”:

In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s. Its creativity and productiveness consists precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words [...] it is not so much interpreted as it is further, that is freely developed, applied to new material, new conditions [...] it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses. (The Dialogic Imagination 345-6)

The word that animates “consciousness” can be used to represent the “interanimated” word or the complexity of voices that define a character’s interiority. Through her interpretations of Bakhtin and Gadamer, Mae Gwedolyn Henderson’s work offers a framework for reading black women’s writing which, like Collins’ novels, represents what she describes as “the multi-vocality” of selves within an individual identity (“Speaking in Tongues” 146). She argues that in addition to the model of dialogism

presented by Bakhtin, which stresses conflict and “*struggle*”, black women’s fiction enters into a “*dialectic of identity* of those aspects of self shared with others [...] a relation of mutuality and reciprocity with the “Thou” - or intimate other(s)”:

[...] the Gadamerian model presupposes as its goal a language of consensus, communality, and even identification, in which one claims to express the other’s claim and even to understand the other better than the other understands [him or herself].(147)

The female characters in Collins’ novel express complex, shifting and sometimes ambiguous subjectivities, which represent what Henderson describes as their “multiple and complex social, historical positionality”; they struggle to define their identities amidst their conflicting roles as mothers, daughter, wives, sisters, workers, intellectuals and revolutionaries. Sometimes these roles are compatible and complementary, sometimes antagonistic and sometimes both. Their subjectivities are formed in the dialogic interaction between themselves and the “other”, with whom they share aspects of their identity in relation to gender, nationality or political ideology, and the “other” from whom they are different.

Like Lamming’s text, which can be read as an examination of the anti-colonial struggles of the 1930s, Collins’ novel focuses on the major events of resistance and liberation in the history of Grenada: the general strike in 1951 and the events leading up to it; the Revolution of 1979 and the overthrow of the Revolutionary government in 1983. Her achievement in this novel, written from the point of view of its women characters, is to demonstrate that the “inner” or “sub-spaces” of national culture which do not interface with either colonial institutions or the elite institutions of nationalism are highly politicised spaces inhabited by an older generation of women

who, though they rarely venture beyond the yard and their places of work as servants or labourers, are highly articulate and engaged participants in the process of political resistance. Her narrative repositions the significance given to the “inner” domain in traditional Caribbean fiction by displacing the opposition between the personal and the political, redefining both in relation to the other. In their conversations, letters, their idiomatic and proverbial sayings and use of a Creole idiom they suggest an awareness that the personal, private spaces of their lives are woven from the fabric of a larger regional and national politics.

In Collins’ novel Angel, the geography and economy of the De Lisle plantation dominates the village of Hermitage in very much the same way that Creighton village is dominated by the Creighton family. Both novels emphasise both the physical proximity between the oppressed and their oppressors and the distance between them in relation to class and culture. Ma Ettie, in Collins’ novel, works as a servant in the kitchen of one of the De Lisle family, and the women who, like Maisie, work “under the cocoa” labour on the De Lisle estate. The De Lisles, like Creighton, do not function as a distant or abstract symbol of the characters’ exploitation but are a palpable part of their everyday lives. Despite the overthrow of colonial authority, the villagers’ lives continue to be dominated by the structures of the plantation economy. The large, isolated house that Angel’s father moves to was once a great house on the Delicia estate; it is payment for Allan’s loyalty to “Leader”, and as such symbolises the fact that the transition from colonialism has left hierarchical structures intact. Its past owners, and its mortgaged present in neo-colonial Grenada, haunt Doodsie as she sets out to reduce its enormous rooms and reposition her family’s relations to its dominating structures. The emptiness of its grand isolation sends Ma Ettie into loneliness and despair: “She hated the big yard with nobody in it. Nobody to sit on

the steps and talk. Nobody to shout to. Nobody passing along the road” (86). The children too feel cut off from village life and its African-centred rituals such as “mawun” and “saracca” (110). In an echo of Doodsie’s “cutting up” of the house, however, at the end of the novel, the Delicia plantation is democratised; it is divided up into smaller plots forcing the ghosts of a former period of exploitation and oppression to flee and suggesting, perhaps, the end to the rule of the landowning class: “All the old workers on the estate, including her father, were buying spots. Delicia estate was no more. And spirits don like to live wid people, said Doodsie” (290).

In Lamming’s novel the villagers see the role of the landlord as paternalistic; he drives through the village to witness the destruction of the flood and to estimate the extent of the repairs he will need to finance. And though they are aware of their powerlessness and the landlord’s power it is the overseer who is the direct target of the villagers’ most visceral expressions of hatred. The villagers in Collins’ novel by contrast are actively involved in resisting the power of the landowner; the burning of the “bukan” is supported by the villagers who witness it. Mano identifies who he thinks is the De Lisle family and exclaims: “Musbe Mr. De Lisle an dem dat come back from town. Ah sure is dem. Dose nastiness” (2). In the aftermath of the burning they articulate their experiences of the counter-violence of the colonialists: “[...] now they treatin us bad in every way possible. Is all over de place they tramplin us in de groun, yes girl.[...]” (10). Cousin Maymay, the speaker here, goes on to offer a detailed analysis of the system used by the landowners to keep the peasants in poverty. As she says, a week’s work buys just one pound of saltfish; but at the same time the system of planting and harvesting keeps them “under the cocoa” and prevents them from cultivating their own land. Her analysis signifies a level of understanding

that politicians and leaders should, the novel suggests, aspire to. She continues, expressing her consciousness of what Scott describes as the “mask of compliance”, a strategy for resistance in the face of brutal domination:

Becus when tellin you, if you talk hard an play vex, they will move you house from the estate. Evic you they callin it. An when you don have a spot of your own, you just have to play stupid an grin and bear it. (11)

Her account suggests that the compliance of the peasants derives from what Scott describes as the “duress of the quotidian”, that is the hardship of everyday labour that, as he argues, along with the expectation of violent repression, enforces a “mask” of conformity in the powerless. Their conscious performance of the mask of “public compliance” is itself an act of resistance (35).

Much of the resistance of the older women functions at the level of discourse, but unlike the examples referred to in Lamming’s text, which are mostly performed by young boys, their discourses of resistance are not generated by the ambivalent texts of colonial authority. Their texts of resistance serve not only to amplify, or in some instances to disrupt, the authoritative word of anti-colonial nationalism and post-colonial revolution but to confront the patriarchal structures that exist in anti-colonial revolutionary discourse and in the post-colonial movements and institutions that marginalise women. Doodsie’s complex reaction to the strike organised by Leader functions as a sophisticated critique of the politics of nationalism. Scenes of anti-colonial violence are enclosed by Doodsie’s concerns not with the politics of the strike but with its effect on her immediate family. She says to her self: “Dis is what you call eatin de bread dat the devil knead. Allan not working an we don have a cent. What de hell we go do? [...] An dis damn man don look like he even inten to stop de

strike. Jesus! Papa God put a hand!” (22). At the same time, her conversation with her sister Jessie suggests that, unlike Jessie, who fears any involvement in the public or “outer” domain of political resistance, she would support the strike and in fact “if wasn for the house that not even finish pay for yet an the fact that Angel have to eat, I does feel I would even go and march wid them meself” (27).

Dialogising Fanon’s Master Narrative: Themes of Resistance in the Novel Angel

Fanon’s work, as my use of his essays in the following chapters suggest, is “split” between the stark opposition of the coloniser and colonised that I emphasise in this section, and what Anne McClintock describes as an “altogether more compromised view of agency” in other work (“No Longer in a Future Heaven” 96). Fanon’s chapter “Concerning Violence” seems to suggest that the cycle of decolonising and post-colonial violence will produce a cleansed and fully liberated nation; however, as McClintock has pointed out, and as the opening paragraphs of the chapter “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” quoted below suggest, within these cycles of violence lies the tragedy of regressive nationalism. She describes a tension between Fanon’s “anticipatory nationalism”, which depends on Manichean binaries, and a more “open-ended and strategically difficult view of national agency”, and argues that:

His anticolonial project is split between a Hegelian vision of colonizer and colonized locked in a life-and-death conflict and an altogether more complex and unsteady view of agency. These paradigms slide against each other throughout his work, giving rise to a number of internal fissures. These fissures appear most visibly in his analysis of gender as a category of social power. (96)

Little has been written about the gender implications of The Wretched of the Earth, and very few women writers have engaged with these narratives in their fictional work. Collins' novel, as I demonstrate, both critiques the masculinist rhetoric of "Concerning Violence" and "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", and also echoes and intervenes in Fanon's representations of decolonising resistance and his critique of nationalism, exposing its occlusion of women's lives and experiences. As the last section of this chapter shows, Collins' critical, though brief, examination of the politics of cultural nationalism elaborates on Fanon's theoretical discussion of the use of women's bodies as political and cultural signifiers.

In this section I argue that the novel uses the women's voices to present a re-gendered echo of Fanon's essay "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness"; Collins' novel uses representations that closely follow Fanon's but by emphasising the contribution that women make to the struggle against neo-colonialism, it presents a more inclusive and textured form of resistance to a regressive "national consciousness". Fanon's chapter begins by asserting that: "History teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism"; the struggle for true national liberation is beset by retrogression and "tragic mishaps". Fanon argues that one of the regressive characteristics of this circular progress is a corrupt and self interested leadership. The "leader" in Fanon is the archetype on which Collins' "Leader" is modelled:

The people who for years on end have seen this leader and heard him speak, who from a distance in a kind of dream have followed his contests with the colonial power, spontaneously put their trust in this patriot. Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as

independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people [he] become[s] the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitute the national bourgeoisie. (133)

The women perceive the seeds of this “Leader’s” corruption before independence, reading his political self-interest and his abuse of the national body in the texts of his personal body, his dress and his private life. In a letter to Ezra Doodsie describes Leader's ostentatious wedding to “that airess from big family”; noting that his best man was his boss, she suggests that with Leader the people will be experiencing another form of colonialism. Notwithstanding the fact that he too had been laid off during the strike he organised in Aruba, as Doodsie writes, Leader was busy cementing his political career and guaranteeing his personal fortune by establishing personal connections with business. The voice of the narrative endorses her scepticism in the following description of his appearance as he addresses the crowd. Maisie uses Leader’s body as a text on which she reads signs of the excesses of colonial authority:

Leader held up both hands, a calm gesture demanding silence. His spotless white suit glistened in the sunshine.

‘He look like Mr. De Lisle, eh!’ Maisie whispered to her companion. Is just so Mr. De Lisle does dress neat when he playing tennis!’ (24)

In a later scene Collins inserts into “Leader’s” address to the crowd, the words from a speech made by Eric Gairy after his release from prison. According to Chris Searle, in return for his release and the official recognition of his trade union, Gairy had agreed to bring the striking workers to heel. In his speech to his supporters, organised with the full co-operation of the governor he says: “I have promised his Excellency the

Governor, there shall be no more acts of violence in Grenada [...] Well say after me now [...] I shall not commit any act of violence, and if I know of anyone who commits any act of violence or acts of violence I shall report to the Union head” (Searle, Grenada, the Struggle 8). Collins’ narrative dialogises Gairy’s speech, embellishing his text with descriptions of “Leader’s” dress and outward appearance, used to signify his betrayal of the workers and the corruption that was to mark his regime.

‘My dear People,’ he explained to the meeting in the old De Lisle plantation yard in Hermitage. You should go back to work. Victory is ours. [...] Leader held up his white cane, the gold of his ring glinting in the sunshine. Faces turned toward him.

‘I have promised the governor that this violence will stop. We have been given a satisfactory solution now, so let us go back to work, stop killing the people’s animals, stop taking things from the people’s fields.’

‘And if you see anyone still interfering with the people’s property, come and let me know. Because we cannot let anybody damage our cause. We have to show the governor who has come to this agreement with us that we are responsible people.’ (32-3)

These words signal the beginning of the formation of the notorious secret police, who were so powerful during Gairy’s post independence government (Brizan 337). This portrayal of Leader echoes Fanon’s “leader”, whose Party, having brought the people to independence, sets about repressing any opposition and controlling the population by force. Fanon writes: “The incoherent mass of the people is a blind force that must be continually held in check either by mystification or by the fear inspired by the

police force. [...] The militant is turned into an informer. He is entrusted to punitive expeditions against the villages” (The Wretched of the Earth 146).

In the same chapter where Fanon describes the “leader” on whom Collins’ character is based, he writes: “It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to [national] consciousness. [...] The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women” (165). He suggests here that national consciousness can only be achieved when men and women participate in the project of resistance and liberation. It could be argued, therefore, that a regressive national consciousness is the result of the exclusion of women from that political process. What Fanon does not explore, however, are the consequences of women’s inclusion. The unaddressed question of his narrative is: how might women’s participation in the project of political resistance and liberation change the character of that process? Collins’ novel can be used to elaborate on Fanon’s brief, undeveloped remarks about the role and function of women in the development of national resistance and liberation, inserting into the masculinist character of his work the problematic complexity of their subjugation. In Angel, Doodsie’s voice is used to articulate the struggle against her husband’s patriarchal attitudes and the patriarchy inherent in nationalist movements headed by Leader and Doodsie’s brother, Regal. At the same time, however, she defends her position of subordination against the more radical feminist critique of her daughter, Angel. In one of her first responses to Regal she suggests that the anti-colonial nationalist movement, which has engineered the strike, has taken over and in the process marginalised the concerns of women; her comment amplifies her earlier expressions of concern for the care of her family and suggests the beginning of a feminist politics and an awareness of the totalising

tendencies of the nationalist project. In reply to Regal's comment that the result of their "victory" is an increase in the labourers' wages, "two shilling an sixpence a day for man an two an two for women" she says: "go and see, those women doin more damn work than allyou self" (12).

Her early years of marriage are characterised by loneliness and poverty, the result of Allan's absence and his infidelities. In her responses to her condition it can be seen that her political awareness both characterises and conflicts with her role as wife and mother: this can be demonstrated in the scene of one of her violent altercations with Allan introduced with the sub-heading entitled, "Sometime you have to take de worse an call it de best":

'You good-for-nutting!' she screamed at him. 'All these nasty dirty woman you runnin behind!' She struggled against his grasp, kicking at him.

[...] 'All of allyou together is one dirty band of nastiness dey under the cocoa. Go! Go an meet dem! You doh deserve nothing better!.'

'You hear you? Is dis same hefe attitude you have make you don like Leader! Damn stupid attitude. [...]

Well if you want to drag Leader into it, drag im in, non! Ah don fraid! Ah could handle dat natsiness too!' (68)

Their political differences become the focus of their struggle. Doodsie is scornful of Leader and his party: "A ole dunce jackass dat could only spell e name little better dan I could spell mine!" To which Allan retorts: "He black like us, you damn ass!" (68). His comment suggests that Leader's support is rooted in the kind of tribalism that Fanon defines as a "pitfall" of nationalism.⁸ He feels threatened by

Doodsie's refusal to be "mystified", to use Fanon's term,⁹ by Leader's rhetoric and by the fact that she has seen through Leader and, as he sees it, has sided against the black man and the workers. For Allan, her refusal to accept Leader's governance can be equated with her refusal to be subordinated to her husband and to tolerate his excesses and his abuse of her trust. Doodsie's responses suggest that she connects the corruption of Leader with male oppression and domination; she equates her husband's infidelities with Leader's disregard for the people's loyalty, which is for her a kind of infidelity. Allan's lack of attention to Leader's extravagant and corrupt leadership signifies, for Doodsie, a moral carelessness that is reflected in his personal life and his fathering of four children outside marriage.

While it is not clear whether or not Allan has stopped his affairs, a truce is finally achieved; in the section entitled: "If wasn for de chilren, eh!", Doodsie remembers her own disrupted childhood.¹⁰ Her mother, Ma Ettie, having left her drunken husband, decided to work away from home with the result that all her children, apart from Doodsie, whom Ma Ettie's mother had described as "dat fatherless child dat come to spoil the family name" (51), were left with various members of the family. Doodsie became a witness to the conflict and aggression that characterised her mother's relationships; the sight of Angel with the hammer, ready to attack Allan, was a chilling reminder of her own childhood: " 'No', said Doodsie, moving towards her, her mind flying back to the thought of herself, perhaps just a little older, flinging a sharp stone that sliced into the cheek of a man with whom her mother had been fighting" (90). Doodsie's decision to stay with Allan is, therefore, a conscious choice. She says to Ma Ettie: " 'You never bother to stay with husban. Me, I stayin. My children go have father, they going to school an [...]' " (51).

The memories of her mother's conflicts act as "internally persuasive" words and determine her decision to prioritise her role as mother and as a consequence, to accept the humiliations and the constraints on her freedom that are a function of her acceptance of patriarchal dominance within marriage. She tells her husband why she does not leave: " [...] if wasn for dose chilren ah would do it too"(89). Doodsie resists Angel's insistence that she refuse to submit to the authority of her husband. When Angel asks why Doodsie allows Leader's picture to remain on the wall, her mother replies: " 'How you mean if I let him put it? Is the man house, you know. When dey cut up de estate and dey selling out to who want lan is he dat had money to buy piece wid house on it not me'" (189). Her mother's reply reveals not only her awareness of her own subjugation, but also her agency in the narrative: she *chooses* to "swallow vinegar and preten is honey" (190). Discourses of domestic disempowerment shape her subjectivity, but Doodsie's identity is also informed by the discourses of race, colour and gender that structure Caribbean society. Although she chooses to accept Allan's authority, she is aware of her own strength; she describes herself as being forced into the role of a strong capable woman because she was marginalised by her mother's preference for Jessie, whose "complexion little bit fair", and for Regal because he was a man and "king". He jokes, understanding her point about gender relations: " 'You not going to blame me for not being born a woman?'" (186-7).

Collins' narrative reveals what Henderson describes as "a privileging (rather than a repressing) of the 'other within ourselves'". Like Mary Prince's representation of the black, enslaved woman, the multiple subject positions Doodsie occupies makes her acts of resistance equally complex but no less powerful; she is not the woman who was being "steeled", in Searle's description, by the Revolution, though her support of

the struggle for liberation is constant. Despite her choice not to contest the authority of her husband, Doodsie's commitment to the Revolutionary government of New Horizon suggests a thoughtful and fully articulate awareness of the political and economic issues that determine the island's future. Through the women characters such as Doodsie and Melda, the narrative emphasises the ownership that ordinary people feel both of the Revolution and of their country's future; she responds to American inspired criticism of the airport, built with Cuban aid: "So if all airport that size is base, America musbe have about three hundred more. [...] what we do wid ours is we business'" (242-3). They express their concern that the Party is operating as an elite group, a "secret society" and in their discussions they emphasise the government's accountability to the people: "Dey on top but is we dat make Revolution. Revolution counta make if weself din go out on de road and make Leader ban give up'" (258).¹¹

All three texts, Lamming's, Fanon's and Collins' novel, are concerned with an examination of the significance of violence in anti-colonial resistance; in Fanon's text violence is one of the key tropes of historical progress and change. In his essay "Concerning Violence", he argues that the only means by which a colonised subject can effectively overthrow the coloniser is through violence. Of the colonial regime, he writes:

In capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counselors and 'bewilderers' separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries on the contrary, the policemen and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. (29)

“Decolonising violence” - that is the violent destruction of colonialism in all its forms by the colonised people is not just a means of combating colonial violence, but of restoring to humanity the decolonised subject; it creates “a new language and a new humanity”; it is, he argues, the “veritable creation of new men”. He continues:

For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler [...] this violence [...] invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler’s violence in the beginning. (73)

The appeal of violence as a means of resistance is represented only in relation to a masculine subject whose physical freedom is constrained by colonial repression; and whose physical presence is literally diminished by colonial subjugation:

The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motor cars which never catch up with me. (40)

Violent resistance is the means by which the incarcerated body of the colonial subject is set free; it also “frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction: it makes him fearless and restores his self respect”(74).

The narrative of Angel is enclosed within depictions violence: the anti-colonial violence which opens the novel and the bombing of the invading American troops which herald the closing scenes.¹² It is Mano, a male member of the village who,

unhampered by frightened and fretful children or the demands for care from the elders, is able, from his lookout in a distant tree to tell the others that it is the “bukan” burning, whereas Doodsie’s ambivalent response encapsulates the fear felt by the women who watch in support but do not participate. As she watches the fire blazing, she is aware of the baby, Angel, clinging to her neck and that action makes her aware of her responsibility to her child and its future; her overriding reaction is one of fear: fear of violence; fear for their future survival (4).

Ma Ettie waits back at the yard and, fearful while hiding in her board house, she utters a prayer:

Lord, let this tribulation pass from us. Let not our enemies triumph over these your children, Lord. Take a thought to the life and salvation of the little family in that burning house. (4)

On the one hand, her reaction demonstrates the power of colonial indoctrination through the agency of the church and the resulting inability of this character, as a colonised subject, to identify the agent of her own suffering and “tribulation”. A clearer articulation of the extent to which Ma Ettie has been shaped by subservience, to the extent that she prioritises the care and safety of those who dominate her, is illustrated in a later altercation with Regal, her son and a union organiser, who is one of “Leader’s” strong men . She expresses horror at the violence inflicted on the animals on the De Lisle plantation: “ ‘I hear all you cutting down people animal straight how dey stand up so in those people land [...]you can’t go into their land and destroy all the tings they work for’ ” (27). Here, she voices her experience of who she is, and reflects the extent to which the particular form of colonial dominance to which women are subjected makes them vulnerable to colonial ideologies which mask as care and protection of the weak. Most of the women work, at some time or another,

as servants, caring for the children of the colonial middle classes; Ma Ettie herself had worked as a domestic servant for the De Lisle family and like all the other women was necessarily involved in the nurturing of those to whom she was also subservient. Her words express the doubleness of that experience; they are used to represent the way men and women experience colonial dominance differently and to point to the ways in which their identities as colonised subjects are, therefore, differently constructed.

Against a more uncompromising expression of truth in Fanon's text, their voices offer a multiple, multilayered truth. Their often intimate connections with the 'enemy' foster, perhaps against their own self-interest, a level of tolerance and compassion for individuals and an understanding of difference. Even when women such as Doodsie or Melda participate in the struggle to resist colonialism, their voices counter the uncompromising militancy of Leader's "gang" who beat Mano, permanently injuring him (21-2), or the absolute commitment to a Party line by supporters such as Jerry (221). The narrative endorses the point of view of these women, who stress the need for understanding and engagement, or what Carol Gilligan describes as an "ethic of care and nurturing" against an absolute belief in the principle of "rights". As well as trying to understand those on the side of the 'enemy', Angel begins to modify her hard line position of intolerance towards her father. As Allan begins to express support for the revolution, Angel tries to articulate her concerns about his subjugation of Doodsie, and her father begins to respond in a way that, the narrative suggests, he would not have responded had she remained confrontational:

'I know, Daddy. I don't think you should and say all right, I will exploit Doodsie in this way and that way, but you grow up to expect certain things and

sometimes those things could be [...] could be exploitative, yes. You see what ah mean?’

‘Huh!’ He stood looking up at the cocoa trees on the hill. Picked up his cutlass. ‘Okay. Uh-huh! I see what yu sayin. [...]’ (253)

As well as these transformations, the Creole fragments which frame both the early depictions of violence and those of social and political change represent history as cyclical and suggest a compromised, even sceptical view of progress and of the gains that can be achieved through acts of resistance: “Take win but you lose” (18); “Sometime you have to take de worse an call it de best” (64); “One day one day congote” (22) (6). The complex and contradictory positions from which the novel’s female subjects speak suggest that, as Anne McClintock argues: “agency is multiple rather than unitary, unpredictable rather than immanent, bereft of dialectical guarantees, and animated by an unsteady and nonlinear relation to time” (“No Longer in a Future Heaven” 96).

The Black Body as a Sign of Resistance in Collins’ Angel

Although, as Patrick Taylor observes: “It is not the call to Black Power that ultimately underlies the revolutionary trajectory in the novel [...]” (Deconstruction and Revolution 15), Angel's encounter with Black Power while on campus is an important stage in her commitment to revolutionary politics and can be said to replace the experience of labour and poverty that forms the basis of the revolutionary commitment of her mother. The novel details Angel’s cautious involvement in student politics, emphasising in the early stages, Doodsie’s voice, which both guides and tempers her involvement. Here the clear annunciation of Doodsie’s voice can be represented as the intimate “other” of Henderson's analysis; she seems in these scenes

to understand Angel better than she understands herself. Her first coming to voice is with Doodsie's words: " 'I actually said that!' she marvelled. It was a line borrowed straight from Doodsie in answer to arguments about Leader's control of the country" (157).

Of more relevance in relation to Fanon's work, however, are the references to dress and appearance that signal the emergence of Angel's political consciousness. Her first encounter with a student nick-named "European Freshette" is marked by Angel's silent inventory of her appearance:

"Her skin was blue-black. A broad nose settled uncomfortably under wide-spaced eyes in a longish face. [...] More like Ann's. But Ann had been unpopular because of her looks. Here it was already obvious that people found European Freshette attractive". (134-5)

As in this scene, the emphasis on appearance, and particularly hair, was a central feature of the politics of Black Nationalism that dominated the political landscape of the 1960s and '70s. In its representation of the politics of dress, hair and the black woman's body, Collins' novel contains strong dialogic echoes of Fanon's essay, "Algeria Unveiled". Like Fanon, Collins connects the physical appearance of the body with the struggle for national liberation but her novel also points to the limited effectiveness of a culturally reformed body that is the product of a male exercise of power. Kadiatu Kanneh begins her discussion of "Algeria Unveiled" by noting that :

Investigating how race is mobilised in terms of black or feminist resistance, and how gender and race intersect become significant in identity politics, it becomes necessary to explore the relationship between cultural signifiers and the body, or rather the acculturation of the body, its invention as an object of analysis and knowledge.(154)

Focusing on Fanon's essays on Algeria, she describes how, for the coloniser, the body of the colonised woman is invented as an "object of analysis" which, in Fanon's decolonising narrative "is unavoidably implicated in the voyeurism it examines" (158).¹³

For Fanon, the coloniser's determination to penetrate the veil of the Algerian woman and to unveil her, becomes a means of "achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of deconstructing Algerian culture" ("Algeria Unveiled" 39). In turn, the determination of the colonised to maintain the veil becomes a way of resisting the "foreigners'" preoccupation with the unveiling of the native woman as a strategy of dominance. I will return to Fanon's discussion of the struggle for possession of the woman's body under colonialism in the following chapter: of immediate relevance to this chapter is his representation of the process of veiling and unveiling the Algerian woman as she is brought into the struggle for liberation. The Algerian woman is invited into the struggle by male militants. There are several examples of the references to male authority and agency suggested in this sentence: "The decision to involve women as active elements of the Algerian revolution was not reached lightly" (48). All further decisions, to involve unmarried girls, to veil, unveil and veil the women who carry weapons and messages to the revolutionaries, are made by men. Nowhere is it indicated that the woman performs any other function than as a carrier or an intermediary; she is a "lighthouse barometer" (54) not a strategist in the revolution. Despite this depiction of the woman as a tool rather than an agent of revolutionary change, the woman is not always subordinate to the man. In an example of what McClintock describes as the "fissures" or contradictions evident in Fanon's examination of gender and revolution, she is described as being "parallel" with men in the struggle ("Algeria Unveiled" 57)

and as assuming a confidence and authority as a result of her participation in the struggle. The woman “walks with sure steps” (58) to her mission and even though she is also working “under” the orders of a man, on several occasions she is described as walking ahead of the man (51, 54). As the revolutionary process intensifies Fanon writes: “Behind the girl, the whole family - even the Algerian father, the authority for all things, the founder of every value - following in her footsteps, becomes committed to the new Algeria” (60).

Two important points can be made about Fanon’s representation of the woman’s body and its function in the process of liberation. Firstly, although during the process of decolonising resistance the Algerian woman’s body remains a site of symbolic signification, the veil itself loses its significance as a marker of essential identity. Fanon’s text stresses its fluidity and multi-valence. Similarly, the woman’s exposed or unveiled body does not signify her promiscuity despite the male response to her. She is the subject of “unpleasant, obscene, humiliating” remarks made by young men “who behave like young men all over the world” (53) but, one assumes, in the interest of the revolution she learns to resist these attempts to read her moral character in her unveiled body. By detaching and reattaching the veil, Fanon subverts the significance attributed to it by “sociologists and ethnologists [and] specialists in so-called native affairs [...]” who read the veil and the undisclosed body of the woman as a metaphor for a whole culture, itself revealed to be “medieval and barbaric”(37-8).¹⁴ Perhaps paradoxically, however, although the woman is freed, in Fanon’s text, from the rigid definitions imposed on her body by colonial institutions and their overdetermined readings of the veil, as suggested above, the woman is denied real agency in Fanon’s narrative of revolution; she is instructed to veil and unveil and

because her role in the struggle is legitimised by male militancy, she has no real authority.

In Collins' examination of the role of the woman's body in the politics of Black Nationalism, she returns to the female subject the agency and voice she is denied in Fanon's text. Although the narrative does not contest the positive significance given to natural hair, black skin and African features within the context of the movement, what it does contest is male authority over the female body. Angel's refusal to stop pressing her hair at Aaron's request, he says, "An Afro is really sexy" (152) - is given the same significance as her refusal to sleep with him. In both instances, juxtaposed in one scene in the narrative, she is asserting control over her body and refusing male possession. In the event of course Angel, like the other girls on campus, does cut her hair into an Afro and this marks the beginning of her involvement with the political drama group "Search", reinforcing the novel's emphasis on the interrelation of culture and politics. Despite the heading " 'Say it loud! I'm Black and I'm proud!'", and her learnt pride in the "African" characteristics of the female body, she maintains a critical relationship with the politics of Black Nationalism. Remembering Leader she states, in one of her first political assertions in her own voice, that "Black Power" is doing the Caribbean "no damn good" (157).

Both Angel's critical response to Black Nationalism as a revolutionary political strategy and the novel's representation of the revolutionary government echo, revise and overlap elements not just of Fanon's political theory, and his own opposition to forms of cultural nationalism, but of political statements made by the leader of the Grenada's New Jewel Movement, Maurice Bishop, on whom the character "Chief" is based. In Fanon's text the role of the intellectual is as one of a "highly conscious group [...] armed with revolutionary principles", to contest the power of both the

leader and the national bourgeoisie through whom he extends his power. In an interview with Chris Searle conducted just nine weeks before his assassination Maurice Bishop, invoking Fanon in his emphasis on the importance of unity between the government, the intellectuals and “the people”, describes his government's achievements.

We have learned to develop a truly deep and abiding respect for the people of our country, particularly the working people, and have understood more and more their enormous creative power and ability to confront and solve their problems [...] we have attempted to involve our people in the planning and running of the economy. (Searle, “Maurice Bishop” 9-10)

“Disunity” is the “enemy of the revolution” in both Fanon and Collins' texts.

Searle writes: “While the Grenada Revolution preserved its imperative unity, it was unassailable[...]When the breach in that fundamental unity came in October 1983 it (US) struck out[...]mercilessly[...]” (2). In scenes such as those of Angel's arguments with staff members at the school where she teaches and with her own father, the narrative does reveal a more textured and discriminating representation of “the people” than Fanon's political narratives cited above; however, specific representation of the kind of political disunity to which they refer is made in two distinct ways: firstly through a domestic metaphor which recurs throughout the narrative and begins its closing section:

High up the chicken-hawk circled...

‘Caw! caw! caw!’ High up the chicken-hawk circled.

Doodsie threw more corn. ‘Allyou stay togedder!’ she shouted....

‘Allyou self too stupid,’ she said to the fowls. ‘Don run when they try to frighten you. Stay together an dey caan get none.’(289)

Secondly, through the fragmentary quality of the closing sections which describe the scenes prior to the invasion, “disunity” is represented as the split of the Party from the people. As Angel’s brother says: “Any Party dat in Mars while people on earth is not no party we want to know about anyway!” In part, therefore, Collins’ novel represents an example of what Fanon describes as “national culture”. It is a work which, with its Creole sayings and idioms and its thematic opposition to what Cudjoe describes as political “one manism”,¹⁵ fashions revolution with the people. At the same time it resists the romantic, Manichean, linear and progressive model of resistance and revolutions that characterises some aspects of Fanon’s work. Most importantly, the texts’ focus on the narratives of communities of women is used to revise the terms within which unity is defined in the political narratives and commentaries of Fanon and Searle. The novel demonstrates that unity, or inclusiveness must include the voices and experiences of women if the political resistance is to provide a successful basis for revolutionary change.

“One han caan clap!” is a subtitle of one of the sections of the novel which describes Hermitage on the night of the hurricane, when everyone has to shelter in the “wall house” newly built by Doodsie and Allan. There are other numerous examples of the ways in which this small community protect each other, and it is almost a cliché to identify these instances as expressions of care, connectedness and collective responsibility. Their responsibility extends beyond the communal “yard”; women who have migrated, such as Ezra, who pays for Angel’s operation and medical care in America after she has lost her eye during the invasion, continue the same tradition of care. In the novel’s representation of community, its emphasis on collectivism and care as a gendered function is made more emphatic through its contrasting representation of the men such as Regal who, after a violent betrayal by

“Leader” migrates and simply disappears for a while before making a sudden re-appearance.

In a revision of Lamming’s text, which excludes women from all aspects of resistance: symbolic, counter-discursive or political and confrontation, Collins’ narrative voices the discounted experiences of women, emphasising their double oppression under colonialism. As a result her portrayal of resistance is complex and is woven from the texture of the women’s multiple and sometimes conflicting subjectivities. Despite their revolutionary commitment, women like Doodsie continually utter the rhythmic refrains: “Swallow vinegar an pretend it honey”; “Tek night an mek day”, illustrating the extent to which their identities are defined, in part, within discourses of care, responsibility for others, and self-sacrifice. Even Angel, who more closely resembles the figure of the Grenadian woman “steeled” in struggle, voices the need to connect with opposing perspectives; her growth in the novel is measured by the growth in her tolerance of difference. The novel exposes the absence of women’s voices and experiences of resistance in earlier “narratives of liberation” and through its representation of the women’s everyday and public acts of resistance, interrogates the effects and implications of gender power in male authored, authoritative texts of resistance and national liberation. Against the linear and uncompromising models of resistance articulated in critical works which are modelled on his theories, Collins’ novel suggests, not unlike, paradoxically, Fanon’s more problematic representation of the progress from resistance to liberation, that resistance is an untidy and sometimes regressive process and functions at many levels of effectiveness. Most importantly, her novel is used to document the important role that women play not only in participating in the struggle to resist colonialism but in transforming that struggle.

In the these two chapters I focus on Merle Collins' novel Angel and demonstrate that, in its representation of explicitly political themes, it signals a connection to earlier Caribbean fiction and to the work of political theorist Frantz Fanon. At the same time, however, the novel challenges and revises the themes and forms of resistance that it repeats, suggesting that attention to women's participation in acts of anti-colonial resistance and the recuperation of their voices in discourses of resistance and liberation radically alters the nature and character of resistance represented in the earlier narratives discussed in these chapters. Collins' novel suggests that because women bring to their engagement with anti-colonial and nationalist politics an experience of care, nurturing and of the importance of a commitment to others, the resistance enacted by these women is often more compromised, and is often conciliatory and complex.

¹ In "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse" Benita Parry writes that Bhabha's work implies a "downgrading of the anti-imperialist texts written by national liberation movements; while the notion of epistemic violence and the occluding of reverse discourses have obliterated the role of the native as historical subject and combatant [...]" (33-5).

² In "The Act of Speaking in Tongues" Chinosole also refers to Lamming's comments in the revised introduction to the novel and describes the villagers' failure to "strike" the landlord as an "ideological blindspot" in the narrative; he argues that the novel represents the villagers' "reluctance to reflect the potential of resistance in rural-based communities" (91).

³ Simoes da Silva continues by arguing that in the example of Season of Adventure, this failure creates the opportunity for the engagement of the middle class "as more useful participants in the national entity, as presaged by Fola's own transformation" (32). Elsewhere he argues that it is the "black male peasant subject in Lamming's fiction who makes the decision to take up the struggle for power against the colonial master (26). Simoes da Silva's problematic use of the term reflects, in part, Lamming's own representation of the "peasant" as a class which is mobile and capable of self-transformation. The boys, at the moment they resist, in the discussion that follows, are part of the peasant class and it is not at all clear that they will, like G, become part of a neo-colonial elite.

⁴ Ketrak, for example, states that women's fiction functions to preserve oral traditions (173); a similar claim is made by Nana Wilson-Tago, 224.

⁵ This phrase is used by Gikandi to define a distinctive feature of Caribbean women's fiction.

⁶ Narratives of Liberation, 191; In the Castle of My Skin, 20.

⁷ A shorter version of this section appears in Scafes, S. "Versioning the Revolution" in Deborah L. Madsen.

⁸ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth 119, 127, 146, 148.

⁹ *Ibid*, 135.

¹⁰ Carolyn Cooper attaches a very different significance to this heading; see "Sense Make Befoh Book" 183.

¹¹ For an elaboration of the role of popular support in bringing the New Jewel Movement to power, see Brizan 348.

¹² The wave of anti-colonial resistance which resulted in the widespread burning of plantations is referred to as "Red Sky" and took place in February 1951. Searle, Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization 5.

¹³ A similar point is made by Ella Shohat, who points out that the revolutionary woman becomes entangled in the erotic language that Fanon uses to describe the coloniser's desire to possess the territory of the colonised (58).

¹⁴ It is worth noting McClintock's more cautious reading of Fanon's emphasis on the fluidity of the veil; she suggests that he gives this symbol an "innocence" it does not have in reality. McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven" 96. In a highly critical article Bart Moore-Gilbert states that "traces of unconscious masculinism abound" in Fanon's writing on Algerian woman. Making a similar point to McClintock, he argues that "Fanon naturalizes the haik as a sign of identity [...] [i]nstead of providing a materialist critique of the veil [...] as social practice" (130).

¹⁵ Selwyn Cudjoe. Grenada: Two Essays (New York Calaloux, 1990) 9.

Chapter 4: Refusing “Slave Man's revenge”: Reading the Politics of the Resisting Body in Zee Edgell's Beka Lamb and Brenda Flanagan's You Alone Are Dancing

Although the focus in the preceding chapter has been on Collins' representation of women's participation in explicitly political acts of resistance, as I argue in the closing section, in her representation of Angel's growing awareness of her own body as a signifier of sexuality and of cultural identity, Collins' novel interrogates some of the assumptions made by Fanon in his essay, “Algeria Unveiled”. In the scene on which I focus, Collins demonstrates that issues of female voice and agency complicate the use of physical appearance and dress as a sign of resistance in political narratives such as Fanon's. Angel's interest in and engagement with anti-colonial nationalism is accompanied by her growing awareness of the need to resist the patriarchal intentions of some of the individuals in that movement and to assert the need for agency, while at the same time signalling a willingness to work with both male and female members of political organisations. However, Angel's awareness of her body and of her sexuality is not treated either explicitly or in detail in Collins' text. Instead the focus is on the emergence of her political consciousness and its connection to discourses of resistance articulated by the community of women in the Grenada to which she returns.

In this chapter, I return to the representation of the Black woman's body and its use as a political and cultural signifier and as a site where the politics of gender power is enacted. I trace a line in the representation of the black woman's body, from colonial narratives and early twentieth-century Caribbean fictional texts, to the work of two contemporary female novelists, Zee Edgell and Brenda Flanagan. I argue that

the first novels of these two writers intervenes in a history of fictional representation which uses the abused figure of the native woman to signify territorial, economic and sexual conquest and exploitation. Whereas the woman, in the male-authored literary texts on which I focus, silently concedes to her aggressor whose actions ultimately end in her destruction, through the themes of political resistance represented in the work of Edgell and Flanagan, their novels present an alternative to either victimhood or to the suggestion that, for the poor, working class black woman, her body is her only commercial capital. As with Angel, these novels are concerned with women's participation in the political process before and after independence. Unlike Collins' novel, however, these texts present a more conventionally positioned protagonist, whose unfolding interiority and growth to maturity are presented as central to the development of their political themes. In Flanagan's novel in particular its concerns with the female body and female sexuality is the text, rather than the subtext, out of which its political themes emerge. Both novels deal centrally and explicitly, rather than indirectly, as with Collins' text, with the sexuality of the protagonist and her own growing awareness of the historical and political significance of black female sexuality in the context of the colonial and post-colonial Caribbean. This awareness, as well as the actions of the characters, serves as a form of resistance to the silenced female victim of earlier male-authored representations.

I begin by focusing on the repeated figure of the abused and sexually violated body of the black woman, used, in Caribbean literature, to signify the desecration of the body of the island and its people. I use these early images of women to point to significant patterns of representation of Caribbean novelists who were concerned both with colonial oppression and with the subjugation of women within colonial societies; this is used as a theoretical framework within which new interpretations of

contemporary women's fiction can be positioned. The gendered representation of the Caribbean people and their land in early twentieth-century fiction serves to emphasise the powerlessness of its majority of working peasants and their vulnerability to the rapacious capacities of the colonial and post-colonial ruling elite. The feminised subject is represented as both the actual and symbolic victim of the male aggressor and plunderer; the woman, as woman or as land or peoples is subjected to dominance, control and ruin by the European 'discoverer' the slave master or the monied elite. Not only is the identity of the subjected peoples and land gendered in Caribbean literary, political and historical texts, but her sexual identity is also racialised. In these texts her body is represented as the Europe's Other; she is indigenous, native. Her sexuality is raw and unsophisticated; she is sexually open, voluptuous and inviting.

In my discussion of Flanagan's novel I return to Fanon's essay, "Algeria Unveiled" in order to elaborate on the connection that her novel makes between political dominance by a male, neo-colonial elite, sexual oppression and abuse, and women's political activism as a means of resisting both forms of oppression. Fanon was one of the earliest anti-colonial theorists to examine the relationship between sexual oppression, territorial conquest and the oppression of a people. As the last chapter demonstrates, his writings on the Algerian Revolution focus on the use of an item of the clothed body of the woman, the veil, as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance. More importantly in relation to the concerns of this chapter, Fanon's "Algeria Unveiled" provides a rhetorical model for an analysis of the relationship between territorial rape and possession, and both the dream of rape and the material rape and possession of the female body. In the case of Algeria, Fanon argues that colonial sociologists perceived that a structure of matrilineal power lay behind the

more obvious structures of patriarchal dominance. Control of the woman was, therefore, seen as the route to control and possess the country and its culture:

Converting the woman, winning her over to the foreign values, wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving real power over the man and attaining practical, effective means of deconstructing Algerian culture. (39)

“Winning over” the Algerian woman was, Fanon argues, by definition a violent act involving the rape and mutilation of her body. As a result, like the Jewish woman, the Algerian woman has “an aura of rape about her”:

The history of the French conquest in Algeria, including the overrunning of villages by the troops, the confiscation of property and the raping of women, the pillaging of a country, has contributed to the birth and the crystallization of the same dynamic image. (45)

The Algerian woman becomes the object of the European coloniser’s violent, erotic fantasies and symbolises his desire to conquer both the land and the woman. It reflects the coloniser’s formula, which is, as Fanon expresses it, “Let’s win over the women and the rest will follow” (37). In Flanagan’s novel the exercise of political control by the ruling elite is not expressed as a process of “winning over” but she does suggest that part of the strategy of control by the post-independence elite involves the sexual coercion, abuse and dominance of women.

The title of this chapter is taken from a scene in Zee Edgell’s first novel, Beka Lamb, where, during the wake for Great-gran Straker, Miss Eila’s comment that Toycie has been vomiting and craving green mango and salt is taken by the other older women as a sign that she is pregnant. The women turn to Beka, whom they notice is approaching puberty, which means, as Miss Flo’s comment below suggests,

that she will soon leave school and get married. She says to Aunt Tama, one of Mother Straker's daughters:

'Better stop that cow bawling and start think of wedding Tama. Beka is getting to be a big girl.' Aunt Tama looked up startled and she said,

'Beka only fourteen, Flo, not fifteen till next year.'

'You could have fooled me! But children grow faster than when I was young. No more school, eh, Beka?'

'I don't know yet Miss Flo.'

'Well take some advice and watch these young boys and married men around here now. They'll take slave man's revenge if you're not careful.'(74)

Here, Miss Flo points to the vulnerable sexuality of adolescent girls in Belize and the sexually aggressive, predatory nature of the men. She places the origins of this aggression in a history of slavery, where the slave owners' sexual dominance was used as a means of controlling slaves. The black "slave man" was left impotent against his dominance. In the sexual relations of post-slavery societies the black man, Miss Flo seems to suggest, enacts revenge on the white master's sexual dominance by seeking to control and sexually dominate the black woman himself. What the narrative demonstrates in extension of her remark, however, is that the white master continues to sexually exploit the black woman as an extension of his continued political and economic dominance; she therefore becomes the victim of the aggressive sexuality of black and white men.¹ Through Miss Flo's sexually charged, but humorous banter, Edgell establishes a connection between race, male power and dominance, and sexual violence. Just as the white slave owner established his authority over his slaves through his repeated use and control of the black woman's

body, so, in the context of this novel, the “pania”, or male members of the elite caste of Spanish Creoles, continue, as of right, to sexually avail themselves of native black girls who now outnumber the men, but who are still, it would seem, powerless to resist them.

Constructions of the Black Female Body in Colonising Narratives

In the discussion that follows I argue that the figure of the black woman’s body in colonialist narratives provides textual representations against which the novelists of the 1930s write back, resisting the casual brutality meted out against the body of the land and its women. I conclude by demonstrating that contemporary women writers such as Edgell and Flangan use but also transform these early, textual forms of resistance and in the process, redefine and enlarge the character of political resistance. It is important to begin by emphasising the attention paid to the physicality of the woman’s body in colonialist representation, against what Hortense Spillers describes as a tendency in feminist criticism to abstract the female body and to read it entirely in symbolic terms (“An Order of Constancy” 247-8). Elleke Boehmer also points to the material dimensions and character of the colonised body in representation: “From the points of view of the colonizer specifically, fears and curiosities, sublimated fascinations with the strange or the ‘primitive’ are expressed in concrete physical and anatomical images [...]” (269). The colonised land/body is repeatedly represented as dumb or inarticulate, open, untamed and animalistic: it is, “wild, seductive, dark, open to possession” (270). Agency is denied the colonised victim who is repeatedly maimed, penetrated, torn and acted upon. Like Boehmer and Spillers, I argue here that the symbolic significance of the black woman’s body emerges from its physical characteristics represented in fiction. In the colonialist narratives on which I focus, the

unclothed body of the colonised woman is used to display her erotic and inviting contours. Emphasis on skin colour is an essential part of the process of sexual Othering in the diaries of Thomas Thistlewood and in the early fiction of C.L.R. James and Alfred Mendes. In their re-inscription of these texts of colonial and anti-colonial fiction, contemporary women novelists Edgell and Flanagan reproduce and reverse the economies of colour, class and gender power established by these writers and in doing so, restore agency and voice to the female, colonised victims. Their narratives resist the tendency to representations of victimhood established in early Caribbean fiction and at the same time their protagonists actively resist the patriarchal dominance of the neo-colonial male elite.

Examples of the “concrete, physical and anatomical” images of the female body, used to symbolise the as yet uncolonised land can be found in a variety of colonialist narratives and are striking in their similarity. Haggard’s *Quatermain* describes Africa’s topography in the following way:

These mountains placed thus, like the pillars of a gigantic gateway, are shaped after the fashion of a woman’s breasts, and at times the mists and shadows beneath them take the form of a recumbent woman, veiled mysteriously in sleep. Their bases swell gently from the plain, looking at that distance perfectly round and smooth; and on top of each was a vast hillock covered with snow, exactly corresponding to the nipple on the female breast [...].

As well as being a site of seduction, Haggard’s Africa is also, as Rebecca Stott argues, a place of corruption and entrapment; it threatens to consume, infect and destroy white male virility and his sanity.² In an example from the Caribbean, Margarita

Zamora's analysis of original Columbian texts shows that the land of the Caribbean islands:

[...] itself becomes the substitute merchandise, the desirable object to be possessed. [...] The text creates in the reader a longing for the land. It employs a rhetoric of desire that inscribes 'the Indies' in a psychosexual discourse of the feminine whose principal coordinates are initially beauty and fertility and, ultimately, possession and domination. (134)

For Zamora, the culmination of the "eroticization of the Columbian paradise" can be seen in his "Account of the Third Voyage". There, he describes the "newly discovered" lands of the "Indies" as the "other world". In this account, he reconfigures the earth:

Moreover, he affirms that the earth was not round at all, as most of the authorities on the subject believed; rather it was shaped more like a pear or a woman's breast. As he sailed to this 'other world', claims the narrator, he actually moved upward on the slope of the breast, toward the location of the Earthly Paradise. The Garden, he declared, was in fact situated on the nipple, very appropriately, he added, since it was the spot closest to *heaven*. (144)

The feminisation and eroticisation of the land was extended to the descriptions of the peoples. Accounts of the men emphasised their feminine beauty, their lack of courage and their incapacity as warriors. They, like the land, were the beautiful Other, desirable but inferior and thus fit for appropriation. This paradoxical representation is defined by Zamora as a rhetoric of "desire and disdain", both of which co-exist in the Columbian narratives and are the function of the unequal value assigned to gender in Western cultural economies where "eroticization permits the idealization and

denigration of the feminized object to inhabit the same discursive space without disjunction or contradiction” (146). The gender difference between the Spanish man and the feminine ‘Indies’ is ultimately a political difference as this article makes clear. Such rhetorical markers in Columbus’ narratives clear the way for the appropriation, domination and exploitation of the ‘new world’.

In contrast, gender divisions in Raleigh’s account of Guiana are distinct and emphatic. Louise Montrose notes that in Raleigh’s text the conquered peoples are represented as exclusively masculine, while a rhetoric of femininity is used to describe the body of the land and the availability of its riches. By feminising the land, Raleigh renders its virile inhabitants invisible, as the following, often cited example shows:

To conclude, Guiana is a countrey that hath not yet her maidenhead, never sackt, turnd, nor wrought, the face of the earth hath not bene torne, nor the vertue and slat of the soyle spent by manurance [...] It hath never bene entred by any armie of strength, and never conquered or possessed by any Christian Prince. (12)

Commenting on this passage, Montrose suggests that it reflects an “elegiac sympathy” for an unspoilt world that is just being “entred” by the Spanish. She continues: “By subsuming and effacing the admired societies of Amerindian men in the metaphorically feminine Other of the land, the English intent to subjugate the indigenous peoples of Guiana can be ‘naturalized’ as the male’s mastery of the female” (12). In the hierarchies of race and gender constructed by the text, the Englishman is the only significant male figure and as such appropriates as of right, the “feminine body of the New World” with the intent, not just to conquer but to enrich the cultures and civilizations he represents, thus confirming his superior masculinity.

Colonialist narratives, such as those cited above, are structured by modes of representation that continue to be repeated in twentieth-century literature;³ however, these texts omit reference to the actual and necessary violence which accompanies the imperialist and colonialist project. Possession of the land is often defined by critics, in keeping with the gender distinctions made in the literature of 'discovery' as rape but the actual sexual violation of women is less well documented. As Hortense Spillers notes: "Silence on the sexual violation of captive females and their own express rage against their oppressors did not constitute events that captains and their crews rushed to record in letters to their sponsoring companies" ("Mama's Baby" 658).⁴ One of the few primary sources that offers evidence of the systematic violation of the black, female body by the white slaveholding class is Thomas Thistlewood's diaries. This text provides a perfect example of the interrelationship between the desire to possess both the body of the land and the body of the native woman. As with the slave and colonialists' narratives referred to in the introduction, Thistlewood's text also suggests the continuous attempts to resist on the part of the enslaved women, even in the small spaces ascribed to her. Thistlewood's journey to Jamaica was motivated by a desire for profit promised by the huge increases in the price of sugar. As an overseer he was directly involved in the regulation of slaves, a necessity for the accumulation of wealth and the formation of a class of landed gentry in the West Indies. His diaries also reveal a close connection between the feelings of desire and violent disdain that defined his sexual relations with black slave women, and his fascination with the fruits of the land, or what Douglas Hall describes as the "horticulture of exotics" (xvii, xviii). In addition to his fascination with the land and its climate, as Trevor Burnard writes, Thistlewood was concerned to tame and transform the colonial landscape into

a temperate English garden (124). This process of transformation attests to the violence and coercion that was the heart of the colonialist project.

In these diaries, Thistlewood recounts his sexual activities, and those of other white planters, in some detail, listing the slave women he had sex with, where and how; his exploits include assaults on young girls (28) and continue even during several painful bouts of gonorrhoea (xvii). His interest in white women is limited to one brief liaison, conducted some years after his arrival in Jamaica; where he has a sustained and, at least on his part, affectionate relationship with women such Phibbah, with whom he lives and has a child, this relationship is necessarily unequal. Despite her conjugal status, Phibbah remains a slave.⁵ An early such 'relationship', as opposed to a series of assaults, is with the slave Jenny to whom he gives gifts such as a necklace or a bordered coat. Their relationship is described as "quarrelsome", which perhaps points to some resistance on her part. The unequal character of the contest between white slave owners and enslaved black men over the sexual ownership of the slave women, referred to by Miss Flo, is illustrated in the following brief diary entry:

Sunday 10th : Differ with Jenny for being concerned with John Filton's Negro man at the Negro house, &c. Also took away from her, her necklace, bordered coat, &c. - At night she in the cookroom with London. (33)

This extract might suggest the exercise of agency by the slave woman Jenny who, as a result of Thistlewood's attraction to her, had gained some advantage both materially and in relation to the ownership of her body. It is impossible to tell how consensual her relations were with either "John Filton's Negro man" or London; either she was 'forced' by these men, or she chose to have sex as a way of opposing Thistlewood's control over her. When trying to speculate about the sexual relations of the female

slave in Thistlewood's diaries, it is worth bearing in mind Hortense Spillers' note of caution: "Whether or not the captive female and/or her sexual oppressor derived 'pleasure' from their seductions and couplings is not a question we can politely ask. Whether or not 'pleasure' is possible at all under the conditions that I would aver as non-freedom for both or either of the parties has not been settled" ("Mama's Baby" 670). As Douglas Hall points out, commenting on his own findings, neither the slave man nor the slave woman had any real power in this criss-cross of sexual activities; any attempt at resistance, through the exercise of choice, or through escape, was punished:

As one would expect, there was resistance. Slave women occasionally braved resistance to the sexual demands of their masters, and were usually punished for their 'impudence'. Slave men sometimes made clear their disapproval of the masters' assaults on slave women. [...] Individual slaves assaulted their masters, sometimes in offensive attack, sometimes in self-defence against assault. Usually they suffered dire consequences, but not always. (50)

An example of such "dire consequences" inflicted upon female slaves can be illustrated in one of the diary entries that refers to Sally, a fifteen or sixteen-year old black slave, whose lack of compliance suggests that what Thistlewood performed was, in fact, repeated rape. As Hall notes, in every record of sexual intercourse with Sally, and there are many, Thistlewood records, "*Sed Non Be*" During an attempt to run away later that year, she was sexually assaulted and on her return was violently punished. The following entries reveal the routine nature of the slave woman's violation and the extent to which her slave status literally signifies non-possession of both her body and her sexuality:

Put a collar and chain about Sally's neck, also branded her with a TT on her right cheek. Note her private parts is tore in a terrible manner, which was discovered this morning by her having bled a great deal where she lay in the bilboes last night. Being threatened a good deal, she at last confessed that a sailor had laid with her while away. Mr. Say's Vine undertook to doctor her. (150)

Despite the sailor's rape and abuse of Sally, Thistlewood merely notes that he "had laid with her" and despite the discovery of the "terrible" tears to her "private parts", she was violently punished and forced to make explicit the cause and nature of her earlier violation. Entries on Sally end with a final assault, "Thursday, 20th October: pm. *Cum Sally, mea, Sup. Terr.* At foot of cotton tree by New Ground side, West north west from the house (*sed non bene*)" (150). Thistlewood's diaries can be said to represent the next stage following from "discovery": the possession and the, quite literally, rapacious character of the coloniser's desire to exploit and consume the land and its people. The diaries make very little mention of the beauty of the land, of the kind that had provoked such erotic desire on the part of Columbus and his sailors; the island's geography is seen solely in terms of profit through exploitation. The language of "desire and disdain" is transferred to the slave woman, whose body as an instrument of labour in the process of possessing and transforming the land, becomes the site of multiple abuse and exploitation. It is this representation that both the writers of the 1930s and contemporary novelists contest, but whereas the Beacon writers simply oppose her violation, Edgell and Flanagan use their fiction to restore agency to the abused figure of the colonised woman and to create spaces for forms of political resistance that emerge from the conditions of her abuse.

Re-inscriptions of Colonialist Discourse in Selected Stories from The Beacon and in Alfred Mendes' Pitch Lake: the Problem of Resistance

Twentieth-century Caribbean literature is haunted by the history of discovery, slavery and colonialism whose representation has at its centre the image of the black woman as the sign and object of desire and exploitability. Her abused body, as Hortense Spillers argues, signifies both the general "powerlessness" of the slaves and their descendants and the specific, gendered character of oppression during slavery, colonialism and its aftermath:

The African female subject, under these historic conditions, is not only the target of rape - in one sense, an interiorized violation of body and mind - but also the topic of specifically *externalized* acts of torture and prostration that we imagine as the peculiar province of *male* brutality and torture inflicted by other males. (659, 660)

The early texts of Columbus and Thistlewood cannot be said to provide evidence of "another's influence" in the way that the early novels of Lamming, Naipaul and others can be said to influence a writer such as Merle Collins and indeed the women writers, who are the focus of this chapter. They can, however, as I demonstrate, be said to exist dialogically in relation to all the literary texts on which I focus in this chapter and can, therefore, provide a theoretical framework within which literary repetitions of sexual abuse and resistance to such abuse, can be examined. A dialogic reading of these novels that analyses the extent to which these texts are shaped by ideologies of gender, lends depth and texture to this fiction, revealing the "social atmosphere" that surrounds their representations of the female body (Bakhtin 277).

I begin with reference to a selection of short fiction by C.L.R. James and Alfred Mendes and continue with a more sustained analysis of Mendes' novel Pitch Lake, first published in 1934. Both James and Mendes began their writing career with The Beacon, a radical journal published in Trinidad in the 1930s. Hazel Carby states that the ideological perspective of the journal emerged from the contributors' experiences of having served in the First World War and been exposed to political and intellectual ideas that dominated Europe at the time. In addition to the writers' admiration for the aesthetic character of the "Soviet Experiment", they were also influenced by the writing that emerged from the Harlem Renaissance(44, 45). In an interview with Reinhard Sanders, Mendes says: "We had come to be known as the Communist group, and indeed in those years we were very sympathetic towards what was occurring in the Soviet Union" (Carby 46). As a result the literature the group produced conformed to ideologically defined guidelines: they stressed the need for realist fictional forms, rejecting work that might be interpreted as "romantic or exotic" (47). Carby writes, "The Beacon was a form for the creation of a West Indian literature which was recorded primarily as a vehicle for the representation of the poor and dispossessed" (42). The group also stressed the need for the writers' involvement with their subjects; as a result Mendes spent six months in a barrack yard in order to authenticate his own fictional representations of its poor, East Indian and African tenants. As I have noted in Chapter 1, however, an involvement with the "poor and dispossessed" was more complex than Mendes' decision briefly to reside in the Barrack yard, might suggest.

Although critics have noted the prevalence of women protagonists in this early fiction, there is no sustained critique of either gender or the role and function of women in this fiction. As Reinhard Sander observes, much of Mendes' fiction

examines women's sexual roles in Trinidad and uses the interrelations of class, colour, culture and female sexuality as a way of interrogating and critiquing the social organisation of early twentieth-century Trinidad (61). Making a similar claim, Hazel Carby writes that "A wide spectrum of The Beacon stories used sexuality as a terrain of racial and class conflict, a conflict expressed through sexual relations that were used for a political struggle for power" (48). Perhaps the best known of these stories is C.L.R. James' "Triumph", described by Harold Barratt as "one of the best pieces of barrackyard realism to be published in the twenties" (97). It focuses on, and as the title suggests, celebrates, the lives of a group of prostitutes or "kept women" living in a Port of Spain barrack-yard. Its opening sentence reflects the unresolved issue of what Carby describes as "proximity", as well as the "anthropological" quality of the narrator, who is positioned very much outside the subject of the narrative:

"Where people in England and America say slums, Trinidadians said barrack-yards. Probably the word is a relic of the days when England relied as much on garrisons of soldiers as on her fleet to protect her valuable sugar-producing colonies" (35) The references in the second and third paragraphs to Roman mythology and to various European canonical writers serve to emphasise the social and intellectual distance between the writer and his subject: describing the stones used to bleach the washing James writes, "Not only to Minerva have these stones been dedicated" (35).

Classical Greek and Roman mythology is not used in relation to the women characters, however and, as the following example shows, the erotically-charged language used to describe their bodies implicates the narrator/author in the feelings of exploitative desire that characterises the woman, Mamitz's, male clients:

She was shortish and fat, voluptuously developed, tremendously developed, and as a creole loves development in a woman more than any other extraneous

allure, Mamitz, (like all the rest of her sex in all stations of life) saw to it when she moved that you missed none of her charms. (36)

Like the land of the 'new world', her body is simultaneously bountiful, irresistible and open to appropriation and abuse. The English explorer Keymis writes: "[...] here whole shires of fruitfull rich grounds, lying now waste for want of people, do prostitute themselves unto us, like a faire and beautifull woman in the pride and floure of her desired yeeres" (Montrose 18). The unscribed character of the land, suggested by the words "waste" and "want", are mirrored in the emptiness, or lack of interiority of James' character, the "acquiescent" Mamitz (43). In the fiction of James, Mendes and in Lamming's later novel discussed in the following chapter, the sexual openness of their working-class women characters, their availability and the excess of flesh spilling out of their meagre garments all serve as a sign of their sexual difference. These women function not only metonymically, as the beautiful, fecund but exploited land but also metaphorically as the wild, untamed libidinous Other - the working-class male and female.

In James' fiction, however, and in the story from the only example of female-authored fiction included in the first volume of The Beacon, the women are not passive victims; they resist, if not the violence, then the control of the men they serve. Their resistance is circumscribed by their poverty and their dependence on men, as Kathleen Archibald's story, "Clipped Wings" demonstrates. Her story reflects similar problems of distance and difference: the black, street boys are "little nigger boys" and the street seller, of Indian extract, is more banshee than woman, with her "weird and screeching laugh" (82). Significantly, however, the female-authored text reveals none of the desire exhibited in James' story. The exchange which results in the woman, Coxi Valentine, murdering her tormentor, is simply referred to as "smutty" and is

suggestive of the inhibiting politeness that constrained the female middle-class writer of the period. What the story does reveal, very clearly, are the limitations of violence as an act of resistance. Coxi Valentine is arrested and imprisoned and the barrack-yard inhabitants are able to capitalise on the lurid details of her story.

Although neither Mendes' short fiction nor his novels contain explicitly political themes, his fictional work does arise from, and reflect, his early commitment to socialist ideals. Mendes' first novel focuses on the Portuguese community in Trinidad, and through its protagonist, Joe da Costa, explores the virulent class and racial prejudices of that group, that the texts suggests, are the result of its precarious social status as a new cultural group in colonial Trinidad.⁶ His desire for social mobility and for acceptance into the urban, middle-class Portuguese community defines his relations with women and, as the following early examples from the novel suggest, his sexual desire for a Creole girl such as Maria is qualified by his contempt for her as his racial inferior. He remembers his first encounter with her and his surprise that, at only sixteen "she was not a virgin":

He perceived her to be a girl of about sixteen years old, short but with well proportioned limbs, round, firm breasts standing up from beneath the scant clothing she wore, and a pretty face. Even then she was not a virgin, as he discovered afterwards much to his surprise for Maria was the first girl with whom he had conducted a protracted sexual intimacy.

(25)

His relationship with her is, it seems, entirely sexual and despite his obvious attraction to her, he agrees with the "old negro" that "Woman is de ruination of man 'cause man carn stan up widout she". For Joe, the ruin he faces, if he were to continue his relationship with Maria, is social and moral; "he would lose all sense of values and

become a lump of putty in her hands for her to mould into some ugly, repulsive shape [...]” (24). By portraying Maria as already sexually experienced, the narrative demonstrates its own implication in the colonial assumptions about black women’s sexuality that it attempts to critique, employing textual strategies and figures of representation that, like in James’ fiction construct her as sexually Other. This representation of Maria contrasts sharply with the de-sexualised representation of Myra, Joe’s childless sister-in-law and the sexually unavailable Cora, his Portuguese fiancée; whereas Maria’s mother urges Joe’s advances, Cora violently resists Joe, saying, “ ‘I’m not that sort’ ” (126).

Joe is the central consciousness through which events are filtered. The women characters in the novel are represented almost entirely from Joe’s point of view or from the point of view of other characters, most of whom are, like Joe, Portuguese. The sexually available bodies of the “coloured girls” referred to variously by Joe as “wretches”, “bitches” or “common barrack-yard girls” and by the other characters such as his sister-in-law Myra as, “little good for nothing[s]” are depicted as being the ruin of the white colonial middle class. Where they themselves face ruin, it is deemed the result of their own carelessness. Myra says to Joe when she hears of Stella’s pregnancy, ““You remember what I told you about the temptation the young white men have with these coloured girls?”” The girls who fall prey to men like Joe are represented sympathetically, but as objects in the narrative’s critique of race and class prejudice in colonial Trinidad; they are characters without interiority and without a voice of their own. They have no real identity separate from their status as victims of men’s sexual aggression and succumb not only to the advances of the more powerful and socially dominant white men, but to the social disgrace that thereafter, according to Joe, condemns them to a life of prostitution. As Mendes makes clear in an earlier

short story, "Five Dollars Worth of Flesh", the women's weakness and vulnerability is the result of their poverty and their racial and gendered identity that denies them ownership of their own bodies.

The text constructs a taxonomy of sexuality, gender and colour that is, in part, represented through images of dressing and undressing. The sexually 'loose' girls such as Maria are "coloured" and scantily dressed, suggesting not only their availability but also Joe's desire only for the possession of their bodies. Their loosely-clad bodies define and emphasise their sexual Otherness: whereas Myra's "bustless" body is fully clothed and therefore impenetrable, Joe seems to see straight through the coloured girls' clothing to their breast, the locus, as in the Columbian narratives, of "Earthly Paradise". He makes no mention of the clothes that cover Stella, the maid with whom he "falls in love", noticing only that "She was bare-legged and bare-footed, and her hair was tumbled about her head in untidy curls" (83). Once he begins to admit and to express his sexual desire for her, her identity becomes dissolved into repeated images of her breasts which, when he first registered her as a child to be protected, were "small and unformed"; now that his desire for her has become urgent they too have matured in his eyes:

Because her nightgown was low to the front, her small firm breasts were exposed to his gaze. His head turned hot and giddy. She did not seem to be ashamed of her half-naked condition. (174)

In contrast to his fascination with the Portuguese girls in their "rainbow coloured gowns" (117), Joe finds formal clothes, as a sign of sexual modesty and social status, incongruous on Stella: "Dress didn't become her; she looked odd; but when she was in *deshabille*, then she was pretty" (187). Like the prostitutes in James' story, she

unselfconsciously avails her body as a sign, as Joe reads it, of her natural, open, sexuality.

In a dialogic reading of these texts, Joseph da Costa can be linked directly to Thomas Thistlewood and Columbus. Da Costa, as a member of the white Portuguese community, feels a similar entitlement to the "bounty" of colonial Trinidad, and his material claims are similarly coloured, or complicated by his attitude of desire and disdain for the poor, black women, with whom he has sexual relations. Although, as Sander points out, he feels more at ease with these women than he does with those of his own cultural group, that ease is based on his inability to see women as anything other than sexual objects. His initial discomfort with Cora, for example, is that he misreads her flirtations and meets, rather than sexual willingness, her determined resistance. Maria and Stella, however, feel powerless to resist his advances and, despite his professions of "love" for Stella, his relations with them are no more than an exercise in dominance. This is no more evident than in the scene that describes their first real conversation. He is first attracted to her child-like look of submission:

She was still shy in his presence and he liked her the more for it. It became her. It was a pleasure to watch her hold her head down whenever he passed her. The more he saw of her the more pretty she appeared to him. (80)

Whereas he feels his masculinity threatened by the more sophisticated Portuguese women like Cora, he is reassured by the simplicity of girls like Stella and Maria, who are just sixteen and seventeen. As with the other white or middle-class men in the Trinidad of the novel, his relationships with Maria and Stella merely illustrate his sense of entitlement to these young women's bodies: as Stella says of their sexual relationship, "Every place I work, is de same t' ing" (228). Even his early

expressions of desire easily slip into racialised invective, which reveal not only the real contempt that men like Joe feel for coloured servant girls but also his own racial insecurity: “ ‘Little bitch [...] She knew he was dressing. Little wretch! She couldn’t be so innocent after all. A servant girl? They were all the same’”(114).⁷ When, at the close of the novel, he realises that her pregnancy cannot be terminated he screams: ‘Coolie bitch, coolie bitch’ before murdering her (351).

Mendes’ portrayal of Joe is an unsympathetic one; he uses his protagonist to expose the shallow sophistication of this newly bourgeois Portuguese community. The predatory sexuality of men like Joe is unambiguously represented and the narrative suggests that the chaste superiority of the white Portuguese women is preserved by the unprotected sexuality of girls like Stella and Maria. Their assaults on black or coloured women prove their dominance as white men in a predominantly non-white colonial society. As the racialised and sexualised Other, the eroticisation and subsequent violation of the “coloured” women characters, continues the patterns of exploitations established in narratives of discovery and colonisation. Mendes’ portrayal of these women also links their victimhood to patterns of representation established by abolitionist texts, whose narratives of the enslaved female victims were shaped by what Alison Piepmeier describes as “discourses of sentiment and suffering” (26). Whereas even the slave women in Thistlewood’s narrative attempt resistance by running away or by non-compliance, these girls are represented as willing victims without agency, who are disempowered by the narrative’s almost exclusive focus on the tragedies of its protagonists. As other fiction from this period, referred to briefly here demonstrates, however, not all fiction of the 1920s and ’30s represents the poor, black, Indian or “coloured” woman as passive victim. Women characters do resist, but as with Thistlewood’s slaves, only within the already constrained terms of their

existence or as an act of revenge. As examples from more recent work by Caribbean women writers suggests, contemporary women's fiction not only addresses the "revenge" of the female victim but it attempts to transform, in the process of her resistance, the conditions of her victimhood. Writers from both periods write from similarly motivated political positions; the achievement of contemporary women writers, whose fiction uses and continues earlier traditions of anti-colonial traditions, is to wrest the black woman's body from its position of subjugation and restore and her to voice and agency.

Bodily Harm and Reconfigured Themes of Resistance in Zee Edgell's Beka

Lamb

The fiction of contemporary women writers such as Zee Edgell and Brenda Flanagan interacts dialogically with early colonial and male-authored texts, which construct black female sexuality as Other, giving voice to these silenced women and rescuing them from the imprisoning male gaze. By explicitly situating the abuse of the young girl, Toycie, in the context of a history of colonial abuse and the resulting dereliction of the land and its people, Edgell's narrative not only opposes and resists the continued violation of the black woman's body, but points to politically constituted alternatives to what, the novel suggests, is a socio-political phenomenon. Like Angel, Edgell's first novel interacts dialogically with early forms of the Caribbean *bildungsroman* using, more conventionally than Collins' novel, an autobiographical subject whose coming to consciousness and maturity provides the narrative framework within which larger, political themes are explored.⁸ Like Angel, Beka Lamb does not simply allegorise the nation but deals directly with themes of nationhood and national identity and explicitly examines the public and political

contexts that shape its personal narratives. Set in the 1950s in Belize City, the capital of what was British Honduras, the novel explores the emerging politics of nationalism in a culturally and racially diverse colony, belonging to the West Indies by virtue of its historical connections to British imperialism but geographically situated in Central America.

The political activism of the older women characters, Granny Ivy and Miss Eila provides the narrative with its strongly political themes. As in Collins' novel, the gendered, spatial and epistemological boundaries, which separate the public/political and the personal, are displaced; personal relationships in Edgell's novel are determined by the turbulent politics of colonial Belize. The source of the ongoing tension between Granny Ivy and her son, Bill, is her active involvement in the P.I.P., a party seen by Bill to be seeking alliances with Guatemala. Granny Ivy's politics shape her interpretation of her personal and domestic relations, the past, and her understanding of the role of colonial institutions. The narrative announces its political intentions through the conversations between the women, who provide a political analysis of domestic, everyday or even mundane events. In the opening scene, for example, Granny Ivy comments on the racially excluding function of the convent school that Beka attends: "'Befo' time,' her Gran remarked towards nightfall, 'Beka would never have won that contest'. [...] 'And long befo' time you wouldn't be at no convent school'" (1). These remarks are followed by a conversation with Miss Eila with whom she plans to attend the P.I.P. meeting at Battlefield Park which, according to Granny Ivy, was responsible for opening up some of the colonial institutions such as the convent and forcing their engagement with the majority Creole community. Granny Ivy perceives that Beka is an early beneficiary of the newly formed Party's transformations: "And Beka's grandmother, an early member of the

party, felt she deserved some credit for the shift Beka was making from the washing bowl under the house bottom to books in the classroom overlooking the Caribbean sea" (2). She adds, when commenting on the tendency of the workers to steal from the Blanco's warehouse where Bill works, "[...] wages everywhere were so low, you couldn't blame them for stretching out the work or dropping a box now and then and splitting the goods among themselves, especially at Christmas time" (9). And she reacts with scorn when Lilla mourns her dried up rose bush, "Lilla had no business going on so bad over rose bush when people out district watching corn and yams shrivel under the sun" (9).

Unlike Mendes' work or more recently Olive Senior's, a writer with whom Edgell has been compared,⁹ the explicitly articulated political themes of the novel determine, to a large extent, a political reading of Beka's personal narrative, which takes the form of a written memorial or wake for her best friend Toycie. Its representations of adolescent female sexuality can be seen to have significance beyond the immediate context of the family or the small community of Belize. The body of the woman, presented throughout the narrative as a site of potential exploitation, abuse and destruction, is used to signify wider historical and political themes of imperial and colonial exploitation.¹⁰ Like Belize, the bodies of the women in the narrative are "broken down" in some way. Toycie's psychological breakdown provides the dramatic and emotional climax to the novel; her aunt, Miss Eila's body is twisted, the result of her broken foot. Her front teeth are missing and it is with a focus on her mouth that she is introduced into the narrative. Even Lilla, a model of maternal, domesticated femininity has "troubles with her eyes" (2) and is prone to debilitating headaches. The pain of Granny Ivy's varicose veins causes her to limp, and Beka's

breasts are growing unevenly, “One of her breasts was growing but the other one remained flat” (21).

The body of the land is broken down by the original colonisers and their African slaves who cut down logwood and mahogany trees that would be shipped to Europe (45); now, as Daddy Bill points out, there are fewer than ten trees to an acre. The tree, however, is the national symbol; it is positioned on the coat of arms in between two “black men, bare to the waist [...]” (8). One of the men holds an axe, the other a saw. The exploitative and destructive mission of the colonisers is thus made explicit in the coat of arms where the tree serves to signify the land on the point of destruction. This symbolic displacement does not simply reflect the absence or scarcity of the tree whose permanent presence is fixed on the colonial symbol of nationhood: as Gikandi argues, its material displacement makes the tree “unreal for many of the people of Belize, as unreal as the flora and fauna that Beka reads about in books” (222).

Meaning in the narrative is structured around similar images of loss, absence, destruction and displacement. Adele S. Newson quotes a traditional Belizean Creole saying, “Anything whe come da Belize sooner or later bruck down” (188). This image of Belize as a fragmented society perpetually on the verge of destruction haunts the consciousness of the novel’s characters. Beka remembers Granny Ivy’s comment on the British defeat of the Spanish in 1798, an event celebrated by the colony each year: “Granny Ivy said that Belize people liked to remember the battle, because it was one of the few things attempted in the country that hadn’t broken down” (46). The caye, where the Lamb family holiday, is described as a place where the British settlers went “to escape the insect life, disease, heat and swamps of the mainland”. Now the island has virtually disappeared: “The island had been larger then, but hurricanes had blown away large chunks of land, and now, from a distance, it seemed nothing more than a

small length of sand spiralling in the hugeness of the sea.” (45). Belize itself was ravaged by a legendary hurricane of 1931, which flattened houses and killed its residents.

It is with a kind of inevitability that the family structures of that community the lives of its members also fragment and disintegrate. Beka herself reflects on the pervasiveness of this experience when she considers her own failure at school:

[...] Toycie and Beka were different on the street where economic necessity forced many creole girls to leave school after elementary education to help at home, work in shops and stores as salesladies or take jobs as domestic servants in the houses of those who could afford such help. (34)

Although she struggles constantly to “fix on a way to prevent her own life from breaking down” she is haunted by fears of her own disintegration; the tension brought about by this fear has the force of a violent “crashing” wave. Her vivid dream, represented early in the narrative, also reflects this fear of destruction, of being swallowed by the fetid debris that litters Belize City and makes it look less like a city than a “temporary camp”(11).

Sailors standing on the decks of their boats stretched muscled brown arms upwards, calling,

‘Jump, nigger gial, jump! We’ll ketch you!’

Beka stared at the laughing faces below her, and at the whiskered catfishes nibbling at the filth floating on the surface of the water. Without warning, the bridge canted downwards propelling Beka into the waters and excrement of Haulover creek. (7)

Several critics have commented on the significance of Beka’s dream. Simon Gikandi argues that the dream represents the anxiety of the colonial condition and the fears of

the colonised individual and community about the unrealised dream of independent nationhood. Beka's fears, he suggests, mirror those of the nation, its anxieties about the threat from Guatemala and "even about the country's capacity to survive as an independent economic entity because of its diminutive size" (221). Newson offers a similar interpretation, arguing that the dream represents the anxieties about coming to womanhood which, in colonial Belize, involve the "choice of whether to be a good colonial citizen or to be independent" (189).

What both critics omit to mention, however, is the explicitly sexual nature of the sailors' threat. The sailors are located, as Newson points out, on the "wrong" side of town and are, as the extract from Thistlewood's diaries referred to above suggests, have often been represented historically as sexual predators.¹¹ Their call to her identifies her racial as well as her sexual difference and their cry "Jump", echoes Beka's fears of "falling" pregnant and "breaking down" and ending up, as she does in the dream, in the filthy, polluted waters of Belize City. The dream very clearly mirrors Toycie's fall from the "rickety bridge leading to the latrine over the creek" (127); her body, heavy with pregnancy and disfigured by the "ugly cut", spilling blood on to her face, seems almost unrecognisable to Beka, who remembers her slender gracefulness. Beka's fear, as her dream and the experience of Toycie's tragedy suggests, is that her developing sexuality is a danger to her ambitions for independent selfhood; her fear of destruction or of her body "breaking down" is often articulated within the context of her more general concern that few young girls seem to be able to escape pregnancy. At Granny Straker's funeral, haunted by Miss Flo's words, she prays to the spirit of her great-grandmother for protection:

And you remember Mis Flo's granddaughter? The one with her face bumpy like pineapple skin? Well, she has *three* children now [...] with different

daddies. And Granny Straker, Toycie sick. She's craving green mangoes and salt just like they say pregnant ladies crave dirt [...] I don't want to turn out like Miss Flo's granddaughter! Whe fu do, Granny Straker, whe fu *do*? (77)

Everyday discourse is punctuated by warnings to young girls about the dangers their bodies represent, warning them both of their vulnerability and their responsibility. Beka becomes obsessed by these stories that portray her pubescent body as a dangerous object and by the thought that poverty or madness awaits her should she become pregnant. A conversation about the arrival of the first Sisters of Charity leads Mr. Rabatu to read the dress of contemporary young women, with their "bare shoulders in satin and taffeta", as a sign of their sexual availability. In response, Beka almost unconsciously lists the women who have, like Miss Flo's granddaughter, several children on their own: "[...] and there's Miss Lucretia, that's Dotty's maid, and she has three sons and one daughter, Miss Hortense, and she is pregnant; and then there's Miss Eila's sister who had Toycie [...]" (145). Later in this scene she consciously articulates her fears but keeps them to herself:

There were no words ready for Beka to explain that, if, as she was beginning to suspect, her nurture was such that her life would probably break down, maybe in Toycie's way, she wanted it to happen in a far away corner where she could pick up the pieces, glue them together and start all over again. (147)

It is significant here that the narrative uses the word "nurture" rather than nature, suggesting that not only would Beka's socialisation in Belizean society cause her to become pregnant and thus thwart her ambition, but the society would not allow her to recover from that experience. Although women like Miss Flo and the Matron clearly blame male sexual aggression for the 'fall' or breaking down of young girls such as Beka or Toycie, their lack of constructive comment on issues of sexual conduct and

the girls' emerging sexuality means that girls like Beka can see no alternative identity for themselves other than as victims of male sexual revenge. The matron's words suggest the inevitability of this scenario: "It happens in all kinds of families and mothers always hope things will be different for their daughters" (135). For Beka, her sexuality is, like the bougainvillea she planted, a dangerous and unruly object which threatens to break down her life.

It is not Beka, however, whose body and mind breaks as a result of the exploitation of her body by the sexually aggressive and revengeful male, against whom she is warned; it is Toycie. As critics of the novel have pointed out, Toycie is Beka's other.¹² She is passionate, creative and ambitious but she is also compliant and studious. She takes Beka's failure in her exams far more seriously than Beka herself, feeling perhaps that for her, schooling provides the only route out of poverty. Like the archetypal protagonist of the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, Toycie is the product of parental loss and fragmentation. She says to Beka when she hears that her Great-granny Straker has died, " 'Girl, I feel bad about your Granny Straker but it' s not the same. My own mother scarcely writes to me anymore. I'd feel better if she were dead. She went to America when I was two and has never come back'" (69). She continues, explaining that her father was a "coolie man" who went to Panama before she was born and kept no contact with her mother. These words follow her sexual encounter with Emilio which takes place, Down notes, in the cemetery:

Toychie's liaison with Emilio occurs in the cemetery, an association with death further reinforced by news of Granny Straker's death. And the act itself debases Toychie [...]. The result is the "death" of Toychie. She loses her innocence but, more important, she loses her identity and dignity. Her

humiliation comes from her unconscious awareness of Emilio's exploitative separation of her body from her 'person'.(42)

She is vulnerable to this kind of exploitation of her body because, as Nurse Palacio suggests, she has a need for love, security and as Down adds, she lacks the "modifying influence that contact with a male relative would have provided" (43). Miss Eila herself, a virgin with a broken body, says, " 'No man ever approach me for any such reasons, Matron. Of course, with my crooked body none would, so I couldn't tell Toycie much on that score'" (135). The whole community of women is guilty of a silence on Toycie's sexual relations with Emilio (Down 44). Comments about girls' sexuality from the older women and men in the novel are veiled and blaming; they take the form of guarded warnings about men's predatory sexuality or heavily coded folk tales such as the story Miss Eila tells the girls about Tataduhende, the little red man who roams the forest "looking for unprotected little girls and boys, to break off their thumbs [...]" (138).¹³ Her despoilment, the narrative suggests, is precisely because this lack of protection from the whole community, whose everyday and folkloric discourses on gender and sexuality reflect, and are complicit with, the more authoritative colonialist discourses of religion and education that define women's sexuality as the root of chaos and sin.

In the novel, the Catholic church has an excluding, regulating function. The convent, that Beka attends was, in her mother's time, primarily for the more affluent white or metsizo population. She says to Beka, "[...] in those days most black children used to go to the Protestant schools. The majority of the girls at the convent were white skinned, either metsizos, backras or the children of foreigners"(69).

Although Lilla is light with "almost straight" hair she was poor, and according to the racial taxonomy of the narrative, "creole": that is, not backra or pania, like the

Villaneuvas. The religious discourses propagated by the convent and the Church itself divide women's sexual behaviour into two categories: virgin or whore. They are either like the sexual temptress, Eve, or they aspire to the chastity of the Virgin Mary and regulate their sexuality through marriage, which is legitimised by the Church.

Like George Lamming's earlier Caribbean *bildungsroman*, In the Castle of My Skin, the novel illustrates the complex ways in which resisting, counter-discursive acts that reflect 'native' culture and cultural practices oppose, with varying degrees of success, the dominant colonialist ideologies of religion and education. Whereas, as I suggest in Chapter 2, in Lamming's novel the boys' narratives perform an anti-colonial, resisting, function, in Edgell's text attempts to confront and resist colonialist discourses propagated by the school and church, are less successful. Beka, for example, learns not to challenge the religious authority of the convent. She remembers the effects of her attempts at resistance when she was listening to Father Nunez warning against giving in to physical and sexual desire:

Remember the story of Eve. As young ladies you must walk with an invisible veil about you so as not to unleash chaos upon the world. God, in his infinite goodness, gave us the Blessed Virgin to erase the memory of Eve and to serve as an example to the women of the world. (90)

Beka speaking, as she later describes it, "against her own best interests", counter-voices Father Nunez' teachings, using her grandmother's words to oppose and resist this gendered and, as the narrative suggests, racialised religious ideology, arguing that it is nature that produces chaos, not women and, "no matter how hard we try, sometimes, like bad luck, things break down" (91). She is almost expelled for what Sister Virgil describes as heresy, and it is this and the failure in her exams that

persuades her that it is in her best interests to listen with a “clear-eyed, attentive gaze”.

Similarly, Bill Lamb’s eloquent plea on Toycie’s behalf falls on the hard cold gaze of the Virgin Mary and her representative, Sister Virgil. Toycie is literally the fallen, broken woman, whose slipped veil had resulted in her pregnancy. On the first Monday back at school, she had vomited, the “slimy mess” had desecrated the “gleaming pinewood floor” and her school belt had broken. When she attends the meeting in Sister Virgil’s office, “slumped” and “disorientated”, her school uniform is “still unbelted”, an image used to signify the sisters’ view of her sexuality as unrestrained. Like Beka, however, Bill Lamb refuses to accept the Church’s doctrine of women’s aberrant sexuality. He refuses to accept that what has happened to Toycie is shocking and that she should be blamed while ““Mr. Villanueva’s son will not be expelled from school”” (119). Although his words have no power to save Toycie, as he accepts defeat, he politicises Toycie’s personal tragedy, making reference in his final response to Battlefield Park, the centre of anti-colonial political activity: ““You say things will change, Sister. It’ll be too late for Toycie here, and others like her, but the woman brave enough to make that change should be crowned Queen of the Bay at Battlefield Park”” (120). His inability to affect Toycie’s fate is made more emphatic by Sister Virgil’s closing words, which blame women for the high rate of illegitimacy and the country’s consequent underdevelopment, by the juxtaposition of the turned key in the lock of Sister Virgil’s door and by the shame-mi-lady plant surrounding the distraught Beka. As she touches the plant, she watches the “shy leaves close like the wings of a butterfly” (121). Each image of closing starkly opposes Toycie’s vulnerable sexuality, deemed too open and immodest by those who, like Sister Virgil, close the door on her future.

Although the narrative's representation of the 'defeat' of these specific counter-discursive acts problematises the potential and effectiveness of discourse as a mode of political resistance, the narrative as a whole serves as an act of resistance against these ideologies that demonise female sexuality. Like Alfred Mendes' novel the narrative's opposing representations of female sexual identities are racialised, but unlike Mendes' novel, in Beka Lamb these identities are critiqued. Senora Villanueva most closely approximates the model of femininity exemplified by the Virgin Mary:

Emilio [...] guided Senora Villanueva, fingertips under his elbow, through the church door as if she was crafted from some fragile substance and would shatter if she stumbled on the two steps from the church door to the yard.

(102)

Senora Villanueva, a pania, represents a model of legitimate maternity, sanctioned by the church. In contrast, Toycie's slightly scruffy taffeta dress was, like her, unravelling; the whitening on her shoes had rubbed on to her ankles "and her worn flat-heeled shoes keeled over, on the outer sides, like sailing dorys on a rough sea" (102-3). Economically and racially she is the converse of Emilio's mother and like so many other Creole girls, she has failed to achieve the ideal of sexual purity that is the basis of sanctified motherhood. In this scene, which takes place outside the Catholic church, Emilio is transformed from the carefree "cayebwoy" in his open shirt and faded pants (48) to a pania "grandee", complementing his mother in dress and manner, and practising for the day when he would be helping his pania wife to negotiate a place of safety in a society dominated by an unpredictable and fragmented Creole culture. As Toycie greets him, he turns to his mother:

Emilio glanced about him as if seeking refuge, then he smiled, the reluctant prince, long lashes brushing smooth olive cheeks as he looked down at his

petite Mama dressed exquisitely in a sheath fashioned of sharkskin material. Her tan patent leather shoes matched her dress, and the glass beads of her rosary sparkled like crystal. (102)

Juxtaposed with this image of idealised femininity is the wild, transgressive sexuality of Miss Arguelles whose performance tears through this scene of polite piety to expose its hypocrisy. Unmarried *Miss* Arguelles confronts Father Mullins, accusing him of complicity with the Guatemalans. As she leaves she “pushed her way in front of him, turned round, bent over and hoisted her skirt exposing a fat black bottom encased in a pair of long white draws” (104). The comments from the pania women reinforce their claim to superior femininity. And even Beka, who would normally have joined in the crowd’s celebration of Miss Arguelle’s performance, is aware that at that moment both she and Toycie are confirming Senora Villanueva’s preconceptions about the unruly and unregulated sexuality of black and Creole women.

Through its contrasting representations, the narrative mounts a critique of this feminine ideal, perpetuated by the Catholic Church and reinforced by the racial and class hierarchies that structure Belize. Senora Villanueva begins to discard Toycie once she suspects that she has had sexual relations with her son, and when she is told that Toycie is pregnant and has broken down because of her expulsion, she makes a few brief appearances at Miss Eila’s house. Emilio invokes his mother’s Catholic sensibilities in his harsh response to the news that Toycie is pregnant. Like Joe De Costa, he casts her as the “whore”, doubting her fidelity and claiming that “his mamacita would collapse if he married somebody that wasn’t a virgin because she’s so religious and she raised him to be a modest Catholic boy...”(109). The root of Senora Villanueva’s objection is that Toycie is a Creole and not, like Emilio, a pania;

she is, because of her colour, of a lower status than Emilio. Beka's warning that "Pania's scarcely marry creole like we" (47) echoes Myra's very heated disapproval of Portuguese men who marry "coloured" girls. She says: "[...] there's such a lot of temptation for young men nowadays with all these pretty coloured girls about town that it's best for them to settle down early. I think it's a horrible thing' – she shuddered – 'for a white man to marry a coloured woman'" (Pitch Lake 194).

Focusing on the issue of Toycie's virginity, Roydon Salick argues that Toycie's statement, "his body didn't go into me" suggests that her conception mirrors that of the story of the Virgin Mary and is therefore immaculate: unlike the Virgin Mary, however, she is "despised betrayed and vilified". However, Toycie's plight presents a more radical "counter narrative" to the biblical narrative of the Virgin Mary and does not, as Salick suggests, reflect a parallel with her story; rather Toycie's narrative is used to oppose and resist the oppressive ideologies of gender and femininity that have arisen from the idealisation of virginity, both as an end in itself, and as a precondition of marriage and maternity. Clearly Toycie's conception is not immaculate; it is Emilio who persuaded Toycie that she could not become pregnant without full penetration; he took advantage of her innocence and then used it to betray her. If she is to be remembered as Beka remembers her, it is not for the wonder of her conception but as a lesson to those in thrall to the Virgin Mary, who continue to sanction the exploitation and abuse of her body and of the bodies of young girls like Toycie.

While Toycie is not the passive, voiceless victim that Stella is, she is, nevertheless, an unresisting victim of Emilio's sexual demands and of those who seek to punish her for her "immodesty". In its portrayal of Toycie's tragedy the narrative points to the impossibility and perhaps the political limitations of individual acts of resistance. By juxtaposing scenes of political activism with these scenes of personal tragedy,

however, the narrative suggests that collective and political change, that has at its centre the voices of ordinary working women who, like Granny Ivy, have survived pregnancy, betrayal and the vilification that accompanies it, provides a framework within which the oppressive discourses of education and religion can be successfully resisted. Although, as Patteson points out, the society itself is remarkably resistant to these dominant discourses that attempt to regulate sexual conduct, in resisting these regulatory discourses, the Creole community is vulnerable to the charge that fragmented family structures result in broken individuals and impede the material progress of the community as a whole. (Patteson 7)

Poor, black girls like Toychie, who attend the convent, are caught between two worlds. Some, like Beka, learn to “suppress segments of their personalities” and to exclude the culture of their home communities so that they can achieve on the terms set by the dominant culture. Beka herself is aware that maintaining a place at St. Cecilia’s “strained her resources continually, narrowing her focus” (Edgell 94). Many, like Toychie, who was materially and emotionally less advantaged, could not succeed:

Their upbringing, set against such relative conformity, was exaggerated into what was perceived to be vulgarity, defiance, ingratitude, lack of discipline or moral degradation. These were the ones who stumbled and fell, often in utter confusion, and sometimes were expelled from school. (112)

Despite its focus on individual tragedy and the seeming inevitability of breaking down, the narrative does offer alternative personal, cultural and political solutions to the dominant discourses of religion, education and the state. As critics such as Bev.L. Brown have pointed out (73-4), the African past is celebrated in the representation of the wake, which is used to signify women's collectivity and their commitment to the history and traditions of their community. In addition, the narrative offers an

alternative to the feminine ideal represented by Senora Villanueva; the model of womanhood validated in the narrative is defined by hard work and a commitment to collective and individual responsibility. Beka considers, as she works hard in the house to atone for her lying, that she had “handled the job like a woman, and in Belize, to be able to work like a woman was an honourable thing” (27). Granny Ivy’s worn “unringed” hands, as opposed to Lilla’s more delicate “ringed” hands, signify honourable womanhood. Although the narrative suggests that it is Toycie’s romantic imagination that transforms her broken down house, it is also transformed by hard work:

Toycie’s house was not a “dawg-siddown” or lean-to, but it nearly could have been. What saved it was Miss Eila’s industry.[...] The parlour set looked new because it had been refinished very carefully by Miss Eila and Toycie in time for Christmas the year before. (32)

By the end of the novel the often repeated term “breaking down” begins to acquire new significance. In his discussion of the English Creole of Belize, Patteson cites the example of Belizean calypsos, used to satirise the British: “In ‘bruckdowns’, a calypso-like composition, words are joined with music to tell a story [...] singer poets are praised for their wit and daring”(1). In this context, broken down English is both a sign and a pre-requisite of creativity and resistance. Similarly, for Granny Ivy, breaking down is an act of political resistance; she says, “People like us helped to build up that empire though we didn’t choose to; now we have to help to break it down [...]” (Edgell 153). Breaking down also becomes a requirement for stronger growth; the bougainvillea that Beka’s father cut down begins to sprout again, and to ensure that its growth is strong but contained, rather than destructive, Beka works until “her fingers were raw” to build a trellis to support it. The hurricane is a disaster

that tests their strength; their survival is, in Beka's words, proof that Belize people don't break down so easily (161). Local political heroes begin their time in jail for sedition, but as Uncle Curo points out, this is not the end of their hopes for independence but merely the beginning of a renewed struggle for full suffrage and emancipation. Whereas, as exemplified in the words of the Confiteor, "Through my fault, through my fault, through my grievous fault" (113) the convent encourages individual blame for broken lives, the narrative suggests that individual resistance to colonial and sexual exploitation can only be successful in the context of organised, political resistance. Although Edgell's narrative uses the figure of the violated woman, that echoes representations in colonialist and early anti-colonial fiction, to represent both the physical violation of the colonised land and the bodies of its women, it also successfully shifts focus from the torn, broken body in order to establish alternative possibilities to destruction and victimhood. One of the significant achievements of the narrative is that, through its protagonist, Beka, it opposes the gender associations of the mind/body binary that has characterised colonialist and early anti-colonial narratives. After Toycie's death, Beka turns more seriously to her studies and to her writing, used in the novel as a sign of the need to re-inscribe colonialist narratives but also to move beyond the tragedy of colonisation with new representations that refuse dominance and subjection. Beka's success lies in the development of her creative and intellectual potential; by honing her mind, she is better equipped to resist colonial dominance and the devastation that accompanies it. The novel suggests that enacting revenge for patriarchal oppression is a limited form of resistance; at the same time, it demonstrates that political resistance and progress beyond resistance, in order to be successful, must include the transformation of the political and cultural institutions that perpetuate the sexual abuse of women.

Resisting Bodies and Political Transformation: You Alone Are Dancing

As Douglass Hall indicates, the white planter or overseer's sexual possession of the black slave woman signified the emasculation of the black slave man and his ownership of the bodies and culture of the slave community (40). Unlike in the Algerian society that Fanon constructs in the essay "Algeria Unveiled", therefore, there did not exist in the slave communities a "visible and manifest patriarchy". In fact, as Barbara Bush argues, the slave women were the "backbone" of plantation labour and formed the majority of domestic servants (237). As higglers and market sellers, they had a certain amount of economic independence and in addition they were at the centre of the cultural "underlife" of the slave community (233). Control and possession of the slave woman's body, therefore, necessarily meant control of the slave.

Whereas in Edgell's text the political connections between Toycie's violated sexuality and the violation of the colonised land are implied, in Brenda Flanagan's more recent novel, these connections are explicit and form the core of the narrative. The peasant and working-class women in her novel, who earn a living as higglers, by gardening and in other "low status occupations", continue the traditions of economic and cultural independence described by Bush (239). As the centre of Rosehill's economic life, the small community in which the novel is set, they play a key role in the political struggle to resist the occupation of their land by American oil businesses and their local henchmen. As with Fanon's text, the language of the opening scenes of the novel emphasises the connection between the sexual and territorial conquest by

the neo-colonial ruling elite. Sexualised language is used by Fanon to describe the coloniser's assault:

After each success, the authorities were strengthened in their conviction that the Algerian woman would support Western penetration into the native society. Every rejected veil disclosed to the eyes of the colonialists horizons until then forbidden, and revealed to them, piece by piece, the flesh of Algeria laid bare. (42)

In Flanagan's novel the same connection is made through repeated images of American companies drilling for oil in the land around Rosehill. This process of drilling echoes the images of penetration used in Fanon's text and the parallels between sexual "penetration" and the theft, penetration and violation of the land continue throughout the narrative which very deliberately positions Beatrice's rape within the context of its descriptions of the rape of the land.

The novel is set in Rosehill on the fictional Caribbean island of Santabella and is the story of the struggle for land and land ownership; its name points both to its beauty and its origins in conquest. The erotic beauty of the land, however, is dismissed as part of the tourist fantasy as the narrative announces its real focus, which is the "resiliency" of the people (8). Originally named the La Roumain estate after a French family, who had escaped from Haiti and were given the land, Rosehill eventually fell into disrepair and was taken over by an old estate worker. It became a refuge and then was transformed into a settlement by the hard work of its inhabitants:

[...] they cut away the undergrowth, turned over the soil, and claimed a lot or two for themselves, depending on how big their family was. After they had put up a little house, they cleared another piece of land to plant short crops, but they always left the rose bushes. The roses made a natural flower garden. (9)

Unlike Beka Lamb, Flanagan's novel does not focus on the breaking down of the people, but rather on the "sturdy" character of these villagers. The survival of the roses, despite frequent hurricanes, their colourful houses, "washed in bright pinks or greens or blues that match the deepness of the waters in the Gulf" (8), are used to suggest the resilience and vitality of the island's people. However, the narrative does contain vivid images of the breaking up and destruction of the land on which the villages are situated. The axe and the saw of the Belizean coat of arms have been transformed, in this post-independent narrative of territorial appropriation and abuse, into the drill and the bulldozer. In the midst of hard, pre-hurricane rainstorms, the bulldozers continue digging, as if in defiance of the natural order. They wreak chaos and destruction on the houses and the people:

They loosened the dirt above Sammy's house and the land began to break up in small wet pieces. By the end of that week, most of it had slipped down, taking Sammy's crops along. Sammy and his wife came out to watch all their bodie plants, their cassava, their chives, tomatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers sliding into the ravine. (15)

These scenes suggest the "influence" of Lamming's narrative with its description, in the later scenes, of the destruction of Creighton village and the uprooting and displacement of the villagers. Whereas the name of the village in Lamming's text suggests the continued dependency of the villagers on the colonial landlord, in Flanagan's text the naming of the village by the villagers themselves signifies their ownership. Despite this sign of ownership, however, as in Lamming's novel, colonial, or neo-colonial interests combine with the greed of the local elite to attempt possession of the land. The villagers in In the Castle of My Skin are, as the last chapter argues, powerless and uncomprehending, whereas Rosehill is powerful,

articulate and resisting. As in the other female-authored texts discussed earlier, this novel uses the voices of the women to announce its political intentions. It is the women who most vocally resist the Americans and the government administrators who attempt to enforce dispossession. Towards the end of the narrative, Dr. Chow accompanies the bulldozers to Rosehill, confirming that, despite the fact that he too grew up in Rosehill, he is prepared to facilitate the villagers' eviction in order to get his share of the oil profits. He says to Beatrice: "'I own this land.' Chow's arm swept the hillside. 'I own Rosehill girl. Don't play with me'"(166). Despite their private despair, however, the women continue to resist: "'Who is you to give notice?' Miss Roberts demanded. 'Who the hell you think you is? Make one move to break this house and you dead'" (159). At the end of the novel the Prime Minister is murdered and although the village women anticipate "revolution", they sound a note of caution: "'I for one have to wait and see how this revolution going to work out,' Miss Ann declared. 'It might be the same ole khaki pants'" (196).

In all the works of Caribbean fiction referred to in this study, the political context of the narrative is articulated through the dialogue of the characters. In this, as in the other female-authored texts, the people represented in the narrative demonstrate a high degree of political literacy that has been developed out of their experience as workers and peasants. As in Collins' *Angel*, it is the dialogue of this novel that structures events in the narrative and provides a historical and political context for the personal relationships that are its focus. The characters' everyday conversations demonstrate their disillusionment with the corrupt and exploitative nature of post-independence politics. The novel uses the "already uttered" theme of education and educational scholarships as the fraught route to social mobility, to illustrate the extent to which race and gender intersect to corrupt the political and social institutions of the

independent nation. A conversation in a taxi centres on the announcement of the scholarship winners. Moko hears that his son, Sonny, has won a scholarship and one of the passengers reads that as a sign of progress. In an echo of Granny Ivy's words he says:

'Long time when we was growing up you not hearing we people winning no scholarship. No. Only white people and backra johnny. Creole people didn't stand a chance!' (28)

Another passenger picks up on his "we" but counters, 'The Prime Minister say what is in this island is we own. But who is this *we* he talking about?' (28). He goes on to provide a political analysis of the scholarship system:

You know why yuh son get that scholarship, man? [...] The government say we'll give two scholarships to some poor people. Then they can't say we not doing anything bout education for them. In the meanwhile, look by the back door and see how many Minister's sons and daughters getting free schooling. (30)

In a further development of the narrative's critique of the school system, the juxtaposing scene describes Beatrice's angry disappointment that her name is not called. She reflects, " 'Who ever heard of a girl getting a scholarship?'" (35) and so unlikely is that possibility that she had kept her application a secret along with her dreams of "big things that young Santabellan girls didn't even dream about" (36).

The novel uses its characters to portray Santabella as an ethnically stratified nation state and through their usually blunt and subjective critique of racial politics, it explodes the politically convenient harmony represented by the national slogan, "All of we is one!"(67). The villagers argue that economic institutions, as the taxi driver suggests, disadvantage the "Creole" community. Bank loans are only available to

those with property and as the taxi driver comments, ““Is Indian and them with all the house and land. They own all the taxis in this country”” (139). It is in this context that the narrative positions the figure of Dr. Chow, who left Rosehill to become one of the island's most successful doctors. In that role, and as someone who, by virtue of his “non-Creole” ethnicity acquires a superior social status, Chow is represented as the successor to the white planter, the Portuguese Da Costa and the pania, Emilio Villanueva (42). His desire to own Rosehill is connected to his desire to sexually possess its women. Both desires are enacted violently; both suggest an assumption of the rights of ownership.

The scene of Beatrice’s rape is inserted into the text’s descriptions of the fete organised by the villagers to celebrate Sonny’s scholarship; its violence penetrates descriptions of the last minute preparations, disrupting the mood of triumph and festivity. As Beatrice watches the nurse leave Chow’s office, she remembers the first time he had tried to abuse her and her resulting confusion: “He had been her doctor since she was a small girl and had always been friendly” (69). Months later, he had masturbated in front of her leaving her too ashamed to speak about it: “Who would believe her? A doctor? And where would she find the words to describe what he had done?” (71). Unable to resist his “steely grip”, on this visit he rapes her. The narrative returns to its focus on the fete, with a description of the “white Cadillac”, which carries the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education to the celebration. He gives a “speech”, a brief statement congratulating Sonny, the “fortunate young man”, on his scholarship (77). Noting Beatrice’s absence, Sonny leaves the fete to visit her and in the privacy of her room reveals the content of the brown envelope the Permanent Secretary had handed him. The letter ends, “We will, unfortunately, be able to offer you only a one year scholarship at the local branch of our regional

University” (82). The reason for this, according to the Ministry, is the cost of repairing the island after the hurricane. In its juxtapositions and disruptions of scenes of personal and public concerns, the narrative effects a collapse of the boundaries between private and political spheres, demonstrating that private relationships and tragedies are inextricably woven of the public, political contexts within which they are enacted. As Beatrice tries to recover from her own rape, she is aware that the government, which has in fact spent nothing on rebuilding Rosehill after the hurricane, plans to further violate the land on which their village is built and, as the narrative makes clear, to use the proceeds of that assault to finance their personal luxuries. She later becomes aware that her rapist is the prime agent behind the appropriation of their land.

After Beatrice leaves the doctor’s office she goes to the beach where she fights the urge to drown herself:

Gritting her chattering teeth against the cold she stayed in the water feeling the numbness creep up her thighs, and forcing back the urge to lie down, to give in, to float until dark blue water covered her. The cramps made her legs heavy, and her shoulders trembled. She slipped deeper into the water, wanting the numbness to envelope her heart, her mind. (74)

She forces herself to “think rationally”, to “anticipate going back”. Eventually, she does walk back to her mother’s house, resisting tragedy and victimhood. This image and the repeated images of the sea as a source of consolation and renewal for Beatrice echo and revise Lovelace’s representation of Christiana's death in his novel The Schoolmaster. Christiana is raped in this novel by a schoolmaster who, as the only teacher in the first and only school in the village, holds, like Dr. Chow, a unique position of power and authority. As Chezia Thompson-Cager points out, Warrick is a

version of the “recent social prototype”, the “Master of Schools”. He is a highly regarded figure in the community and is responsible not only for the children’s schooling but for their moral and social development (216). A literary descendent of Lamming’s Mr. Slime, Winston Warrick is also the precursor to Lovelace’s Ivan Morton and the character Alford George in his latest novel, Salt.

The very remote village of Kumaca is poised on the brink of change; a new road from the village to Valencia will mean the end of its isolation and the beginning of its incorporation into a network of urban centres. Dardain, the shopkeeper, has acquired the land through which the road will run, by appropriating land from the villagers in lieu of the repayment of their debts. As Constantine Patron observes, he and Dardain have the villages “in their hands”. He continues: “And you see now the schoolmaster buys a white horse, and rides it like a governor” (103). Unlike Slime, Morton and Alford George, however, he is Columbus, the conquistador. As his power increases, he reflects on this role: “The village was his. And he felt now not only as if he had discovered Kumaca, but had had it willed to him by some Sovereign of the Backward Regions” (154). Villagers such as Ben, whose poverty and drunkenness represents the failure of masculinity that diminishes less successful men than Dardain and Warrick, feel themselves excluded from the institutions and structures, such as the school and the road, that signify progress. He describes his feelings about Warrick to the priest:

He is black, yes. But not my people. Priest, he is closer to your people. I think he is your people. He learned in your schools, and he wears the clothes the way you wear them, and he talks the way you talk, and his thinking is that of your people. He is yours, priest, he is not mine. (78)

As the illiterate Ben rightly observes, the schoolmaster’s power rests on his acquisition of literacy, which gives him access to the plans and contracts that will

shape the villagers' future. On the other hand Christiana's literacy makes her vulnerable. Although she is made aware of Warrick's desire for her from their first meeting when she "[...] became aware of his large eyes behind spectacles, felt the eyes going over her like hands", as one of the few young people in the village who can read and write, she is forced into regular and close relations with him. Christiana is silenced during and after her rape by fear and awareness of her powerlessness. She breaks her silence only to reveal her pregnancy to the priest, whose impotence is underscored in the narrative by her eventual suicide. After being confronted by the priest, Warrick forces the father of Pedro, her fiancé, to sell her in exchange for the sum of his cancelled debts; for the schoolmaster Christiana's body, like the land and the village, is part of his entitlement. He says to himself:

A man has the right to himself to take what he wants. [...] The girl will accept you. She is dying for you. She will fall at your feet this very moment if you were to ask her. You are almost governor in this village. You are like a ruler. You *are* a ruler. (135)

During the early months of her pregnancy she is haunted by the forest pool, which has for her, acquired a spiritual significance. It represents a place where she can be reunited with her dead mother:

And in the pool of her tears she saw a bigger pool, a deeper pool, a pool near which her mother stood very quietly waiting on her. She straightened herself very slowly. She would find the pool in the forest. She would find the pool and would go to her mother. (134)

Eventually, Christiana is found, "sticking in the bamboo roots in the big river" (168). Despite the similarities of the female protagonists Flanagan's later novel resists the tragic conclusion both of Lovelace's earlier text and of Toycie's fate in Edgell's

novel. Beatrice determines to survive her pregnancy, the birth of Chow's son and his premature death. The sea, in the novel, becomes a site of her rebirth and her reconnection with her African past. She is baptised there by Mother Dinah who, in an echo of Father Nunez' favourite story, "prays loudly for god to witness the virgins' coming and to have mercy on them" (89). Unlike Father Nunez and the nuns at St. Cecilia, Mother Dinah also prays to "[...] other gods, [...] African gods [...] We people, child'" (98). When, during her pregnancy, Beatrice becomes plagued by bad dreams the church sisters "bathed her with bush leaves and rubbed her down with a poultice and stretched her out on a piece of pine board. Then Mother Dinah and Tante Vivian prayed to the African gods for her to be healed". The novel ends with a return to the image of the sea which symbolises the source of her strength and her commitment to dance alone.

Not only does the narrative resist passive defeat for its protagonist, it represents Beatrice's sexual abuse as the root from which her political consciousness and activism grows. She becomes both the central figure in the villagers' attempts to resist eviction and dispossession, and the agent of Dr. Chow's destruction. In this way, Flanagan restores voice and agency to the silenced victims of earlier Caribbean fiction but like Edgell's novel her narrative suggests that, in the same way that sexual abuse and the violation of a woman's body has a political and historical context, resistance to that abuse can only be effective in the context of a wider movement of political resistance. As well as reversing the representations of earlier colonialist and anti-colonial narratives, Flanagan's novel dialogises Fanon's theoretical text which itself appropriates and revises the metaphorical language of colonial exploitation and penetration. The figure of Beatrice, however, further extends Fanon's portrait of the Algerian woman revolutionary who, only figuratively, leads with her family behind

her ("Algeria Unveiled" 60). In You Alone Are Dancing, Beatrice leads the villagers' resistance, engineering the purchase of the land from the government and positioning herself at the forefront of the women who stand, immovable as a "human fence", (166) to resist the doctor and his bulldozers. Unlike the women in Merle Collins' Angel, Beatrice's resistance is fierce and uncompromising; her use of violence at the end of the narrative links her to the figure of Coxi Valentine in the story "Clipped Wings". Unlike Coxi, however, she is not only motivated by her experience of personal abuse, neither does she act alone. Her decision to use violence stems as much from her anger at Chow's rape of the land as from her own experience of abuse; she joins together with a community of women who, as mothers on their own, experience the neglect that patriarchal cultures condone. As women without men, who support themselves economically, their decision to join with Beatrice to resist the exploitation of the land by Chow and his group of profiteers is therefore motivated by personal, economic and political concerns. Both Beka Lamb and You Alone Are Dancing provide models of resistance which are defined as much by the protagonists' experience of sexual abuse and patriarchal dominance as by more explicitly political concerns; these novels demonstrate that, insofar as both forms of oppression are connected in women's experiences, their acts of resistance must necessarily reflect that connection.

I have focused on the figure of the abused body of the black woman, used as a sign of the successful dominance of the conquistador, of the victimisation of the colonised and finally, as a site of empowered resistance. The chapter traces the intertextual relations between representations of the body in colonial narratives of conquest and discovery, in early twentieth-century anti-colonial fiction and in the work of two contemporary Caribbean women writers, Zee Edgell and Brenda

Flanagan. I argue that the narratives of Edgell and Flanagan resist the tendency to objectification and in the case of Alfred Mendes, victimhood, that characterises the earlier anti-colonial fiction of the 1930s; their work recovers the subjectivity of the silenced, mutilated body of the Caribbean woman and restores agency to these figures in their narratives of resistance. I also demonstrate that by dismantling the gendered mind/body divide that characterises colonialist and early anti-colonial narratives, the fiction of contemporary women writers moves beyond simply recovering and seeking vengeance for the abused body of the colonised woman. Their work uses women's historical memory and their continued experience of abuse, to mark the emergence of a political consciousness which includes recognition of patriarchal as well as colonial violence, and to signal the beginning of political transformation and liberation.

¹ A discussion of the abuse of slave women by black men is in Joseph C. Dorsey, " 'It Hurt Very Much at the Time' ". He argues that the exploitation of black women actually begins in slavery; he writes, "Standing outside the slaveholding class [...] black nonmen slave and free who engaged in forced sex acts with slave women gained temporary access to legitimate masculinity as society defined it" (297).

² Rebecca Stott, "The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Rider Haggard's Adventure Fiction" 75-9. A discussion of how the black woman's body serves as a site for the inscription of colonial power can be found in Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics 203-30.

³ Fitzgerald continues Columbus' eroticisation of the Americas when he writes, in the concluding paragraph of The Great Gatsby that the first Europeans encountered "a fresh, green breast of the new world" (187).

⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese points to the absence of depictions of the actual abuse of slave women in female slave narratives in her essay, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken" 261.

⁵ Even Thistlewood regrets this and writes: "Poor girl, I pity her, she is in miserable slavery" Douglas. Hall ed. In Miserable Slavery 80.

⁶ See Margaret K. Bass 131; Kenneth Ramchand, in the introduction to Pitch Lake v-vi; Reinhard Sander The Trinidad Awakening .

⁷ Margaret Bass notes that Joe's father is from Madeira, an island owned by Portugal, but closer, geographically, to Northern Africa.

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of Edgell's interconnection of the personal and the political see Adele S. Newson 186; Simon Gikandi 228, Charlotte Bruner 330 and Roger Bromley 10-14.

⁹ Richard Patteson, Caribbean Passages 57.

¹⁰ See Lorna Down 39; Simon Gikandi 221.

¹¹ See also Joseph C. Dorsey's commentary on the official inquiry into events on the *Jesu Maria*, 1841, where he states: "each of the girls' testimonies cites a "sailor" or "one of the crew in " 'It Hurt Very Much at the Time' " 304.

¹² See Lorna Down 109; and Roydon Salick 104.

¹³ The fact that he preys on 'unprotected little girls and boys' points not, as Roydon Salick argues, to the red man's religious significance (111), but to the sexual significance of his destructive intent.

Chapter 5: Cultural Resistance and Gender in Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron, George Lamming's Season of Adventure and Erna Brodber's Myal

The aim of this chapter is, as the title suggests, to examine Caribbean novelists' representation of the recovery of lost, stolen or suppressed cultural practices and their interrogation of the role of national culture in political resistance and liberation. By using gender as a category of analysis in the interpretation of these texts, I argue that women's writing can be used to suggest that a neglected component of that other, hidden half of colonial and anti-colonial narratives, is the role of women in the recovery and practice of national culture. By closely examining the representation of gender roles and relations in the work of three novelists, I demonstrate that fiction that takes into account women's participation in affirming cultural practices that have their roots in pre-colonial history, further problematises the function of culture as a mode of resistance but also points to the transforming potential of cultural resistance which is neither narrow nor excluding.

Caribbean fiction returns over and over again to representations of recovered cultural forms and practices both as a means of signifying political resistance and of demonstrating the importance of culture in the process of national liberation. Much of this fiction is concerned to validate cultural practices that were suppressed during colonialism and to re-voice forms of knowledge that were discounted or erased by the repressive ideologies of European colonialism. The writers referred to in this chapter use their fictional texts as a means of recuperating, interrogating and re-presenting the

cultural practices of marginalised groups who use culture as a means of resisting domination and connecting to a silenced, lost or stolen past. These writers demonstrate that a connection to the past, the “backward glance”, as Lamming describes it, is an essential component in the process of liberation but that such a connection, while valuable, needs to be thoroughly re-examined in the process of representation.

This chapter traces the intertextual, dialogic relationship between Erna Brodber’s Myal and two earlier texts published within two years of each other, George Lamming’s Season of Adventure and Sylvia Wynter’s The Hills of Hebron. Wynter’s novel, published in 1962, is a prescient exploration of the limits of black nationalism as a model of political resistance and liberation.¹ Its critique of the politics of tribalism mirrors Fanon’s work, The Wretched of the Earth, first published in France a year earlier, but where Fanon’s does not address the significance of gender power in his analysis of a culture of liberation, and makes a brief, though significant reference to the need for women’s inclusion in the formation of national culture, Wynter’s work focuses closely on the achievement of masculinity as a constraining force in movements of cultural recovery and political transformation. Whereas in Wynter’s novel, the religious practice of “pocomania” is treated with scepticism, Lamming’s earlier Season of Adventure offers a more sympathetic portrayal of the importance of recovered, lost or ignored religious practices. Nevertheless, his work does problematise both the recovery of these practices and their function as a means of restoring agency and voice to the colonised. As a way of interrogating the effectiveness of cultural resistance, Lamming places relations of class and gender at the centre of his novel; in this way, his work foreshadows later Caribbean novels, such as Brodber’s, which also explore ways in which the effectiveness of cultural

resistance is mediated by gender. The chapter ends with an analysis of Myal which, I argue, reprises Fola's role in Season of Adventure, and through Ella, the re-appropriated Fola presents a model of cultural resistance which echoes Fanon's: one which is affirming, is inclusive of men and women and which is based on a spirit of collectivity rather than tribalism or a narrowly defined nationalism. Brodber presents a vision of national culture which is *not*, in Said's words, "constructed out of warring essences" (Culture and Imperialism 277).

In my discussion of Brodber's novel, I place, alongside continued reference to Bakhtin, the work of contemporary cultural theorists Dick Hebdige and Nathaniel Mackey in order both to emphasise the cultural specificity of the forms of representation used in the novel and as an analytical tool in the discussion of music as a sign of resistance to colonialism. I begin, however, with a discussion of the significance of gender in Fanon's chapter "On National Culture" and argue that while his work, and those his work has influenced, adequately theorises the distinction between resistance culture and a culture of liberation and transformation, as later sections of this chapter demonstrate, Caribbean writers further problematise the very grounds of that distinction by foregrounding issues of gender and by adding levels of contradictory meaning to theoretical representations of the practice of cultural resistance and liberation.

Fanon's "On National Culture": a Useful Tool for Analysing the Function of Gender in Literary Representations of Cultural Resistance

As I demonstrate in the introduction, several theorists use a Fanonian critique of cultural resistance to distinguish between "nativism", which involves the recovery and

recuperation of lost or hidden cultural forms, and cultural liberation, which demands the transformation of those forms to create new spaces for the production of a new national culture. Whereas these critics fail to address either Fanon's masculinist register in The Wretched of the Earth or the implication of this work's failure to elaborate on women's contribution to national culture as creators, performers and participants, in this section I argue that Fanon's theories of resistance offer the beginning of what Madhu Dubey, referring to Fanon, describes as a "feminist critique[s] of decolonizing nationalism" (2).² As such it provides a useful tool for elaborating on themes of cultural resistance in the novels of Lamming and Wynter, both of whose novels appeared at the same time as Fanon's work, and Brodber's later novel, Myal. Those novels complicate theoretical representations of cultural resistance which omit a consideration of gender.

I refer to Said's use of Fanon's categories of resistance in the introduction: for Said, resistance contains within it the seeds of regression. It is, he argues, a process of recovery and reconstruction, acted out on "territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from colonialism"; as a result, an act of resistance might simply mirror and replicate existing structures, inserting into those spaces new agents of dominance (256). He cites Fanon's warning that, in political terms, "merely to replace white officers and bureaucrats with coloured equivalents [...] is no guarantee that the nationalist functionaries will not replicate the old dispensation" (258). Beyond this second phase of "identity politics" (264) is national culture as defined by Fanon, which moves beyond nationalism and the cultural territories and structures inscribed by colonialism, towards liberation. For Said, as for Fanon, liberation involves universalism and the discovery of "a world *not* constructed out of warring essences" (277).

In Benita Parry's more sympathetic treatment of "nativism", she contends that a seemingly binary "inversion" model, which uses pre-colonial cultural forms to oppose and resist the cultural and political dominance of the coloniser, does not necessarily, as some critics have suggested, recuperate a subject whose identity is fixed by that past. She suggests that an excavation of the past is in fact dependent on "a notion of a multiply (dis)located native whose positions are provisional and therefore capable of annulment and transgression" ("Resistance Theory" 173). She describes a post-colonial reconsideration and rewriting of the past as:

[...] a discourse of the subject inscribed in histories of insubordination produced by anti-colonial movements, deciphered from cryptic cultural forms and redevise from vestiges perpetuated through constant transmutation in popular memory and oral traditions. (173)

These lost, denied or submerged cultural forms are often complex, contradictory and unpredictable; they are also, as Parry suggests here, in a state of constant flux. As practices produced outside the official discourses of nationalism, they are often regarded as counterproductive to the nationalist project of unity and progress; they are often irrational, characterised by the "anarchic and nihilistic energies of defiance and identity-assertion, which were sometimes nurtured by dreams, omens and divination [...]" (173). While recognising the value of a practice such as "Voodoo" in the colonial period, Fanon also emphasises its limitations: "This disintegration of the personality, this splitting and dissolution, all this fulfils a primordial function in the organism of the colonial world. When they set out, the men and women were impatient [...] when they return, peace has been restored to the village". He continues with the observation, "During the struggle for freedom, a marked alienation from these practices is observed" (45). The energies that were sated by mystical rituals

become re-channelled into acts of anti-colonial violence. Fanon sees this “alienation”, during the period of struggle, as a sign of the limited function of these practices, in their unmodified forms, in a liberating national culture. Like Fanon, Parry is also concerned to recognise the importance of these practices that have their roots in popular memory and oral tradition but stresses the importance of their refashioning in the process of forming of a national culture.³ As acts of resistance, these practices would not, she suggests, represent an attempt to return the colonised to an imagined “original state” but “an imaginative reworking of the process of *metisage* [...]”, and an acknowledgement that whatever is recovered is dislocated, transformed and continually reworked (173).

Fanon’s style in his essay “On National Culture” lacks some of the certainty and linear progression that characterises the previous chapters in The Wretched of the Earth. Here his argument is circuitous and endlessly qualifying; it is characterised by abrupt movements of thesis and antithesis, reflecting what I interpret as both a profound ambivalence toward “nativism” or “Negroism”, and the non-linear and recursive movement from “Negro-ism” to the third or “fighting phase” which produces a national culture and a “new humanism both for itself and others” (171, 179, 198).⁴ His language and the structure of his argument also suggests the unfinished nature of cultural resistance and the fact that culture, as part of a lived reality, is always changing and being changed. His characterisation of the native intellectual is important to an analysis of Lamming’s novel: he is described as a figure who is responding to his own seduction by and fixation with Western colonial culture. For Fanon, the immersion into the culture of a pre-colonial past is inextricably bound up with the desire of the individual artist or intellectual, who had hitherto “managed to become part of the body of European culture” and “exchanged his own culture for

another”, to cleanse himself of that European influence and to unify the separate selves that the embrace of colonial culture had effected. This movement backward signifies, in Fanon’s work, a separation from the people and a misunderstanding of the dynamic instability of culture as it is lived by ordinary people. However, although his critique of the native intellectual is insistent, Fanon recognises the “historical necessity” of this determination to recover the past:

This historical necessity in which men of African culture find themselves, to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley. (172)

This reference encapsulates the paradoxical nature both of Fanon’s style and his assessment of “Negro-ism”. The recovery of the past is both a “historical necessity” and a fruitless enterprise. He describes the process of recovering the past as a “blind alley”, a “banal search for exoticism” and as a form of elitism. He writes, “The desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people” (180-1). National culture or a culture of liberation, which moves beyond “Negro-ism”, is not only culture formed in struggle but is the struggle of the people. It cannot emerge from the pre-occupations of intellectuals and their attempts to save themselves from “psycho-affective injuries” (175).

There are just two references to “women” in this chapter and both can be used to signify the gender relations that inform his conception of national culture. In his discussion of the “fighting phase” of national culture, Fanon writes:

During this phase a great many men *and women* who up until then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now that they find themselves in exceptional circumstances [...] feel the need to speak to their

nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action. (179; my italics)

This is closely followed by: “but the ideas he expresses and the preoccupations he is taken up with have no common yardstick to measure the real situation which the men *and the women* of his country know” (180; my italics). In the latter example, as throughout the work, the native intellectual is figured as masculine whereas in both examples *the people* are men *and* women. In the first example Fanon is clearly referring to uneducated people, the mass of ordinary people who do not qualify as native intellectuals and do not share his experience of privilege, exceptionalism or psychic and cultural conflict. As with the latter example these people, the “people” who shape national culture, include women. The fact that Fanon excludes women from his definition of the native intellectual is emphasised in the aggressively masculine imagery used to describe his cultural activity. When the native intellectual is unable to find monuments of the “same grandeur and scope displayed by the ruling power”, he develops a style which attempts to negate the value of such monuments. This style is described as “vigorous”, “sun-baked and violent [...]”; his struggle is “muscular” and is described over and over again as a “fight”: his purpose is to shock by confirming the stereotypes of barbarism constructed by the coloniser. He becomes, “not just a nigger like all other niggers but a real nigger, a Negro cur [...] a dirty wog” (178). Given the historical context of this work, the extreme, violent physicality of the imagery suggests that the native intellectual is a masculine subject and further, that the performance of “Negro-ism” is necessarily masculine.

Most critics ignore Fanon’s gendered rhetoric: in her reference to what she sees as the exclusion of women, Benita Parry writes of an, “unwillingness to abstract resistance from its moment of performance” (“Resistance Theory”179). There is a

similar silence from Bhabha and Said on the role of women in the text. Ketu Katrak, who uses Fanon's work as a tool of analysis in her discussion of Caribbean women writers argues, in relation to The Wretched of the Earth, that Fanon is "caught in his own sexism [...]", a "position common with revolutionary ideology" (162). Fanon's brief but significant inclusion of women and his insistently masculine figure of the native intellectual is used to inform the following analysis of Season of Adventure, The Hills of Hebron and Myal.

Themes of Cultural Resistance and an Analysis of Gender in Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron and Lamming's Season of Adventure

Several critics have pointed to the complex significance given to culture in works of Caribbean fiction. Renu Juneja's work reflects Bhabha's and Fanon's concern with the "instability" as opposed to the fixed nature of culture and its practice. She argues that literature of the Caribbean represents the instability of cultural signification in its lived, everyday and performative aspect. The divergent histories and cultures of the Caribbean are reflected in the structures of its narratives and the forms used to represent the past, and are themselves necessarily diverse. Citing Brathwaite's term, a "literature of reconnection", to describe literature that is concerned with an excavation and recovery of the past she writes:

I would add that despite occasional romanticism, this literature confronts the complexity of a culture with multiple heritages, so that the 'backward glance', to use Lamming's term, is neither fetishistic nor retrograde. Rather, the backward glance is a self-conscious part of a project which is forward-looking

in its attempt to define cultural possibilities that can redeem the crisis induced by the delegitimization [...] of the dominant Western culture. (51)

The past that is recovered, in Juneja's terms, does not reflect a "single origin"⁵ but the complex and contradictory histories of the past, from which the present is constituted. The recovered past becomes, in Caribbean narratives, the basis from which political liberation can emerge. Fiction such as Flanagan's and Lovelace's, for example, explicitly critique the metaphor that Bhabha sets out to interrogate: "out of many one" (Location of Culture 142). Lovelace's novels expose the mythical identity of nationalist slogans that promote social cohesion and integration, and point to the fallacy of attempts to simplify constructions of the nation and to ignore the identities of its individuals. Lovelace's work radically complicates the work of many theorists who, in Bhabha's words, "treat gender, class or race as social totalities that are expressive of unitary, collective experiences" (142).

The female-authored texts referred to in previous chapters all include representations of cultural reconnection, used to suggest the important role that culture plays in the process of political resistance and transformation. In Merle Collins' Angel, for example, the narrative uses the transformed calypso as a way of expressing the people's liberation from the neo-colonial government of Leader. One of the calypsos, "Ole Ole O/ Djab Djab" evokes the African ancestors of the Grenadian people, who celebrated emancipation by "blacking up" so that they could leave their mark on anything white. As Carolyn Cooper notes, Collins' narrative emphasises the oppositional power of carnival and calypsos and their potential to subvert dominant ideologies; in this instance blackness is invoked as a powerful force of liberation, more powerful than the dominant "whiteness" of colonial ideologies: "The diabolical energy of the Djab Djab is the assertion of an emancipatory blackness

that seeks to leave its indelible mark on anything white” (“Sense Make Befoh Book” 182). Collins also uses the “saracca” to emphasise the novel’s focus on the importance of community and the interconnection between individuals. At the saracca, a feast with origins in African culture, the villagers meet to exchange humorous banter and to eat together; their gathering and the interchanges that are conducted without rancour or hostility, awaken benevolent spirits, whose function is to protect the community.

Similarly, the novels of Brenda Flanagan and Zee Edgell reveal that, as Juneja argues, “the past is still alive in the present” (50). In Flanagan’s novel, the figure of Mother Dinah and her use of African systems of knowledge and beliefs in her “church” ceremonies, are used to suggest the importance of the transformed past in the everyday culture of the present. In Beka Lamb the wake of Beka’s great grandmother is given prominence in the narrative and used to symbolise the importance of keeping alive cultural connections to the past, particularly where they function to reinforce the ties of family and community. The wake is also used as a structuring symbol in the novel. Beka’s record of Toycie’s life, which functions as a substitute for Toycie’s wake and as a validation of her otherwise insignificant and unremembered life, does not simply recover and revalidate the wake as a sign of the nation’s connection to a past identity, it serves to transform the “scraps, patches and rags of daily life [...] into the signs of a coherent national culture” (Bhabha, Location of Culture 145). Although there is no actual wake, through the process of remembering Toycie, as Lorna Down notes, “Beka learns truths necessary for her survival as an integrated person. [...] Moreover, the wake is a symbol of past traditions which, Edgell shows, Beka must retain if she is to have an awareness of her community and her race” (40).

While these novels represent signs and practices of cultural resistance to colonialism that have their origins in an African past as an uncontested good and as a necessary component in the process of political liberation, there is a tradition of writing that represents the recuperation and transformation of lost cultural practices as a complex and at times counter-productive component of national resistance and liberation. A detailed and intertextual reading of two early novels, Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron and George Lamming's Season of Adventure, and of Erna Brodber's later work, Myal, can be used to demonstrate that fictional narratives offer a more elaborate and layered reading of the relationship between culture, resistance and gender than many theoretical texts that fall, it would seem, in the shadow of literary production.

Sylvia Wynter's novel can be said to foreshadow Earl Lovelace's later, more canonical works, which critique the liberating potential of a recuperated past. The novel describes the efforts of Prophet Moses Barton to lead his people out of the bondage of colonialism and into the spiritual and political freedom of Hebron, a theocracy governed by himself, the Prophet of a black God. In The Hills of Hebron Wynter critiques what Cooper describes as an "emancipatory blackness", and examines its suitability as a political and cultural tool in the struggle for liberation. Her novel, like Lovelace's The Wine of Astonishment and The Dragon Can't Dance, and Lamming's Season of Adventure also examines the role of cultural resistance in the achievement of masculinity and in the formation of male political leadership. It does not, like Erna Brodber's much later novel, attempt to re-imagine the context within which cultural resistance can be performed, nor does it suggest an alternative to the limited and flawed vision of Hebron's male leadership.

The novel emphasises the political character and function of religion, while at the same time suggesting that oppositional religious institutions and systems of belief cannot, on their own, be a substitute for political action. Moses' first attempt to set up a church at the Cockpit Centre represents, for his believers, a way beyond the indignity of their poverty; it offers them "the magic of new hope" and the chance to reclaim their humanity (117). As prophet, leading his people out of the cycle of degradation to which they had become accustomed, Moses inserts himself into the text of the Old Testament; he is also the New Testament Son of God who arises from the dead to redeem his people. He offers his followers this vision:

As soon as the sun came up, he promised, he would take off for the Kingdom. Three hours later he would return with a fleet of golden chariots driven by white angels, dressed in tunics with gold buttons. (115)

Despite his own robes and turbans and the crowns and robes he offers to his followers to assure them of a place in heaven, and literally to oppose their degradation on earth, at this stage, as the reference to "white angels" suggests, Moses leaves the cultural implications of the biblical text unchanged. He does not radically re-imagine the structures of the biblical narrative or its forms of representation. His sermon does not represent a real challenge to the power hierarchies and value systems that the biblical narratives support. Nor does it, therefore, seek to challenge the systems of oppression that victimise the black inhabitants of the Cockpit Centre.

This first attempt to liberate his followers ends in failure and humiliation, but a "new" Moses, literate and more politically astute, returns to the Cockpit Centre with a new confidence and a clearer understanding of his condition as a colonised and disenfranchised black man. On his second coming he articulates a more radical countervoicing of the biblical narrative. His revised text is not an act of unconscious

“mimicry” that revises the original, exploiting its ambiguities and uncertainties, but a self-conscious reconfiguration of the original text and an ambitious re-imagining of its primary subject. Moses returns armed with a new narrative of cultural resistance and liberation and with it he sets out to create new systems of knowledge and to form a liberated, self-governing state, Hebron:

The man who knocked at her door was a new Moses, a man who could read and write, a prophet chosen by the God of black men, of the oppressed, a man with all the craftiness and the cunning of the deity he was to serve. (137)

As this quotation illustrates, the narrative constantly interconnects the spiritual with the material and the political. His vision had been prompted by a “hand on his shoulder”, one which he knew to be the “true God made in his own image, the God of black men” (137). At the same time, he maintains a focus on the immediate and the concrete: on his arrival at the Cockpit Centre, he went straight to Miss Gatha’s shop because she was “reputed to be very wealthy”. To impress her he arrived in a buggy, wearing a “black serge suit, tie, shirt, and leather boots, an umbrella and a top-hat and the biggest Bible he could find” (138, 137). Following the lessons of the missionaries he bargains with the white Reverend Brooke to secure a plot of land in the hills to which he can take his followers. He uses his sermons to transform the reality of his followers, radically reordering the relationship between heaven and earth, and making their newly liberated land, their heaven, the “Kingdom of Hebron”. Just as the God about whom he preaches is a black God, so is their heaven defined by the particularities of their place on earth:

Moreover, the Prophet no longer preached about a kingdom in Heaven, but of one on earth where they would all be landowners, eat suckling pigs roasted with yams. Moses called his new sect ‘The New Believers’, because they were

worshippers of a new God, followers of His Chosen Prophet. And because their God was black He would be on their side for ever. (138)

His plans to build a strong, independent community in Hebron are, at first, “sane and practical” (198). His focus is on the material welfare of his followers; when he itemises the structures that need to be built, a “new and imposing church” is the last on his list. The limits of Moses’ religious ideology, however, are tested by the brief appearance in the narrative of Comrade Bellows, the radical political orator who speaks to the crowd about Revolution. In this scene the narrative juxtaposes Moses’ faith in a black God and the powers invested in him, with Bellows’ vision of a more explicitly political form of liberation. Moses hears the radical text of this “new Prophet” who opposes his own essentialist notions of blackness, and talks of a “race of workers”. Bellows advocates organised action against the imperialists and actively encourages the crowd to disavow God and religion and to put their faith in man. Through this figure, Bellows, the narrative reveals and opposes the limited character of Moses’ teachings, which reflect what Said defines as a politics of resistance, not liberation. In contrast, Bellows’ ideology closely mirrors Fanon’s representation of a national culture which is formed in struggle and which, through struggle, takes on an international dimension (The Wretched of the Earth 198, 199).

Wynter does not use Bellows’ entry into the narrative to suggest a simple opposition of ideologies, however, and treats Moses’ nativism, his ideology of “emancipatory blackness”, with the kind of complexity that mirrors Fanon’s and Said’s treatment of cultures of opposition and resistance. As Moses himself observes, his kingdom has already achieved a revolution: his followers are free: “Up in Hebron they were already free, neither workers nor capitalists, owning everything in common, safe from the flood of want on Mount Arafat” (205). His kingdom might have

represented a culture of resistance and opposition which, at its best in Said's words, "suggests a practical method for reconceiving human experience in non-imperialist terms" but, as the novel suggests, this vision of freedom predicated on religious rather than political ideologies or a real understanding of history, might itself have been an illusion (Culture and Imperialism 333). It is only when he faces Bellows' challenge, and in his terms fails, that he returns to the idea of his crucifixion, retreating into the "private refuge" of "nativism".⁶ When the crowd taunt him with his failed crucifixion and alleged madness, he considers this a sign from God: "The market-place had become his Golgotha, his place of skulls; and God had manifested His Presence, not in anger against the unbelievers, but in the sacrifice of His Son" (209).

Bellows' hasty disappearance, however, suggests that the narrative is not concerned to represent his politics as an alternative to Moses' vision: rather, its concern is to critique the model of leadership, epitomised in Prophet Moses, which relies on the authority of a single, male individual, whose claim to power is intimately bound up with his claim to independent manhood.⁷ Moses is threatened by his rival's eloquence and by his ability to win over the hardened, cynical townspeople that he had failed to convert. It is not, Moses feels, his material achievements that are being tested but his authority and his belief that he was the Son of God. Despite the narrative's critique of religion as the basis of a culture of liberation, its scathing treatment of "Voodoo", and Moses' descent into "superstition" (113, 210), it is not the ideological limits of his vision of freedom that destroys him, but his vanity, pride and arrogance, which have become a kind of madness.

Much of the novel is concerned with delineating its male characters, and their struggle to achieve manhood in the face of poverty, abandonment and degradation. In contrast, the women characters, though significant, are portrayed in less detail and are

represented largely as victims of male authority. In contrast to Cooper's assertion that "[...] it is the female characters who come to assume a central role in the unfolding drama" ("Something Acestral" 69), I would argue that, apart from Miss Gatha, the women in the novel are denied narrative agency and rendered powerless. The women, including Miss Gatha, who becomes Moses' wife, are diminished and made bitter by their relations with men; sexual relationships are often represented as brutal affirmations of male dominance. In the period of drought following Prophet Moses' crucifixion, his apostles, Hugh and Obadiah, are left directionless. Gee, Hugh's wife is aware that she is "the only person left to whom he could affirm his importance" (75); when he approaches her for sex, he "forces her to the floor":

He wrestled with her savagely, trying to subdue her, to bend her body to his will. And she laughed at him as he wore himself out ploughing into her again and again. When he was near breaking point she pretended to be conquered [...]. (76)

The body of Sister May-May, Obadiah's mother, is abused by Ambrose, the pocomania shepherd who, after her possession in the pocomania ritual, sends her to his hut, where he stands over her body "masterful and demanding" (117).

In addition as Natasha Barnes points out, "Moses' messianic creation of the Hebron community has its genealogy in the body and personality of Rose" (45). The novel opens with a depiction of the crisis caused by Rose's alleged infidelity: in order to bring about an end to the drought that is destroying Hebron and to affirm his right to the succession of Moses' leadership, her husband, Obadiah, has vowed to abstain from sexual relations with his wife. The beginnings of her pregnancy, spotted by Miss Gatha's envious eyes, sparks the public disavowal of Rose and, ultimately Obadiah. In its retrospective account of events, the novel reveals as integral, the connection

between women's subjugation and violation and the community's narrative of origin. The rape of Gloria, Rose's mother, by Reverend Brook is used to signify not only his authority and his desire for possession of her body but also his desire to control the unruly people of the Cockpit Centre. In this he is unsuccessful but, like all colonised territories whose foundations are inextricably linked with the abuse of women's bodies, with Moses' connivance, the land of Hebron emerges out of the circumstances of women's, and in this case Gloria's, abuse. It is because Moses knows that Rose, who later becomes Obadiah's wife, is the product of Gloria's rape by her master, the Reverend Brooke, that he can bargain for a sealed document as "proof" that he owns the land. He takes over ownership of Rose, whom he adopts, bringing her to live with his wife, Gatha and their biological son Isaac.

Janice Lee Liddell argues that Rose's child will become the "true redeemer" of Hebron, and that through her grandchild, Miss Gatha will embark on "new heroic journeys" (36). While Miss Gatha certainly believes that her grandchild will deliver Hebron, the ambiguous ending of the narrative suggests otherwise. Her response to the fact that Rose's child was not born with a club foot is expressed as a question: "Wonderingly, she turned to Kate. The sins of the fathers then, had not been visited on the children? The fabric of her forebodings dissolved, and she wept" (283). She is grateful that there is no material evidence of her son, Isaac's "sin", his rape of Rose. However, the fact that Rose was, like her mother, raped and that Isaac was himself born from a brutal sexual encounter between the Prophet and Miss Gatha, suggests that the simple fact of a birth in Hebron, a land with its own flawed beginnings and its inadequate religious ideology, provides no guarantee of liberation.

Although the novel clearly represents the women characters as the victims of patriarchal dominance, the novel does not envisage a future beyond the phase of

“national consciousness” or “nativism” that Moses’ Hebron represents, and which the narrative treats as a masculine concept that excludes women’s participation and necessitates their domination.. Although Liddell argues that Miss Gatha’s character represents “an affirmation[s] of the abilities of older women to direct their own personal journeys to fulfilment and selfhood” there is little evidence in the novel to support this claim (44). Miss Gatha’s assumption of the role of leader is motivated by bitterness, by her contempt for the people of Hebron and her ambitions for her son, not herself. She is introduced as “a gnarled and knotted tree trunk in a forest of saplings”, as someone consumed and distorted by hatred (13). She had suffered Moses’ “barefaced lies”, his infidelities and his public denouncement of his son because of his disfigurement; his death offers her the opportunity to exact revenge on him and his followers. As leader, she is as seduced by power and by her dominance over the New Believers as Moses was; when she stands in front of her audience she “sensed something of the mad grandeur that must have possessed her husband when he had stood there with the waiting congregation below him” (53). Miss Gatha does not use her power in radically new ways, nor does she redirect the religious culture of opposition and resistance, which she had treated with cynicism, towards the struggle for true freedom and liberation. She does not use her brief “reign” over the people of Hebron to address and transform the women’s experiences of abuse and humiliation; her focus is so intently fixed on her own abusive son, that she cannot envisage how women’s participation in the project of cultural liberation might lead to a radical re-imagining of the project itself.

Wynter’s novel not only problematises a process of liberation that is based solely on a pragmatic form of “nativism”, it also points to the oppressive structures of patriarchy that underpin an essentialist cultural and political movement such as

Moses'. Moses uses the politics of 'blackness' to ameliorate the condition of the townspeople but because its ideology is, in Dubey's words, "moored [...] to a spuriously homogenized and static precolonial tradition" (10), it exploits the differences of gender roles and power and therefore fails as a truly liberating cultural programme. Moses is represented as a version of the pocomania shepherd: his people are under what Fanon describes as "magical jurisdiction" and he is both "terrifying" and reassuring (The Wretched of the Earth 43). Through its negative representation of pocomania, with its power to seduce and dazzle its followers, the novel presents a sustained critique of "nativism" and of the potential of nativist, essentialist ideologies such as Moses' to disempower and oppress the people they purport to liberate. In its focus on Moses' desire for independent masculine authority and on his movement's disregard for its women followers, the novel also critiques the tendency of essentialist cultural movements to reinforce the gender hierarchies that confirm male authority and dominance, and marginalise and subjugate women. As Natasha Barnes suggests, despite Wynter's claim that "Caribbean feminism is impossible because gender difference was not part of the constitutive makeup of colonial and white supremacy", it is clear from her first novel that her critique of "nativism" is determined by a concern with issues of gender inequality (41). In its critique of gender power in the enactment of cultural resistance the novel does not simply celebrate Miss Gatha's succession to Moses' flawed legacy but offers a sustained critique of her desire to replicate his dominance. To describe Miss Gatha as "sheroic" is to underestimate Wynter's problematising of the ways in which individual identities are shaped by ideologies of gender.

Lamming's novel, the subject of the next section, also focuses on the importance of a recuperated past and on the role of African-centred cultural expression in the

performance of resistance and the achievement of political liberation. Like Wynter, Lamming is concerned with the ways in which cultural expression is mediated by gender but unlike Wynter's novel, Lamming's Season of Adventure suggests that the culture of a recovered past plays a significant role in transforming the neo-colonial practices of a nation on the brink of independence.

Season of Adventure is a classic and prescient work of Caribbean fiction, narrativising and mirroring the theoretical concerns of Fanon, and more recently, Said, Bhabha and Parry. Its characters are ideologically constructed and enable the author to dramatise the tension between culture, cultural practice and political resistance. Much of the narrative, particularly in the second section, "The Revolt of the Drums" examines the extent to which the artists, Chiki, Fanon's "native intellectual", and Gort, can reconcile their art with the political imperatives of an emerging nation: can the music of the drums be mobilised in the service of political liberation? Can Chiki's canvases be more than just a reflection of his personal torment? Other significant characters such as Powell and Fola are also ideologically freighted: Powell is the voice of articulate but misguided resistance that finds its expression in oppositional violence; Fola is the nation in search of its past.

Critical studies of Lamming's novel have focused on representations of cultural resistance in the novel and on the political character and significance of such cultural expressions. Patrick Taylor secures his analysis of Lamming within the framework of Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth. Like Fanon, Taylor argues, Lamming resists the Manichean binaries perpetuated by colonialist ideology; his work points to the "fallacy of reducing oneself and one's world to a racial definition that the colonial other has created [...]" (Narratives of Liberation 197). He suggests that Lamming's critique of such a reduction is expressed through the character of Powell, who is

locked into a Manichean struggle with the colonial other; his actions are “reactive and self destructive”; they are borne of the illusion that “he can liberate himself and his society through eliminating one term in the opposition ”(197). It is not Powell whose actions are decisive in the process of liberation but those of the artists, Chiki, Gort and the character of the “author” in “The Author’s Note”. As Lamming has said in interviews and essays the artist, and he includes himself, is by definition of his role, a “witness” to the “misfortune” of others who share his racial, social and historical identity; he has, therefore, a particular responsibility in the struggle for social justice and political liberation.⁸ Baako, the intellectual and the figure who assumes responsibility for the second republic, confronts Chiki and says:

“But if politics is the art of the possible, then your work should be an attempt to show the individual situation illuminated by all the possibilities which keep pushing it always towards a destiny, a destiny which remains open” (324).

Taylor comments on Baako’s words arguing that “Baako demands that art realise its liberating potential at the widest social and political levels. For Baako, national consciousness oriented to actual rather than to formal independence is the truthful expression of culture” (198). Here, and elsewhere in his discussion, Taylor invokes Fanon, who writes that “national consciousness [...] is the most elaborate form of culture”. It is also “the source of all culture” (198,199). This is what Fanon terms “national culture”; a culture of liberation that is formed in the context of decolonising struggles. It defines and is defined by that struggle.

Critics such as Taylor, Gikandi and Sandra Pouchet Paquet have pointed to the importance of the character Fola to Lamming’s narrative: although Taylor states that it is to Chiki, Baako, Gort and, “most decisively to Fola [...] that we look for a liberating encounter with history” (197), he makes only brief mention of Fola’s

“decisive” role (222). Gikandi argues that the novel represents “a significant critique of nationalist discourse as a system of patriarchal power” and of the women’s exclusion from that discourse.⁹ Like Gikandi, Pouchet Paquet emphasises the regenerative function of women in the novel: quoting Lamming himself, in a talk delivered in 1973, she writes:

For the first time in Lamming’s fiction, the feminine principle in Caribbean society is seen as an ‘active agent of self-transformation; with the emphasis on the regenerative power of the womb’, [...] For the first time a woman is ‘the initiator of a revolutionary break’. (72)

Pouchet Paquet does not examine the extent to which Fola is an agent in her own self-transformation, nor does she address either Lamming’s portrayal of cultural performance as an assertion of masculinity or the consequences of this on the women characters such as Fola, who follow the cultural lead set by men such as Charlot and Chiki. Importantly, given the narrative importance given to the trauma of rape, abuse and death through a careless abortion, Pouchet Paquet also fails to interrogate Lamming’s assertion that the womb, in his novel, functions as a symbol of “regeneration”.

In her analysis she argues that both Fola and her mother, Agnes, are used by Lamming to represent the potentially transformed consciousness of its emerging middle-class. Such a transformation is dependent on the colonised subject’s willingness both to confront and to reject aspects of the past, and like Fola to separate themselves from the potentially destructive and regressive aspects of their own class. Fola’s personal liberation is the result of her “revolt against the values of the first republic; the fatherlessness, the whoredom, the elitist ambitions of the ruling class” (70). In contrast, Simoes da Silva’s analysis of gender and sexuality in the novel

presents an overdetermined reading of Agnes as the “libidinous degenerate”, in which role, he argues, she functions as a metonym for the “comprador elite’s willingness to prostitute itself” (135). His critique focuses less comprehensively on representations of masculinity or on the significance of the narrative’s deployment of tropes of physical and sexual abuse in its representation of its female subjects.

Unlike the women characters in In the Castle of My Skin, in this novel women’s voices are used to articulate some of the narrative’s dominant themes. As with the texts discussed in the previous chapter, the female body is a central trope, used in the narrative to explore issues of national identity and history as well as female identity, sexuality, sexual violence and oppression, or what Renu Juneja, in her discussion of the novel, refers to as “the dark side of this life of poverty and deprivation where men abandon women and where unwanted pregnancies weigh down the life of women” (79). As I demonstrate in this section, Lamming’s depiction of women’s vulnerable sexuality further limits the project of cultural liberation that the novel problematises; the body of the black, colonised woman is also used to signify and elaborate on the novel’s concern with the discovery and expansion of colonial territory, the emergence of the colonised subject and with the confrontation of the past.

The opening chapters of Lamming’s novel construct a paradigm of gender relations that is repeated throughout the narrative. The novel begins with a representation of the intuitive wisdom and philosophical sophistication of the male characters such as Gort or the uneducated Powell who, as a child, had been denied access to formal education in the prestigious school his brother had attended. His words underpin the narrative’s own preoccupation with political and individual freedom and the relationship between freedom and historical, social, cultural and personal identity. He says:

If ever I give you freedom, Crim, then all your future is mine, cause whatever I do in freedom name is what I make happen. Seein' that way is a blindness from the start. (18)

Gort, though also illiterate, is empowered by the articulacy of his drums which “seemed to open the pulse of every voice chanting a miracle of faith in the *tonelle*” (17). The “muscular stride” of the drums conveys the message of the gods; they recover an ancient and forgotten past and lead the responses of the crowd in the *tonelle*. In contrast to Gort’s mastery and the commanding tone of the drums, the women, singing and dancing in the *tonelle*, are subjected to the power of its music; they become “hysterical”, their eyes filled with “delirium” (19,20). The male figure of the *Houngan*, the leader of the “Ceremony of Lost Souls” is an intermediary between the world of the gods and the material world they inhabit. He has the power to release the souls of the dead so that they can communicate with the living. The women merely act as the chorus to his direction, or serve as conduits through which the spirits pass. They are not agents in the narrative of the “Ceremony of Lost Souls”; they do not act but are acted upon by the power of the drums and the spiritual command of the *Houngan*.

A similar relationship of master and subject is repeated in the relationship between Charlot and Fola, where he assumes the role of the *Houngan*, directing Fola to cultural practices from which she has been alienated and facilitating the recovery of her lost self. It is his concern with his own and Fola’s dislocation that prompts the quest for a lost self that dominates the narrative. Like Selwyn Langley in Brodber’s later novel, Charlot is interested in Fola as a specimen in an experiment; he wants to fill a space in her left by the absence of a past. Unlike Ella, however, she is able to articulate an analysis of his role in her life, describing him as a “cold, detached, self-

centred spy” who nevertheless had “taught” her to look at her past (65, 66). It is in keeping with the gender relations that structure the narrative that it is Chiki, the artist who taught Charlot about the “backward glance”, who later becomes Fola’s tutor, continuing her dependency on a more dominant and articulate male figure.

The gender ideologies that structure Lamming’s narrative of cultural resistance are revealed in its representations of the physical character of a woman’s body: significance is given to the geography of its contours, its fecundity as bearer of children and nations, its value as a commodity of exchange, its relative passivity and its potential as a site of violence. Less value is placed on the intellectual character of the women; in fact, in keeping with Lamming’s critique of the value of education to the colonised, Powell pours scorn on Fola’s education, and her use of language which “twist that girl mouth right out o’shape” (21). Charlot’s first thoughts about her were that, “She had great beauty for her age [...] meaning, at the time, that her figure had already achieved the certainty of its promise” (23). As he watches her dancing on the beach, he becomes fascinated by what he perceives to be an essential self, one concealed by a veneer of bourgeois sophistication:

Watching her dance, he was reminded of the crowd at the other end of the beach. She hadn’t lost their rhythm – sensual, vigorous, innocent in her sense of physical delight. Charlot was sure there was some hidden parallel of feeling between the girl he met three years ago and the coarse exuberant faces of the crowd which had suddenly grown hysterical in the *tonnelle*. Social refinement had become Fola’s natural atmosphere, yet she had kept the raw, unbridled certainty of instinct which tossed those women through their dance around the bamboo pole. (24)

Fola's mother too is most often described in physical terms; the narrative rests longingly on the details of her body whereas the physical appearance of the male characters is barely mentioned:

Her shoulders were spread backwards and her bosom, no larger than her daughter's, lifted discreetly under her blouse. There was no sudden thrust, no sharpness of line in the proportions of her breasts. She had the dancer's subtle and athletic thighs. [...] This was part of the magic which could still subdue Piggott. (101)

When Fola becomes conscious of a link between her absent father and her own feelings of cultural disconnection, she begins to see her mother, not as maternal but as Piggott sees her, as sexually vibrant and desirable. Fola the product, as she understands it, of her mother's illegitimate sexual activity, can only conceive of her as a "whore", a term that might be used to describe many of the women in the novel who, like Fola's colleague Eve, barter their sexuality for a better life, but who are never far removed from the threat of sexual violence. Eva, dancing to the rhythm of imagined drums, remembers that it is her relationship with Vice-President Raymond who, "shelving the compulsory requirements for republican clerks, got Eva into the sanctuary of this office" (163). Inextricably bound up with her exultation in her body, and her memory of the Vice-President, is the awareness of her physical vulnerability, an awareness that foreshadows her tragedy. Fola deliberately shadows the lives led by these women, sitting in the maternity ward where prostitutes line up to get abortions and visiting the Moon Glow brothel where Belinda works to ensure a better life for her son. And as if to emphasise the narrative's concern with women's vulnerable sexuality and its symbolic connections to the rape and abuse of the nation, Fola the

sign of the nation uprooted from its past, also shares the experience of sexual danger when she is almost raped by a deranged Powell.

At the same time that Lamming presents the dangerous vulnerability of poor, black women, however, he also romanticises their sexuality and their sexual relations. The narrator describes the sexual relationships between men and women in the Forest Reserve as Edenic in its frankness: "This is the Forest Reserve where male adults are referred to as the Boys. Fruitful in offspring, or avid ever in their wish to bear, the women are simply women" (52). That "women are simply women" and the men are "boys", irresponsible and self-interested, is illustrated in the following scene, where the Forest Reserve women are "engaged in the worst kind of war", in this case, a conflict over a man. One of the Reserve women, Mathilda, accuses her rival of squeezing Lantern, one of the "boys", literally to death. Her language reflects the women's frank, untamed sexuality and their aggressive, consuming sexual power:

You wrap round an' squeeze poor Lantern 'til he ain't even had what make a man, then you go tell everybody how he can't make the grade.[...] After two rabbit shake how he start to blow like a bugle all over what you got. Is what you say, an' everybody in Moon Bay know what you do to him 'cause Lantern was once a man with a commandin' prick. (253)

In a later incident one of the women is castigating her "boy" friend for not finding work and she threatens: "[...] I aint here to make litter like a pig all year long. My pussy can find somethin' else to do" (257). In these exchanges the women demonstrate the extent to which their powerful but unrestrained sexuality circumscribes and limits them. The women are not free and despite their apparent lack of inhibition, they, like C.L.R. James' barrack women, are imprisoned in their bodies; their sexuality is their only means of self expression and, like Belinda or Mamitz, the

women in these scenes have nothing to exchange but their bodies. Though uneducated and perhaps, like Gort, illiterate, they do not abstract their condition, reaching for the kind of philosophical or intellectual analysis used by the Forest Reserve men such as Jack o' Lantern, Powell or Gort. They are not artists, whose drums eloquently express what they cannot articulate. Whereas Simoes da Silva's analysis implies that all the women in the novel are sexually promiscuous, women's sexuality is differentiated along lines of class: the Forest Reserve women are not, like Fola, self-consciously aspiring to cultural self-knowledge or, like Veronica, daughter of the Vice-President, struggling to escape from the constraints that hinder women's material achievement and success. Veronica chides Eva for her preoccupation with the value of her body; she says: "If marriage is the be all and end all of a woman's ambition, what's goin' to happen to the country now they give us freedom?" (160). The women from the Forest Reserve are "simply women"; their role in the narrative is to be fruitful, like the land, and like the land, they are open to exploitation and abuse.

Although Fola is not "simply" a woman or simply, like the Forest Reserve women, a sexual object, her "backward glance" involves a recovery of her relationship with what she had imagined as the raw sexuality of her mother, who had begun her life in the same conditions as the Forest Reserve women. In the incident of Powell's attempted rape, she comes close to experiencing the sexual abuse and violence that her mother experienced and which was the circumstance of her own conception. Despite her attempts to connect with the sexual experiences of these women, she doesn't develop close, personal contact with the women from the Forest Reserve and Bruton Lane, the site of the famous Moon Glow brothel. Similarly, although she works with Eva, she knows nothing about her. The narrative does not represent Fola's reaction to Eva's botched abortion, and the incident is treated like a sign post in the

novel, rather than a tragedy concerning a significant, though minor, character. Eva is the subject of a discussion between two men, a corporal and junior constable, who discuss her affair with the doctor, Camillon, and his betrayal of her, but the corporal brings the subject to an abrupt end: "He had decided to close the subject of Eva who now lay dying in the hospital ward which Camillon was ashamed to visit" (284). In this brief reference, which reads almost like a footnote, the narrative is condemning the doctor's abandonment and abuse of Eva's body, and through the policemen's reaction to this incident the text suggests that the sexual exploitation of women is routine and not, the characters feel, worthy of comment. The novel does not recover her story, however, and Eva disappears from the narrative to make room for its focus on the role of art and the (male) artist.

Although Fola continues to be present in the narrative as a vehicle for one of its dominant themes, she too is marginalised and silenced by its preoccupations with art, the artist and *his* role in resistance and liberation. In the interactions between herself and Chiki, it is Chiki's voice which dominates, articulating her unspoken thoughts. He is the creator and she his subject; he brings her to a consciousness of her true self. She feels herself to be "completely in his power" (233). As Chiki paints, Fola cooks an elaborate meal for them both and even though Lamming writes that she assumes her chores "like a wife drawn back to the domesticities of her life, a woman in her man-made role" (238), she does not resist that role. Because she has no relationship with Eva, she cannot intervene to save her, but she does intervene, risking her life and reputation, to save the men in the Reserve who would have been punished for Powell's crime. Fola is never transformed from pupil to teacher or from subject to artist and though she is instrumental in the liberation of the drums, she is not a participating agent in the act of cultural resistance and political liberation. Her

struggle remains personal: she has won individual freedom from “the families”, the ruling elite; in the Forest Reserve boys, the “original and forgotten bastards of the New Republic”, she finds both herself, her father and a cultural reconnection to the lost past that his absence represented (252).

Although the music of the drums is an example of national culture, emerging, in Fanon’s terms, from conflict and the political struggle for liberation, it is also an expression of the “backward glance”, and represented as subject to the limitations of nativism. As Taylor and other critics have suggested, Lamming’s novel is an open-ended statement on the nature of cultural resistance and its relation to political liberation. Chiki is imprisoned in his art and after the liberation of the bands becomes immobilised by despair. The success of Baako, the new President, is not assured since the novel leaves him with the challenge of effecting a lasting reconciliation between politics and forms of cultural expression that are performed as resistance to colonialism.

Writing about the role of literature in the production of national culture, Fanon writes that national literature is a “literature of combat”:

[...] it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space. (The Wretched of the Earth 193)

Using these terms Taylor describes Lamming’s novel as an “act of responsibility”:
“George Lamming has succeeded in writing a novel that is for him an act of responsibility towards his brothers and sisters, his fellow persons” (The Narrative of

Liberation 200). As I have argued, however, ideologies of gender, which structure the narrative, limit the novel's potential as an act of political responsibility. As Fanon's specific references to women cited earlier suggest, his term "the whole people" is one that includes women as fighters for national liberation and *therefore* as artists and producers of national culture. The bands are formed from communities of men, and Lamming's focus is on individual artists who are part of that community and who are differentiated from the wider nation by their talent and vision; art lifts them out of their poverty and illiteracy to make them "great".

The overall effect of Lamming's novel is, in Jean Franco's words, to affirm the "difference between natural reproduction and the masculine province of creativity" and to define artistic creativity as an "exclusively male activity" (508-9). Because its focus is on women as child-bearers and as sexually open and vulnerable, it does not address the implications of including women so defined, not only as reproducers of the nation but as producers of art. It does not envision how women's inclusion might reconfigure the role of the artist and the character of artistic and cultural resistance and liberation. The following discussion of Erna Brodber's Myal serves to demonstrate that although writers such as Lamming and Wynter, who interrogate the cultural practices of "Negro-ism" and examine the conditions of production of a "national culture", preserve and critique the masculinist figure of Fanon's native intellectual, they ignore what can be described as his, though admittedly embryonic, re-gendered vision of a "new humanity", which includes men and women as producers of national culture. The work of a contemporary writer, Erna Brodber interrogates the implications of this masculinist rhetoric: her work includes representations of women as producers and performers of "national culture"; it demonstrates a clearer and more inclusive vision of a national culture and opposes the

individual, masculine intellectual with the figure of the artist as multi-vocal, poly-semantic, and composed of multiple identities.

Narrative Transformation and Cultural Resistance in Erna Brodber's Myal

This concluding section reads Erna Brodber's novel dialogically, as a revision, extension and transformation of the two novels discussed earlier in this chapter. In this section I argue that Brodber recovers female characters that are silenced, marginalised or represented with limited agency in earlier texts of Caribbean fiction. Her repositioning of these figures and the narrative's attention to the details of a specifically feminine experience results in a novel which redefines earlier theoretical and fictional representations of cultural resistance, and which is reconfigured as the radically inclusive model of cultural resistance that Fanon begins to describe. I begin with Nathaniel Mackey's theories of "othering", which he defines as a dynamic and oppositional mode of black artistic production; Mackey's essay is used to read the language and structure of Brodber's text as an example of cultural resistance, and Hebdige's work on the culture of Caribbean music, particularly his discussion of dub music and the practice of "versioning", is used as a way of reinterpreting Bakhtin's theories of the dialogised word in the novel and of recovering the cultural detail of Brodber's novel.

As outlined in the introduction, Hebdige's work traces the history of the dub version in early forms of reggae music, where the original is given "new life" and new accents in each new context. It is, as he argues, a form of repetition, but it is repetition that is celebrated, like the rhythm section of music and the rhythm that is "at the core of life" (15). In its examination of themes of political and cultural resistance, my

analysis represents a new “version” of an aspect of the novel already covered by critics. What has not been covered in the critical work that focuses on these themes in the novel is a sustained critique of the significance of gender in Brodber’s representation of cultural resistance, and the texts’ own dialogic “versioning” of narratives referred to in previous sections. The chapter ends by focusing on the narrative’s construction of female agency; I argue that in the novel’s emphasis on the role of women as agents of creativity and as central to the process of cultural recovery and social and political transformation, Myal presents a model of political and cultural liberation that is neither exclusive nor inextricably bound up with the achievement of masculine authority.

In her review of Myal Evelyn O’Callaghan is careful to avoid reading the novel as political allegory, focusing instead on its representation of the recovery of individual consciousness and selfhood; she does, however, cite, in the author’s own words, the political and historical concerns that inform the production of the novel:

I have this notion that colonialism, as it operated in Jamaica, was a theft of culture – a theft in a strange way. The English have brought in all these African peoples, who have a particular world view, and they insist on taking this world view away from them, which is in fact their *spirit*. Without it, you cannot live; without it, you’re just plain “flesh”[...]only dry bones, rotten flesh. And what [the novel] is really about is the struggle to get back the spirit.
 (“Spirit Thievery” 53)

O’Callaghan’s later analysis of Myal uses the text as an example of Caribbean female-authored narratives which restore agency and control to female subjects and resist representations of their female characters as irretrievably alienated and fragmented. Despite, O’Callaghan argues, the fractured and fragmented structure of

the narrative itself, Brodber does succeed in restoring subjectivity to its split and divided protagonist (Woman Version 76-7).

In a less textured reading of the novel, Collette Maximin suggests that “Brodber casts light on the whole colonial process by stressing the allegorical status of Ella’s and Anita’s sufferings” and argues that the “distinctive focus” of the novel is “the colonial plight” (54-5). In her essay, “Myal-ing Criticism: Beyond Colonizing Dialectics”, Catherine Nelson-McDermott argues that “the process of spirit thievery is paradigmatic of the issues postcolonial cultures face on a day to day basis” (54). She concludes that the text “situates itself in a site of continuing historical resistance” intervening in “critical theoretical debates about vital issues affecting the relationship of Jamaica (and postcolonial cultures) to itself and the world around it (64-5)”. Basing his argument on a reading of Michael de Certeau’s definitions of resistance and opposition, Tabish Khair also reads the novel as an example, not of cultural resistance but of cultural opposition: that is, resistance that takes place from *within* the dominant colonial culture.

Other critics, while acknowledging the allegorical function of the novel’s dominant trope of spirit thievery and possession, interrogate the nature of its representation of resistance to imperial domination, or possession. Neil ten Kortenaar, like O’Callaghan and Cooper,¹⁰ attempts to focus on the specificities of the narratives’ themes and subjects, and opens his essay by positing a reversal of the allegorical relationship that critics have identified in the novel: “Brodber [...] does something different; she posits a literal spirit possession for which cultural imperialism is a metaphor” (51). He continues, adjusting the relationship between centre and margin by suggesting that Grove Town, the location of the novel, is the centre that struggles against its enemies, the colonial and imperialist cultures, which threaten the town’s borders or margins.

While, as I have indicated, much critical attention has been given to an examination of the nature and the extent to which Brodber's novel can be defined as an act of resistance to cultural imperialism and the colonial, political project, little or no attention has been paid to its use of gender roles as a way of redefining cultural resistance and/or "opposition". Mention is made of the important role that women perform in the novel. Nelson-McDermott, for example, suggests that the novel heals or contributes to the "myal-ing" of faulty gender relations by including male and female myal workers who effect the recovery of Ella and by foregrounding female characters who demonstrate through their everyday lives and practices their "experience of and contribution to Jamaican society" (63). Ten Kortenaar notes that while the male dominated exchanges in the spirit world echo the "vivid linguistic performances of West Indian males in homosocial settings", demonic possession only afflicts "young virgins and newly married brides". The only member of the spirit community who combats Anita's spirit possession is Miss Gatha, demonstrating, according to Neil ten Kortenaar, that women are at the "dangerous interface between the community and its enemies" (55, 61). He continues, arguing that Miss Gatha's appearance in the public sphere of the community constitutes a reversal of normal gender relations, in the spiritual sphere at least, where men dominate the public realm, and women the private, but the significance of this reversal is not fully examined.

As the title of her article suggests, Heather Smyth's aim is to investigate the extent to which Brodber's novel offers the possibility for a theory of "feminist" creolisation that uses, as a category of analysis and description, gender and sexuality. Her summary of the novel's dominant themes and ideas reflects those of the critics cited above; she describes the novel as one which illustrates "how heterogeneous community can provide the cultural and spiritual resources to transform social and

psychic rupture into political revolution” (3). Brodber’s text represents a “pedagogy of resistance” and, as she goes on to argue, narrativises Wilson Harris’ theories of cultural syncretism and pluralism, in other words, creolisation. Smyth’s work offers interesting insights into the novel but it does not focus on Myal as an example of “feminist creolization”. Brodber’s work is used, quite literally, to “illustrate” Harris’ text and neither to reveal nor oppose the gender ideologies that structure his work. No critical attention has been paid, as my summary suggests, to gender as a category of analysis in Brodber’s text, or to the way that her novel interacts with novels in the tradition of Caribbean literary production to reveal and oppose the hierarchies of gender power in their narratives.

The first sign of cultural resistance in Brodber’s novel is suggested in the language and structure of the novel. This is not, as some critics have suggested, reflected in the novel’s modification of European novels of becoming,¹¹ like Merle Collins’ Angel, Myal signals both its connections and its resistance to the Caribbean *bildungsroman* with its own anxious relationship with literary realism and its resistance to some of the constraints imposed by that form. Whereas Collins’ novel revises the position of the protagonist, focusing on the security of community, the extended family and a married and present mother and father, Brodber’s novel uses the more traditional representation, in the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, of the father-less child, while testing, in a more explicit way than in Collins’ first novel, the boundaries of realism. As a father-less and culturally disconnected or uprooted protagonist, Ella O’Grady can be read as the literary descendant of Fola, Mohan Biswas, Tee, and Toyocie among others. Unlike the protagonists of earlier Caribbean *bildungsroman*, however, the loss or absence of a parent is exacerbated by the fact that her father is white. She is the “half black, half white” daughter of Mary Riley and Ralston O’Grady, an Irish police

officer stationed in rural Grove Town, and in appearance, she bears the burden of that racial mixture. The “already uttered” themes of fragmentation, dislocation and breakdown that characterise the form and its protagonists are therefore more sharply accented in *Myal*. This difference in Brodber’s “version” of the dominant themes of the Caribbean *bildungsroman* is more emphatically marked by the language of the novel and its narrative style and structure.

Denise de Caires Narain describes Brodber’s style, with its emphasis on orality as well as its desire to reconnect with the lost maternal body, Mother Africa, as one which connects with aspects of “écriture feminine”(100). As I argue in the introduction and in earlier chapters, however, an emphasis on orality is not always, in Caribbean fiction, the sign of women’s writing. On the other hand, the concern in *Myal* to emphasise the experience of its women characters does help to shape the narrative. Whereas in the earlier works of fiction referred to in this chapter, the writers’ focus is on the relationship between spiritual and cultural acts of resistance and masculine claims of authority, in Brodber’s novel her focus is on women’s participation in cultural healing as resistance, and on its connection to the female characters’ habit of caring for others. This concern for others, or what Carol Gilligan refers to as an “adult ethic of taking care” (164) produces, in women like Amy Holness and Maydene Brassington, a desire to forge alliances across racial, cultural and gender boundaries. This female desire for connection and reconciliation is reflected in the text itself, which is hybrid in its language and structure and which, thematically, structurally and linguistically, celebrates its own inclusiveness.

Narain does note that attempts to describe and categorise Brodber’s narrative style can be limiting and prescriptive. In an echo of Narain’s claim, I would describe Brodber’s narrative as act of resistance which refuses to be contained by

literary prescription. It is, to use Nathaniel Mackey's phrase, an example of "resistant othering": indescribable, inventive and endlessly innovative. In his essay, "Other: From Noun to Verb" Mackey reconceptualises the relationship between the subject and its "othered" object, firstly by restoring agency to the term by transforming it into a verb: "[...] we need to make it clear that when we speak of otherness we are not positing static, intrinsic attributes or characteristics. We need instead to highlight the dynamics of agency and attribution by way of which otherness is brought about and maintained, the fact that *other* is something people do [...]" (51). Secondly, he argues that it is important to make the distinction between social othering and artistic othering. Social othering is the exercise of power by a dominant group: it results in marginalisation and exclusion. Artistic othering "[...] has to do with innovation, invention, change, upon which cultural health and diversity depend and thrive". This form of othering should be valued and celebrated. Mackey uses the term "resistant othering" to describe the self-consciously disruptive influence of black artistic expression; it is art that announces its variance. In music it is the "versioning", and here he refers to Hebdige, of established work, giving the work new accents and inflections, suggesting that the original work is not closed but the beginning of infinite possibility. It is also a "bending and shaping of sound, black liberties taken with music and language". Jazz, Mackey notes, was often described as "the sound of surprise" and writers influenced by jazz and bebop are inspired to make language surprise, to "make words surprise themselves" (55). It is cultural production which actively resists commodification and appropriation by the dominant culture: it refuses to be tamed. And as such it represents what Stephen Slemon describes as "a differential, contestory, and genuinely *post*-colonial semiotics [...]" in pursuit of political change" ("Monuments of Empire" 14).

Myal's "resistant othering" is signalled and elaborated on in its opening chapter which, like the rest of the narrative, is at once both highly figurative and grounded in the everyday realities of early twentieth-century rural Jamaica. Mass Cyrus, whose voice opens the first chapter, is the herbalist, hermit and the myalist charged with diagnosing and healing Ella's body as well as her mind. As such he is one of the most important figures in the myalist group and is a direct descendant of the African medicine man, or what the plantation community termed the "black Doctor" (Senior 341). He is, however, one of the least developed of the characters who form the group of myal practitioners, and the veil of mystery within which he is cloaked in the opening chapter is not lifted as the narrative progresses. It is Mass Cyrus who diagnoses Ella's sickness but who also chastises the "trained-minded" people such as William and Maydene Brassington for the discord they produce, the "clashing symbols" of their anxiety:

He spoke very quietly. If those people had only learnt to deal with quietude and silence, they would have seen the notes on his score if not the dulce melodia – sweetly please -, the pp for soft, the diminuendo poco a poco – turn it down please -, and the curlicues for rest that Mass Cyrus face had become.

(1)

Using imagery derived from European musical notation, Brodber reverses normal cultural expectations. In its minstrelsy mask, black musical production is caricatured as loud, raucous and jarring, whereas Mass Cyrus characterises the "music", the manners, the approach and bearing of the European educated or "trained minded" people as harsh and discordant, music which "could shake a man out of his roots". Mass Cyrus, the Myal herbalist and healer, describes his face using imagery that derives from the European musical score as a way of connecting, and showing that he

can connect, with those, such as the Brassington men, who are defined by a colonial cultural heritage. He is also emphasising the need to read into the silence, the gaps, to focus on what is not *said*. Through his own unspoken words he establishes his authority over the process of healing and demonstrates the lesson his spiritual colleagues teach and Ella later learns, that in order to resist the power of colonial systems of knowledge a person has to: “Get in their books and know their truth [...]” (67).

Mass Cyrus’ emphasis on “quietude and silence” also connects to the “linguistic rituals” of the Grove Town people, their systems of verbal communication by indirection. He says of the Brassingtons, William and his sons, “ ‘Another kind of people would have said: ‘Mass Cyrus we need help.’ Just that and shut up. In two two’s the woman would be better.’” (1). Throughout the novel, one of the “trained minded”, William Brassington, expresses his impatience with the villagers’ attention to the spaces between words and their refusal to be explicit whereas Maydene, with her determination to be attuned to the cultural nuances of Grove Town, understands these rituals and indirection perfectly. She interprets the pauses in Amy Holness’ speech and understands that when she blandly mentions that she has heard that Maydene wants to take Ella “into” her house, she is really insinuating that, like her mother, Ella will be seduced by the young white “masters”, Maydene’s sons, who are soon to return from their schooling in England. Maydene correctly traces this practice back to the days of slavery where all meaning had to be coded and further into the present-day situation where “[...] those below must hate those above and must devise some way of communicating this without seeming too obviously rude” (21). It also reflects the proverbial structure of the African roots of Caribbean speech, which relies on highly figurative and ritualistic language as a way of communicating meaning.¹²

Although Maydene and Mass Cyrus are representative of two seemingly opposed systems of cultural knowledge, in each case, their ability to “get in the[ir] books” of the other enables them to connect with and transform a potentially hostile situation. In this case, unlike Mass Cyrus who has to establish his authority, Maydene has to relinquish hers, which she does with ease and determination. In the process, she breaks down Amy’s resistance and again, although the process is not articulated explicitly, a connection is made between the two women, who begin to understand their still fully unexpressed shared experiences.

In the very early image of the musical score, therefore, Brodber signals the central importance in the narrative of creolisation, as a theme, a mode of representation and as a sign of its “resistant othering”. Several critics have commented on Brodber’s literal and figurative use of the cultural reality of Jamaica: Kevin D. Hutchings, for example, argues that the novel’s “non-essentialist approach to cultural politics” reflects Brodber’s “philosophical attitude toward the heterogeneous nature of Jamaican cultural reality”. He continues:

Brodber takes as her *point of departure* the reality of “creolization”: a particular instance of intercultural hybridity which profoundly complicates the notion of “roots”. [...] The reality of creolization, a process wherein Self and Other become mutually constitutive, despite the insistence of a coercive colonial hierarchy, makes it possible and indeed necessary for Brodber to conceptualise a programme of decolonization and self apprehension which does not subscribe to an inflexibly oppositional understanding of cultural identity. (105)

Here Hutchings demonstrates his interest in Brodber’s thematic use of creolisation as a means of effecting resistance within a heterogeneous community; her complex and

inclusive representation of cultural resistance both to colonial dominance and essentialising “nativism” in the context of a and racially diverse community such as the Caribbean can be precisely characterised as, in Bhabha’s words, the “dialectic of various temporalities – modern, colonial, postcolonial, native” within which lived cultures of resistance are produced (Location of Culture 152). Her text stretches and extends this dialectic across real and imagined time zones, geographical borders and cultural boundaries in a way that reflects Bhabha’s work but also reveals the limitations of his reliance, even as he seeks to contest it, on an oppositional construct of centre and margins as a way of theorising cultural resistance and transformation.

Much less attention has been paid to Brodber’s use of language to demonstrate and celebrate a heterogeneous, creolised community where, at the level of language as well as thematically, “Self and Other become mutually constitutive”. The effect of the early image of Mass Cyrus’ reference to a European musical score is reproduced in the narrative’s voicing of other forms of European cultural production, effecting what Bakhtin defines as a “sociological stylistics” or the self-conscious, artistic reworking of the heteroglossia that populates all language (The Dialogic Imagination 300).

Brodber dialogises the speech of what might be perceived as opposing cultures to expose and exploit the interconnectedness of individual experience and of cultural production and transformation. Apart from the very clear instances of Ella’s citation of Kipling’s verse there are, in the opening chapters, other less obvious references to the culture of these “new people”, embedded in a narrative that seems, on the surface, to prioritise representations of the “othered” culture of the colonised. A line from a 1950s popular song is inserted into a description of the vibrations that accompany the completion of Ella’s cure: Bill Hayley’s “Whole lot of shaking going on” is a reference that points to the continuation of “spirit thievery” in the form of rock and

roll and marks an extension of the white recording industry's commodification and sanitisation of blues and jazz. To see rock and roll as merely "spirit thievery", however, would be to reduce the complexity of the narrative: as Hebdige argues, Bill Hayley's invocation of another person's music is, as a form of musical quotation, inevitably revised and reinterpreted; his version is open to further revision or versioning: "And that's the beauty, too, of versioning. It's a democratic principle because it implies that no-one has the final say. Everyone has a chance to make a final contribution" (14). The appearance of this reference to white rock and roll in *Myal*, a narrative that appears to be so grounded in the culture of turn-of-the-century rural Jamaica, is a sign of the narrative's many layers of meaning, its complex interrogation of processes of cultural borrowing and "othering" and its resistance to monological narrative structures.

In a deliberate reversal of its reference to Hayley's rock and roll version, the novel ends with a line from one of the best known Jamaica dub tunes of the 1970s, "Wear You To The Ball". This was one of the first commercially successful dub recordings which included "toasting" or talk over lines by DJs who had helped to make dub music famous. Hebdige's description of the music of the 1970s suggests an important link between early dub music and the dominant themes in the novel: "These early talk overs are certainly wild; at times U Roy's toasts resemble the inspired ravings of a worshipper 'trumping in the spirit' at a Pocomania gathering" (84). U Roy's song dubs over its own lyrics so that "Take a bow, take a bow, take a bow wow wow" becomes, with repetition and the exuberance of performance, "Chick a bow, chick a bow, chick a bow wow wow", the line used by Brodber to close the narrative and to pay tribute to Mass Cyrus or Percy the Chick and the central role he played in the practice of healing. In its original form the line "Take a bow" serves as a fitting term

to close the novel and to signal the performative aspects of the narrative: the myal ritual; the Pocomania ceremony; the jazz performance of the male spirits. Brober uses the dubbed form (“chick a bow”), however, to draw attention to the playfulness of the text’s language and its celebration of a truly hybrid language and culture; the final musical reference reflects back on the narrative’s use of cultural references from Shakespeare, Keats, Kipling and others to more contemporary forms of specifically, as in the case of dub, Jamaican music, itself concerned to experiment with the play of language.

The first chapter closes with a reference to Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn”: “All this sudden destruction because Ella O’Grady-Langley lying still like a Grecian sacrifice upon a pyre had gone too far, had tripped out in foreign” (4). The juxtaposition of opposites, Keats with the Jamaican contemporary colloquial term “in foreign”, meaning abroad, echoes the example cited above, and provides further evidence of Brodber’s use of creolisation as a mode of resistance to monologic notions of culture. The reference to Keats’ poem graphically underscores Ella’s own condition of being “choked on foreign”, on colonial culture as well as on the experience of neo-colonial dominance in the form of Selwyn Langley. It also suggests that the life in her, the vibrant experiences of the village had, like the experiences of love and loss the urn portrays, been transfixed into something aesthetically beautiful but still and dead. Of more significance than these intertextual details, however, is the fact that these words are utterances made by a narrator who is from within the community of Grove Town, one who speaks with easy familiarity of its flora and fauna, its spiritual practices and cultural customs.

While the colonial cultural references such as those in the first chapter pose no difficulty to most readers of *Myal*, the untranslated descriptions of rural Jamaica in

1919 provide a quality of surprise which emphasises the text's "resistant othering". The title's reference to myal and the ceremony itself, which is used to give coherence to the thematic structures of the novel, is untranslated, though several critics have undertaken detailed excavations of the ceremony's significance to the text.¹³ Rural Grove Town is defamiliarised with the inclusion of phrases such as "sekkle pekkle", and the repeated references to the "stone bruise", the "bastard cedar, the physic nut and shy shame-mi-lady". This naming of the vegetation concretises both the reality of Grove Town itself and the period in which it is set and contrasts with, but also complements, the chapter's, and indeed the novel's, equally material and concrete representation of the world of the spirits and the contribution they make to healing. Mass Cyrus' heightened sensitivity to the world beyond material limitations is illustrated in the way he connects with and animates the very concrete, named trees, shrubs and insects, as if they were his community; the bastard cedar feels the pain of every touch and the gum it produces is used to "glue together a broken heart or a broken relationship until the organism could manage on its own again" (3). It is evidence of his rootedness: when Dan asks: "Why is he stuck in some grove talking to snails and me alone in this Egypt?" Willie replies: "Some have to root, man" (67). Even as Brodber insists on cultural interconnectedness and what Said calls the "overlapping streams of historical experience" (378), she also makes it clear that such an interconnection must include the recovery of lost practices: her model of cultural resistance is a kind of "nativism", grounded and coloured by specific historical and geographical realities, but shaped and modified by contemporary experience. A plural or hybrid culture must simultaneously attend to and contest the authority of dominant cultural forms which disempower or disregard cultural practices of the dominated other and which perform, in Brodber's terms, "spirit thievery".

The narrative's use of culturally specific naming prompts a hesitancy in critics, many of whom admit that, in O'Callaghan's words, they "miss some of the finer shades of meaning [...] and some of the delights of register variation" ("Spirit Thievery" 52). It also prompts fruitful speculation of the kind offered in Shalini Puri's essay. As Puri's essay reveals, even where these concrete images are important for their validation of an othered reality, Brodber's work continues to invite focus on the "complex play of light and shadow" with which the word becomes saturated as it enters into the contest for meaning (Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination 277). Puri re-invests the "stone bruise", the local name for a common caterpillar, with its literal significance. With reference to Ella she writes: "Indeed the light-skinned mulatto registers the purple bruises of so many kinds of violence that at one point she is actually described as being a 'little stone bruise'. It is those marks of violence that make her emblematic of Grove Town, Jamaica, which is described as a colony of stone bruise" (102). This provides an interesting imagistic connection to Anita's bruising by the stones thrown at her during Mass Levi's attempts to steal her spirit and regain his potency. Puri continues: "By deploying the concept-metaphors of spirit thievery and stone-bruising simultaneously, Myal brilliantly overcomes the spirit/matter, mind/body dichotomy, rendering it impossible to separate bodily and mental violence" (102-3).

In another, final example of the way in which the first chapter, like jazz, continues to surprise, extending the "play" in words to *playfulness*, Brodber mocks the historical voice of objectivity in her closing reference to the storms of 1919, of which there is no record. Brodber's novel does not just signal the importance of cultural pluralism, a pluralism that includes the validation of an ignored, lost or discounted cultural past, but it also grounds itself in and speaks to a tradition of Caribbean literary production

that it versions or talks over. In its self-conscious collapsing of textual boundaries and its insistence on the connection between cultures and forms of representation, Brodber constructs a novel whose style and form reflects its thematic preoccupations with a female desire for inclusiveness, reconciliation and collective well-being.

Female Agency and Cultural Resistance and Transformation in the novel *Myal*

In the final section of this chapter I demonstrate that the repositioning of gender roles and relationships in its representation of cultural resistance, not only connects the novel *Myal* to earlier fictional forms but also radically redefines political and cultural resistance and liberation.

As I have argued, the formal structures of Brodber's novel represent one aspect of her re-gendered version of earlier Caribbean fictional representations of cultural resistance. The novel also recovers female characters from earlier narratives and repositions them in the text, giving voice and authority to their earlier, silenced or marginalised forms. In her comparison of the fiction of Orlando Patterson and Erna Brodber, Joyce Johnson notes that Brodber writes with an awareness of an established tradition of West Indian literature and that her novels make "glancing references" to characters who appear in earlier literature: "Significant folk characters are given names of 'failed' characters such as Cyrus and Mary in *The Children of Sisyphus* and Miss Gatha in *The Hills of Hebron*. The influences exercised by such characters in *Myal* are positive" (86). It is not just the character that is recovered, however, as in the case of Mass Cyrus and Miss Gatha, it is the religious practice itself which is recovered and validated. In Wynter's novel *Pocomania* and obeah are conflated, as

they were in the earliest records of African religions among the slaves, whereas in Brodber's more sociologically accurate account, she makes a clear distinction between the two, and emphasises the malevolent quality of the obeah practices with which Mass Levi becomes involved. In The Hills of Hebron Pocomania is referred to as "black magic", and as the worship of "dark spirits"; Ambrose is the worshippers' "obeahman": "These voodoo followers of the 'obeahman', Ambrose, believed in the malevolent, cruel spirits opposed to man. Theirs was a lost god of Africa who, for their sins, had abandoned them" (114, 113). Sister May-May, Ambrose's chief medium, is described as having "skin like black satin, a long wiry body and an evil face". In both texts' representation of what is in fact, in Wynter's novel obeah and not pocomania, both narratives point to the role of obeah in the sexual abuse and exploitation of women. In Wynter's novel, Ambrose directs the "Pocomania ritual" and as part of the process beats Beatrice with his rod, then while the drums and the dancing of the ceremony continue, Ambrose leads her away to his room and under cover of the ritual, abuses her.

Of more significance to my argument, however, is the recovery of Fola from Lamming's novel in the form of Ella. Both texts use young father-less female protagonists to signify the cultural dislocation of the colonied subject; both novels represent formal education as a form of spirit thievery and construct the process of recovery through an African-centred ritual. In Lamming's novel the process involves the more esoteric Ceremony of Lost Souls and in Brodber's text it is the process of Myal which incorporates the Kumina ceremony and the energies of Reverend Simpson, the native Baptist minister. As Collette Maximin points out, the native Baptist church arrived in Jamaica in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with black North Americans and came to reflect many of the African religious practices

that had been retained in Jamaican culture. She argues that the native Baptists had, by the late nineteenth century, merged with Myalism and had “moved further away from the dominant faith”:

[...] Myalists blended various cultures to uproot wickedness from the community. Their mission involved the whole society and was both African and Christian in scope. Witchcraft was the target of the cultists’ efforts and was identified as the main source of social disorder. It was necessary to fight against it with the help of songs, drums and dancing. [...] (52)

Although Miss Gatha, as Myalist leader of the Kumina ceremony, is invested with the powers of leadership and healing that Wynter’s character is prepared to rescind, she does not work on her own but with other members of the whole community to fight against the spirit possession of Anita and Ella. Their recovery is, therefore, effected by the entire community, not just an individual religious or cultural leader. Amy Holness takes in Anita, partly from feelings of guilt because she is not able to bring up her own child and partly because she is able to offer a better environment in which she can nurture her talents. She is motivated by a duty of care towards her.

It is the same motive of care that prompts Maydene Brassington’s interest in Ella. She is, initially, attracted to Ella because she seems to mirror the disconnectedness that she senses in her husband:

‘That little girl looked as if she was flying. Totally separated from the platform and from the people around her. Not just by colour but as an angel in those Sunday school cards is separated from the people below. Swimming in the sky, or flying or whatever, in that ethereal fashion all below. It is that. [...] It is that angelic look that I saw, its root in a passion so innocent and strong that it could separate body from soul [...]’. (17)

Maydene's concern for her husband allows her to see something unsettling beneath the young girl's perfect recitation. She alone notices her unhappiness and begins to think of her soaring as a lightness of being, the result of her body being separated from her spirit. She senses the same disconnection and dislocation in her husband, William, and this in turn leads her to speculate on the cultural conflicts between William and the people of Grove Town. It is Maydene who introduces the term "spirit thief" into the narrative. And it is in this same scene that she forges a mental connection with Miss Gatha, whom she praises for her resistance. Miss Gatha refuses to take off her head-tie when in church, even though she knows that Maydene's husband, the Reverend Brassington, disapproves:

"No way he could take away her head-dress" and congratulated her silently.

"So that is it!" She felt she now held the germ. [...] Grove Town people would resist his efforts to separate them from their understanding of life. (19)

Although, like Charlot, Maydene is an outsider, she functions more boldly than Charlot to participate in the community's "inner" rituals of cultural and personal transformation. Whereas Charlot, who is part European, part Chinese and born in West Africa, is interested in helping Fola to connect to her lost cultural past as a way of working through his own alienation, Maydene is interested, not in herself, but in others; her desire to help others is prompted and enabled by her empathy and her ability to connect with others. Unlike Charlot, who is first struck by Fola's emerging sexuality, Maydene sees beyond Ella's physical appearance to her fractured consciousness of which her outward appearance is merely a sign.

Because Maydene Brassington is so preoccupied with a duty of care toward her husband, however, she agrees to send Ella away from Grove Town; she does precisely what her husband had tried to do in the village and what she had commended Miss

Gatha and others for resisting. Before she concedes to what was in fact her husband's request, she forges, and in some cases forces, a connection with the people of Grove Town and its culture: she insinuates herself into the group of Myalists, and is able later to become, like Mass Cyrus, part of the practical, material and the spiritual process of healing the sickness that she had, in part, created. In many ways, the narrative's focus on Maydene Brassington's determination to assimilate into Grove Town and her successful entry into the inner group of Myalists reflects the quality of "surprise" that characterises the narrative. She is not, like Charlot in Lamming's text, a spectator more concerned with the parallels in his own life than with making connections to the community in which he lives. Charlot does not, like Maydene, stay to finish the process of healing that he started out of a selfish interest in Fola's cultural disconnection. In contrast what started out as a selfish interest in her own relationship with her husband, was transformed, in Brodber's character, into care for and interest in the community of which she insisted on being a part. As well as probing into their culture, she successfully participates in using it to resist the spirit thievery of the European colonialists.

Although Ella is the subject of Myal - she is the body and mind that needs to be healed through Myal practices - she is one of the less well developed characters in the novel. She is not, like Fola, articulate, well educated and privileged, with close connections to the island's ruling elite. What Brodber effects in the narrative, however, is the restoration of agency and subjectivity to a character who, throughout the novel had been the object of other characters' preoccupations and experiments. As well as being the vehicle through which Maydene would have enabled her husband's self-recovery, she was, for the white Selwyn Langley, a blank canvas onto which he could project his fantasies of the cultural Other. Like the 'discovered' territories of the

'New World', her body and mind provided an unspoilt site for exploitation and his own self-aggrandisement. By the end of the novel, however, through the collective efforts of Grove Town, she is able to reverse the effects of what Helen Tiffin calls the "ritualised *disembodiment* of colonial reading and listening" that Maydene observes as she watches her ("Cold Hearts" 914). As restored subject, Ella's first achievement is to deconstruct the ideological apparatus of the reading primer used in Grove Town school and to liberate both its characters and the young colonial minds it interpellates. Like Edgell, Brodber uses this process of deconstruction, or breaking down, as it is represented in Edgell's novel, as a sign of creativity and of the beginnings of political and cultural liberation and transformation. Ella uses the literacy she has acquired and which had confirmed her difference, to begin that process. Speaking of Ella, Mr. Dan says:

" People who are familiar with the print and the language of the print. Our people are beginning to see how it and themselves have been used against us. Now, White Hen, we have people who can and are willing to correct images from the inside, destroy what should be destroyed, replace it with what should be replaced and put us back together [...]. (110)

In the "language of the print" however, as Shalini Puri points out, citing Bakhtin, the word is only half someone else's. As a result, Ella is able to dialogise an "authoritarian, monologic discourse" and to point to other meanings and possibilities in each utterance (111).

The character of Ella not only effects the recovery of Fola but transforms her . Ella, in Brodber's narrative becomes the teacher and cultural practitioner, roles that are not available to Fola in Lamming's novel. Chiki points out that Fola should teach but the narrative is, as I have argued, less concerned with her achievement of agency

than with its representation of the performance of cultural resistance as both a masculine enterprise and a route in the achievement of an otherwise denied masculine identity. Through the foregrounding of women characters, Brodber radically transforms the earlier representations of cultural resistance with which her text engages. Both female characters, Ella and Maydene, are prompted to participate in using culture as a means of resistance because of their role in caring for others: Ella for the school children she teaches and Maydene for her husband and later, Ella. They exemplify the necessary inclusiveness and interrelatedness that characterise successful resistance and liberation. Whereas the earlier narratives focus on the pitfalls of “nativism” as a means of resistance, problematising and refusing what Gareth Griffiths terms as an “atavistic resurgence of the traditional” (437), Brodber’s narrative projects beyond the limits of “nativism” and its constraining binarism to forms of cultural resistance that produce liberation. Anne McClintock argues that a “feminist investigation of national difference might produce a more theoretically complex and strategically subtle genealogy of nationalism” (“Family Feuds” 67). As I have demonstrated, however, Brodber’s fiction does produce a more complex and subtle version of a national culture of liberation than those suggested in theoretical accounts of the kind that McLintock proposes, and taken as a whole a detailed, dialogised reading of all three texts offers a radically challenging interpretation of the role and function of gender in cultures of resistance and liberation.

I have focused on forms of cultural resistance used, in Caribbean literature, to suggest the interconnectedness of political and cultural liberation. The novels analysed all use cultural forms recuperated from an African past – Kumina, Pocomania, Vodun and Myal – to suggest the complex and contradictory nature both of the process of recovery itself and the practice of culture as a sign of political

resistance. These fictional works all engage with issues of gender power and their narratives are used to examine the ways in which cultural resistance is shaped by ideologies of gender as well as the more frequently observed power relations that are the result of colonialism. In conclusion I argue that a recent work of fiction by the female author Erna Brodber, demonstrates that the inclusion of women's participation in the practice of cultural resistance radically transforms both the practice itself and its function as an essential component of political liberation.

¹ Natasha Barnes makes the important point that Wynter's novel was published to coincide with Jamaica's independence and that it reflects Jamaica as a new nation state "whose psychological and social dimensions are still to be worked out" (43). Fanon's and Lamming's texts, published in the preceding two years, can also said to have emerged out of a concern with the political, social and cultural reality of independence.

² Madhu Dubey is one of very few critics who deal with issues of gender in Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth. The following critics focus on Fanon's treatment of gender and sexuality in Black Skin, White Masks: Marie Perinbaum, "The Parrot and the Phoenix" Savacou, 13: 7-13; Jane Miller, Seductions 123-6; T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms (New York: Rowman and Littlefield 1999).

³ See also Said, Culture and Imperialism, 258.

⁴ See also Parry, "Resistance Theory" 190.

⁵ Said, Culture and Imperialism 141.

⁶ Said writes: "[...] cultural resistance to imperialism has often taken the form of what we can call nativism used as a private refuge". His words strongly echo Fanon's description of the native intellectual and perfectly describe Moses' motives for the more extreme and dramatic transformation of his religion.

⁷ See also Carolyn Cooper, "Something Ancestral Recaptured" 69.

⁸ See George Lamming, "The Negro Writer and His World" Caribbean Quarterly 5:2, 115 and Patrick Taylor, Narratives of Liberation, 201.

⁹ Supriya Nair also leaves Fola's "decisive" role unexamined, Caliban's Curse 115, 118.

¹⁰ See Carolyn Cooper "Something Ancestral Recaptured" 70-77; Kevin D. Hutchings 105 and Ulrike Erichsen "Planning a Strategy to Beat Back Those Spirit Thieves" 21, 29.

¹¹ Shalini Puri, An "Other" Realism: Erna Brodber's Myal", 99; and Khair, 122

¹² Chinua Achebe makes several references to this mode of communicating in his novels. See Arrow of God 85,132-4,144.

¹³ See Carolyn Cooper, "Something Ancestral"; Colette Maximin and Neil ten Kortenaar.

Chapter 6: Considerations of Gender in Post-Modern Narratives of Resistance to Colonial Historiography: Merle Collins' The Colour of Forgetting and Earl Lovelace's Salt

tales of hunting will always

glorify the hunter

until the lioness

is her own

hiss-

-torian

(Merle Collins, Rotten Pomerack 60)

This final chapter returns to the work of Merle Collins and examines the way in which her most recent novel, The Colour of Forgetting reconfigures the representations of gender, gender relations, resistance, and revolution that dominate her first novel, Angel, the subject of two earlier chapters of this study. I argue that, unlike earlier novels, which point to the possibility of successful liberation even where it is negatively defined, The Colour of Forgetting constitutes a Caribbean post-modern reworking of earlier narratives of national resistance and liberation, including Collins' first novel, subverting expectations of a process of decolonisation which is progressive, linear and causal. Whereas in earlier chapters I have plotted a diachronic relationship between texts that focus on themes of resistance and liberation, in this chapter I intend to move in two directions at once, to reveal the ways in which Collins' latest novel repeats and revises the preoccupations of her first novel, written eight years earlier and, with reference to Earl Lovelace's Salt published within a year

of The Colour of Forgetting, to continue an exploration of the difference that gender makes as a category of analysis in the representation of resistance and liberation.

Both novels return to preoccupations expressed in earlier fiction: Lovelace's novel revisits the specific problematic of cultural pluralism in his native Trinidad, narrativised through the theme of carnival in The Dragon Can't Dance; the possibilities and limits of carnival as a mode of cultural and political resistance is also a dominant concern of the novel, Salt. The character Alford George, whose growth to maturity and to political prominence provides the linear chronology of the novel, echoes the figure of Ivan Morton in The Wine of Astonishment who, after only modest academic achievement, becomes a politician in the post independent government. As these thematic convergences suggest, Lovelace's concerns about the cultural and political character of Trinidadian society dominate his fiction and are expressed within the context of his preoccupation with the character and effectiveness of anti-colonial resistance, and the nature and possibility of political and cultural liberation. Merle Collins' novel echoes more closely the themes and concerns of her first novel, Angel but the shape and form of the narrative further problematises some of those concerns by situating the specific, recent history of Grenada within a historical context that reaches back to slavery and to acts of resistance and rebellion performed both by the slaves and the Caribs, the original inhabitants of the island. At the same time, Collins' representation of the past in mythical terms abstracts the question of resistance by disengaging acts of resistance from a materially defined historical context; in this way, Collins is able to re-examine the limitations of a linear narrative of anti-colonial resistance and liberation that was used to powerful effect in her first novel and, by focusing on repeated cycles of oppression, struggle and resistance, to interrogate the possibility and the identity of successful resistance and

liberation. As I demonstrate below, because Lovelace's novel Salt also revisits the past using post-modern strategies of narration, a comparison between the two texts will enable me to compare and to theorise the novels' use of gender roles and relationships and to examine how gender power works to limit or redefine acts of resistance. A comparative analysis of the two novels also allows me to examine the ways in which the writers' use of orality or vernacular linguistic strategies radically reshape representations of time, history and resistance to colonialism.

The writers' repeated examination of the Caribbean's history of domination and resistance reflects what Clarisse Zimra describes as the "nightmare" of the repeated return to the originary violence of the Caribbean; it represents an "obsessive confrontation of the white order, always negated by a paralysing sense of déjà vu. Each defiant literary utterance, each assertion of impending freedom brings simultaneously their bondage and the frantic denial thereof [...]" (244). Collins' novel re-examines not just the island's past and its history of violence, but the process of reinscription; it explores the role and the limits of language, the "defiant literary utterance", in re-writing and reordering the past and in representing the enactment of anti-colonial resistance. Her novel asks whether literary language can ever adequately express either the history of the colonised or a liberated future. Zimra reflects on this dilemma, arguing that the need to return to the history of subjugation and resistance is a compulsion that, in the process, creates an immobilising myth of the past and reproduces narratives of failure and betrayal. Reinscription or counter-voicing of colonial "hiss/story", however, necessitates a confrontation and a reconfiguring of its representation by the conquered: as Peter Burke argues, that is the fate of the "losers":

It is often said that history is written by the victors. It might also be said that history is forgotten by the victors. They can afford to forget, while the losers

are unable to accept what happened and are condemned to brood over it, relive it and reflect how different it might have been. (106)

In the poem cited above as an epigraph, however, Collins suggests that the need to reinscribe or even reinvent the past is not just a condition of loss, it performs the necessary task of restoring dignity to the conquered: her use of the figure of the lion to represent the colonised subject, suggests an unvanquished or even heroic spirit, despite the defeats and oppression of colonialism.

I define both Salt and The Colour of Forgetting as examples of Caribbean “historical metafiction” or post-modern re-workings of colonial historiography. More than offering a revision of the past, these novels interrogate historical authority and the process by which history, as progress, is recorded. Even as they expose history as narrative, these texts, and Collins’ novel in particular, problematise the premise of all teleological narratives of history and resistance. Both novels focus on acts of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and in their re-examination and re-voicing of past resistance, merge mythical accounts with more conventional historical narratives. Set on the fictional islands of Paz and Eden, clearly Grenada and Carriacou, Collins’ novel presents an oral history of the islands, told through the genealogy of a particular family, significantly named Malheureuse; as with Angel, Collins’ novel is told almost entirely in the voices of the women characters and focuses on the ways in which their experiences of the mundane, domestic and everyday are defined by larger, historical and political events. The stories of the family’s past are told to Thunder, who grows up in the narrative’s present and who lives in fear of the sound of thunder. His mother, Willive, believes that what he really fears might be “the spirits” of the family’s violent past. The older women in the family, his great-great aunt Mamag, Cassandra, his grandmother and Carib, the shaman figure who haunts the island obsessively

reminding its inhabitants about its unatoned-for past, weave together the story of the Malheureuse family as a way of bringing peace of mind to Thunder, and in an attempt to end the cycle of violence and counter-violence that has haunted the island. Salt's multi-vocal narrative also focuses on the history of a particular family and, like The Colour of Forgetting, uses the issue of land and land ownership to tell both the genealogy of the Durity family and a history of colonialism, enslavement and the "unfreedom" of neo-colonial independence. At the centre of the narrative is the figure of Alford George, who grows from a shy, silent and awkward boy to become a teacher, then a government minister in post-independent Trinidad. As Keith Booker and other critics have pointed out, Alford George's 'successful' colonial education results in his cultural alienation, represented in the novel as a series of crises (Booker and Dubravka 180-1). It is not until he is reconciled to the collective past of the island's oppressed and their struggle for dignity, as well as to his uncle's struggle for the commemoration and reparation of the past, that he achieves real fulfilment and personal freedom. At this point he is able to join Bango in his struggle for liberation in post-independence Trinidad.

With reference to the work of Linda Hutcheon and Stephen Slemon, I will demonstrate that both novels use and resist post-modern fictional strategies. Henry Louis Gates' theory of "signifyin(g)" is used to examine the function of orality in Collins' novel and its exploitation of oral repetition and ambiguity. Time is represented in both texts as both cyclical and linear and these narratives examine the possibility of successful resistance within the context of a conflicting experience of time. Salt, as Jennifer Rahim writes, is a work of "massive proportions" in which "Lovelace takes up the burden of confronting and exorcising the demons of racism, injustice and betrayal that have haunted the complex quest for identity, freedom and

unity in Trinidad's multi-ethnic society" (152). I propose to examine the way in which both texts reveal the workings of gender power in their representation of the themes and concerns outlined by Rahim.

Textual Strategies of Resistance in the Post-Modern Caribbean Text: The Colour of Forgetting and Salt

In the Epilogue to her book The Politics of Postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon refers to post-modernism in the past tense and argues that "The postmodern may well be a twentieth-century phenomenon, that is, a thing of the past", and she continues, "Let's just say: it's over.[...]" (165, 166.) As a cultural aesthetic that defines a key moment in the cultural history of the West, however, it is inescapable. In both her major studies of post-modernism, Hutcheon focuses on the counter-hegemonic character of post-modern culture which, she argues, interrogates and opposes the totalising processes that shape cultural production and determine meaning. She defines "totalising" as:

[...]the *process* by which writers of history, fiction, or even theory render their materials coherent, continuous, unified – but always with an eye to the control and mastery of those materials, even at the risk of doing violence to them. It is this link to power, as well as process, that the adjective 'totalizing' is meant to suggest [...]. (59)

Thus defined, post-modernist fiction challenges dominant forms of representation to reveal the ideological structures that inform them. The genre that characterises the political intent that Hutcheon defines as characteristic of post-modern fiction is "historical metafiction", literature which juxtaposes official historiography with

“alternate representation that foregrounds the postmodern epistemological questioning of the nature of historical knowledge” (68). Historical metafiction interrogates the totalising narratives of conventional historiography, undermining its claim to be factual and revealing that, like fiction, history is defined by discourse and narrative. It foregrounds the “unstable, contextual, relational and provisional” nature of historical meaning, potentially creating spaces for narratives and voices excluded, silenced or marginalised by official histories that present narrative as fact.¹

While a system of representation which deconstructs dominant and excluding forms of discourse has obvious attractions for post-colonial writers, its emphasis on meaning as *only* provisional and contingent is problematic. In her earlier work A Poetics of Postmodernism Hutcheon argues that: “[...]what postmodernism does is to contest the very possibility of our ever being able to know the ‘ultimate objects’ of the past. [...] the only ‘genuine historicity’ becomes that which would openly acknowledge its own discursive, contingent identity” (24). Although the fiction of Collins and Lovelace self-consciously interrogates the “reality” of the past constructed by colonial historiography, their work is not only concerned to contest the claim to truth of colonial discourse: it also seeks to oppose and displace its power and dominance. As Caribbean historians have argued, post-colonial oppositional fiction can be used to point to the unrecorded experiences of the past, those of women and other marginalised figures. They point to the importance of some fictional history as a means of illuminating the gaps and silences in colonial historiography. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, for example, argues that Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved can be used as a “source for another history, namely the history of the elusiveness of women’s experiences of slavery” (261).² Bridget Brereton, while acknowledging the class origins of women’s literary production during slavery and colonialism nevertheless

argues that “[...] since ‘the private sphere’ has been much more central to the lives of women than of men in human societies [...] personal documents like diaries, memoirs and letters can illuminate this sphere” and can serve as evidence of the importance to women of family and personal relationships (4). They can be used to contest “[...] the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another [...], an interested post-colonial critical practice would want to allow for the positive production of oppositional truth-claims in these texts” (5).

Post-colonial theorists such as Stephen Slemon have argued that the recovery of history is, for the post-colonial writer, part of the ongoing process of resistance to a textual dominance that both masks and is an integral component of the material dominance of colonialism.³ In an article which examines the relationship between the post-modern and the post-colonial, Hutcheon points to the limitations of post-modernism as a strategy of anti-colonial resistance, suggesting that post-modernism’s insistence on irony and indirection tends to negate or effectively obscure its political intention. For post-colonial representation to be anti-colonial it has to “make a judgement about the effects of colonization” (“The Post Always Rings Twice” 223). That, for Hutcheon, is the difference between representation which is “postmodernly deconstructive” but not “postcolonially oppositional” (222). Post-colonial literature and criticism does not reside outside the reach of mainstream cultural institutions, however, and it is useful and important to examine overlapping points of representation between the post-modern and the post-colonial, not least because the dominance of the former has created an inescapably global critical and cultural framework.⁴

A critic whose work very vividly illustrates the doubleness of the post-colonial and the culturally marginalised post-modernist is Henry Louis Gates, whose theory of

“Signifyin(g)”, as I argue in the introduction, effects a “blackening” both of Bakhtin’s dialogics and his reading of literary history and post-structuralist critical theory.

Gates is concerned precisely with both parodic inversion and oppositional reiteration but he includes in his theoretical work, a focus on the ways in which work *within* an oppositional tradition, African-American literature, repeats and revises its own dominant themes and modes of representation. Gates’ work provides a theoretical structure within which a discussion of Collins’ dialogue with herself can be elaborated; it also allows for a focus on the changes in formal representation in Collins’ and Lovelace’s latest work and for an examination of the extent to which, by utilising, modifying and resisting post-modernist textual strategies, their fiction interrogates the preoccupations of their own earlier work. His own extensive investigations of the transformation of language in the process of “Signifyin(g)” provides a useful mechanism for interpreting Collins’ own exploitation, in her latest novel, of the ambivalence and indirection of oral expression.

Slemon’s term “disidentificatory reiteration” (“Modernism’s Last Post” 4), like Bhabha’s concept of “mimcry”, situates the post-colonial text in opposition to colonial representation rather than within its own traditions of production and describes only antagonistic textual relations. The term “Signifyin(g)”, however, is used by Gates to emphasise both an oppositional and an empathetic (identificatory) reiteration performed by African-American texts operating within and outside of different literary traditions. “Signifyin(g)” provides a means of articulating the “double-voiced” character of Collins’ latest novel and allows for an examination of the ways in which her latest novel “signifies (upon)” themes and forms of representation both in her own, earlier work and another male-authored text within the same cultural and literary tradition. The aim of this approach is, in Mae Gwendolyn

Henderson's words, to demonstrate the ways in which her novel constructs a "dialogic engagement with the various and multiple discourses" with the "other", the same and the "other" within the same. ("There is No More Beautiful Way" 157)

Textual Strategies of Resistance in The Colour of Forgetting and Salt

As I have argued in earlier chapters, Collins' Creole dialogue, used as a dominant mode of narration, represents an act of political resistance, as does her use of a radically decentred subject protagonist and multiple, conflicting narrative voices. In the novel Angel, these often contradictory Creole voices are contained, though not controlled by a third person narrative voice which frames the dialogue using Standard English. Collins' use of a revised Caribbean *bildungsroman* form situates her narrative in traditions of realism; the linear shape of the fictional journey, which begins during the period of colonialism and ends in the present, a generation after independence, mirrors conventional historiographic sequencing that represents political and social change in terms of cause and effect. At the same time, however, and within the linear structure of the novel, historical concepts of progress are challenged in some of the voices of the women and in the repeated proverbs and idiomatic sayings which form the chorus of the narrative. The repetition of these proverbs itself forms a kind of subtext suggesting that conditions for ordinary people do not change: "When water more than flour"; "Sometimes we have to drink vinegar and pretend we think is honey"; and "In cow-belly crossways" are used as sub-headings for sections that describe their repeated experiences of struggle and suffering. On the whole, however, as the final sub-heading, "We never get more dan we can handle!" suggests, both the narrative and its subtext of idiomatic sayings

affirm and celebrate the people's resistance and survival and point to the possibility of progress.

The language of The Colour of Forgetting effects a more radical resistance to the authority of Standard English in its use of a Creole "speakerly" voice as the dominant mode of narration. In addition its use of Carib as a dominant voice in the narrative, and its repetition of her ambiguous aphorisms, further adds to the oppositional quality of a text which continually problematises the relationship between language and meaning. The novel opens with words which are repeated over and over again in the narrative: "Blood in the north, blood to come in the south and the blue crying red in between", is spoken by Carib, one of four generations of women all given the same name and all speaking as if they have been given a prophecy. The circular, repetitive character of her discourse is used to oppose the linearity of conventional historiography; Carib's memory serves as a repository of untold stories, marginalised or hidden in colonial histories. She passes on these stories to those in Paz who are willing to listen, thus bringing to voice and history the unremembered and unaccounted for.

She is positioned "in the middle of the cemetery", mourning those who have died, "Forgotten and drowned". These are not just, as the third person narrator suggests, the original Caribs but also the slaves who jumped from the slave ships and whose blood she sees in the "crying red" of the sea.⁵ Her words oppose the romantic quality of "Leaper's Hill", the name given to the cliff from which they jumped to their death, and she reminds tourists and others who "trekked often to this spot on the hill when they visited the island of Paz", that beneath the "splendour" of the overgrowth and the "green so lustrous it was impossible to see exactly where the drop began" (4), lies a history of bloodshed that only Carib remembers. These ambiguous and repetitive

words of blood, loss and mourning signal the narrative's own resistance to the heuristic impulse of conventional narratives that progress towards discovery or closure.

The Standard English voice which narrates the opening chapter is that of an interested but distant observer, one who tries to interpret events for an audience or reader outside the community. Rational explanations are used to interpret the mystery of Carib's words and to point to her importance in the narrative as a figure who "kick-starts" the memories of the islanders. While the young people ridicule Carib, this narrator supports the view of the "really old", who believe that Carib has the gift of prophecy: the movement of voices in the first chapter reflects this merged point of view, Carib's and the narrator's; the dominant Standard English voice is modified by including phrases such as, "They knew, you see, that was just a big voose he making [...]" (7) and by using the oral storyteller's voice without enclosing speech marks. In the final paragraph the more distant, formal narrator of the opening scenes fades, almost imperceptibly, into the oral storyteller who recounts the history of the Malheureuse family to Thunder, the boy whose life is at the centre of the novel. Here the narrative juxtaposes subtly creolised and Standard English registers: "The story that Mamag heard that night was a lot of what she knew already, because was the Malheureuse story. She and Willive had already talked a lot about it. [...] Wasn't his alone, but the spirits letting him hear it [...]" (14).

The stories that follow are the everyday "experiences" of historical processes and of public acts of political intervention, given "new and emphatic value" (The Politics of Postmodernism 156). Individual characters narrate their own stories, with the effect that as the narrator says: "One story not waiting while another one crossing it" (24). The third person Standard English voice returns towards the end of the novel to

give a “factual” account of the aftermath of the American invasion: “Standing next to the war memorial, it contained a plaque which proclaimed the gratitude of the residents of Paz to a Great Country which had intervened to grant monetary support for a land reform programme which would bring Paz into the twenty-first century (173).” However, the authority of this point of view is subverted by Carib’s tears and by the chaotic and fragmentary structure of her Creole lament, which follows this account.

Although Carib and Mamag are the implied narrators of the story of the Malheureuse legacy, the narrative voice is, as Cooper points out, “omniscient” (“Sense Make Befoh Book”186), seamlessly combining different points of view. Lovelace, in contrast, uses an unnamed character as first person narrator to open and close the novel, while only intermittently retaining the integrity of the first person narrative voice. The shifts in the narrative voice are dramatic and unsettling. The narrator concedes authority to other characters, who are given their own voices to tell their own stories. In her discussion of Lovelace’s use of language in the novel, Velma Pollard cites Funso Aiyejina’s paper, read at the launch of the novel in Port of Spain:

The narrative structure of Salt would seem to suggest that Lovelace is of the view that both the consciousness of the subjects of a story and the consciousness of its teller are actively involved in the story-telling process. As a means of suggesting this complex relationship between the story, storyteller, and contending perceptions of history in a multi-cultural society,

Lovelace adopts the use of multiple narrative voices. (100)

Commenting on Aiyejina’s work, Pollard argues that Lovelace represents the telling of his story as a “communal act, community activity in the mode of the African storytelling event”. In this way, participants in the storytelling event gain a deeper

understanding of the others' experience. There is, she argues, an additional political intention in Lovelace's development of a "Creole Aesthetic", which is that he attempts to "capture the complexity of the society whose social, cultural and political problems he tries to resolve" (100). Jennifer Rahim also points to the political and cultural significance of Lovelace's narrative style; using Aiyejina's paper as a starting point, she describes Bango's story of his ancestor Jo-Jo as "spirit-possession" (154).

Whereas Collins carefully constructs a speaking voice which effects the gaps, silences and recursiveness of an oral narrator, Lovelace's voice is more fluid and experimental, moving in and out of oral and scribal modes of articulation. The Colour of Forgetting uses the gaps in the characters' memory and their re-voicing of the past as a way of mirroring the silences in conventional historical accounts of the colonial past. There is much that even the counter-voicing of colonial "hiss/story" cannot replace; factual details remain unremembered and more importantly, as the narrative's return to the events of October 1983 suggest, the answer to the question "why" remains elusive. Both novels use what Caribbean linguists define as "code switching" and what Pollard, making specific reference to Salt, calls "code-mixing", where the narrative moves imperceptibly from Standard English to Creole. In the case of Lovelace's novel, Pollard argues that the odd word, phrase, or a change of rhythm in "chunks" of predominantly Standard English are used to reflect the language behaviour of educated Trinidadians who "move between English and Trinidad Creole in a way that is natural" (95,94). Of more importance, she argues, is Lovelace's use of the "shift and slide" from third to first person voice to create what she defines as a "double perspective [...] effecting a special closeness between reader and fictive character, then moving out again, returning character to his/her arms length position [...]"(98). The following extract from Miss Myrtle's story, where the third person

subject of a “chunk” of free indirect discourse abruptly shifts to the first person, is a particularly affecting example of the way in which Lovelace’s innovative narrative technique works to heighten moments of emotional intensity:

[...] and she was struck by the sudden softness of the day and by her awareness of millions of years of time and the greenness in the green leaves of the lilies and by the sweet smell of the earth, and the stubborn strength and frailty of grass, and she felt herself tumbling into a new space and danger and excitement and peace, with the need to hold herself from spinning and the wish to step backwards to look at him again, to see if I could spy out in him something that I mighta missed earlier, some flaw that would diminish him in my eyes, make him less invincible and vulnerable and handsome and dazzling than he appeared. (137)

In Collins’ novel the balance of “code-mixing” is reversed: her narrative sustains the effect of an oral voice through the use of Creole, albeit modified, as a dominant register. Words and phrases from Standard English are mixed into this dominant register with the effect that readers are ‘insiders’ and part of the storytelling community. Collins’ “code-mixing” and use of narrative voice effects less surprise than Lovelace’s and creates what Gates, referring to Zora Neale Hurston’s work, describes as a “speakerly text”, one which gives an “illusion of oral narration” (The Singifying Monkey 181). Points of view, expressed indirectly and through direct speech, are integrated seamlessly into the narrative commentary:

A man choke on the rum. Another one slap him on the back and ask, ‘You all right dey?’ People move, feeling well self-conscious. They turn away from the confusion and turn towards the counter to ask for a ‘quarter’ quiet like, to get another ‘eighth’. Some started to drink but put the glass back down in case it

might look as if they in confusion and taking part in the toast. Family business. Is best not to put you mouth. But that kind of thing Son-Son cannot forgive. Magda has no respect for anybody. She should never have been allowed to sell that piece of land and to get so big-up with she self. (51)

In a reversal of the movement of language registers in Hurston's text, Standard English as the language of narrative commentary becomes more dominant towards the end of Collins' novel as it moves into the present and as the power of storytelling recedes, and its role historical and cultural transmission diminishes. As the novel closes there is an increasingly clear distinction between a Standard English narrative voice and Creole dialogue: "Voices clambered over each other for attention. So that the same voice seemed to be asking 'why' and saying 'is because' at the same time. The big circle broke up into smaller circles. [...] Voices shouted back at him. 'Leave me let me make my nan-pu-put in my little piece of land. Is that I accustom to'" (167-8).

In addition, the narrative makes frequent use of untranslated words of French patois and, unlike *Angel*, no glossary is provided. This works both to reinforce the effect of hearing the story from the inside and to distance the reader/audience and inhibit full comprehension. The meaning of phrases such as "big-up" or "to put you mouth" are perhaps obvious but much less obvious is the meaning of the italicised French Creole words such as: "*ou tini bone-u wa!*"(65); "*Mu ka kwie ou. Ou ba ka vini?*" (66) or "*Mwen mette-u la Wete la*" (74). Carib's words and the dialogue between elements and figures from the natural world further distance the reader through their endless signification. Merle Collins' poem, "Crick-Crack" is a self-reflexive piece, focusing on on the slipperiness of the formulaic epithets used in storytelling; it is evidence of her concern with the possibilities and limits of language

as a means of representation. The words “crick-crack” are a sign that a kind of magic will be performed by words which will tell “tall” tales:

come midnight a tall tall cake

walking through the streets

all in white icing

monkey break he back on a rotten pomerack

The rotten pomerack lying on the ground signifies the fictional quality of the story told to impress gullible listeners. But it is not only the listeners who are tricked; the over-confident storytelling monkey is tripped by his own storytelling prowess. As the poem suggests, however, whereas both teller and audience are knowing participants in this ritual performance of the “slippery lie”, history offers no such warning of its slipperiness and falsehoods. The poem ends by arguing that until the history of oppression is told by the oppressed, “Blacks” and colonised peoples, its slippery lies will be propagated as facts. Collins’ novel does not simply tell history from the point of view of those resisting domination, but focuses on the problematic nature of a retelling which contests colonial authority and asks, how can the stories of the subjugated be authorised?

Gender as a Category of Analysis: Narrative Voice and the Representation of Resistance, Time and Progress in Lovelace’s Salt

The “slippery” ambiguity of the language of Collins’ novel and its representation of history as cyclical and repetitive challenges the narrative’s focus on the need for and the possibility of successful resistance to colonialism and imperialism. The

narrative suggests that hope for a liberated future lies in a commitment to the past, which provides lessons for the present and the future. The failure to learn from the past results in the perpetuation of violence, failed resistance and the loss of freedom. However, hope, in the novel, is less palpable than failure. Whereas in Collins' novel the characters experience events as recurring, in Lovelace's novel there is a sense of progress, however qualified. In this section, I will argue that the difference in the narratives' representation of time, resistance and progress can be attributed to the very different character of the novels' dominant narrative voices. This is not, as I demonstrate, simply a difference of gender identity but by the way that gender roles are characterised in these two novels: the women in both novels are constrained and confined by their domestic roles, but Lovelace's women speak not only about their confinement but about their men; these men, the male protagonists in Lovelace's novel, either literally or through the strength of their imagination and their politically transforming vision break out of the confines of their poverty to become participating agents in the struggle for political nationalism.

Whereas both novels take a long view of history, in Collins' novel the limitations of that view can be attributed both to the gender and the character of the narrative voice. In The Colour of Forgetting, the narrative is voiced by women, or a woman-defined male character such as Ned, who speak of their powerlessness. Although male and female characters speak through Lovelace's unnamed first person narrator in what Rahim describes as an act of possession, the focus and preoccupations of both these differently gendered points of view are male figures. In contrast to Collins' text, the voices that tell history in Lovelace's novel are given authority and agency in its narratives of individual and national becoming. The view of history in Salt is not only epic in scope but in its focus on the heroic qualities of its dominant male subjects and

in the narrative's more general concern with masculine agency and its relation to emerging discourses of nationalism. His novel announces its epic intentions with the history, recounted by Bango, of Guinea John and his brother Gregoire who, it was claimed, "were ringleaders of an insurrection that had a plan [...] to use the cover of Christmas day to massacre the white and free coloured people of the island" (3). As leaders of "African secret societies" they were men who were involved in cultural and political resistance; despite their death, their heroism is preserved and celebrated in Bango's countervoicing of colonial history. Unlike Ned the slave in The Colour of Forgetting, whose resistance, represented in the muted tones of his descendent, is punished by death and John Bull, beaten to death arbitrarily, Guinea John made a miraculous escape from slavery by flying back to Abeokuta from the east coast of Trinidad with two corn cobs under his armpit. In the figure of Guinea John Lovelace revises the representation of Moses Barton's failure to fly in Sylvia Wynter's earlier novel, discussed in Chapter 4; flying becomes a trope of empowerment through the reconnection with the ancestral past.⁶

Maarit Laatinen, commenting on the novel's opening writes: "But how was it for those who stayed on the island, what were their ways of flying? In country ruled by a colonial power, its presence saturating the whole society, how does one resist?" (130). As in Collins' text, from the beginning, the narrative speaks of the need to know about the past in order to move forward:

[...] everybody putting in their mouth and saying 'You see! You see! That is why Blackpeople children doomed to suffer: their own parents refuse to pass on the knowledge that they know to them.(3)

Bango, the narrator's uncle, sets out to redress this absence by ritualising the story not just of his own family's past, but the past of the island. Whereas in Collins' novel the

past is represented as a catalogue of destruction which serves as a warning for the present, in Salt, the past is a source of strength and empowerment. In an ironic reversal of the letters and diaries kept by slave owners and governors such as Thistlewood and Lady Nugent, his account of the trials of the slave owners, told in a voice which mimics the owners' point of view, celebrates the resistance of the slaves. In Bango's revoicing he affirms that the slaves resisted not only indirectly: "They don't hear you. They forget. You tell a man to do something and he tell you he forget", but directly and violently: "People had to revolt. People had to poison people. Port-of-Spain had to burn down" (7).

Although the narrative loops back time and again to new beginnings as each character's story is told, its overall structure is, unlike Collins' novel, progressive. Despite its focus on the failure of cultural and political independence, it signals not only the need but the possibility of national liberation beyond the conclusion of the narrative. The novel's representation of the march, which closes the novel and which is organised to oppose the fraudulent and divisive politics of the National Party, mirrors the pattern of recursive and progressive time effected in the narrative. The route of the march is used to suggest progression, hope and the achievement of political agency, as well as, paradoxically, the cyclical and repetitive nature of the island's history of conquest and resistance. On the characters' linear journey, they pass the land to which Alford George's father had given his own life, the familiar roads of his childhood and the areas passed every year by Bango's independence day marchers. These landmarks in the narrative mark a return to earlier stories and serve as a reminder that liberation has not yet been achieved. However repetitive the march itself has been, covering the same route year after year, its enactment at this point in the novel is represented as a sign of optimism. The older characters march with a

sense of dignity that is, for the younger narrator, a source of inspiration, “[...] making me feel that this march of his was for all our own lives and had to be carried on, even if it took us to the very end of time” (260).

The narrative begins as it ends, with Bango, and foregrounds his pride and his exultant masculinity; he is the proud descendant of Guinea John, and Gregoire. His bearing, like the landscape refuses “unfreedom”:

‘Watch the landscape of this island,’ he began with the self-assured conviction that my mother couldn’t stand in him. ‘And you know that they coulda never hold people here surrendered to unfreedom.’ The sky, the sea, every green leaf and tangle of vines sing freedom. (5)

As in earlier novels such as The Dragon Can’t Dance and The Wine of Astonishment, the achievement of masculine authority and self-assertion is the pre-condition of the attainment of national liberation; in those novels political discourses of national self-realisation are subsumed to the narrative’s explicit focus on the precarious nature of its protagonists’ masculinity. In Salt the narrative is not preoccupied with the problematic process of masculine self-assertion but rather with a celebration of its achievement. And as with Lovelace’s earlier work, Salt represents the struggle for national identity as one waged by male characters and defined as male.

Writing about The Wine of Astonishment Sandhya Shetty argues that the female narrator, Eva is a “hostage to the pressure of a constituency that claims priority for its own male-centred programme of narrative and political recovery” (77). The novel further disempowers the narrative voice by its use of female categories to suggest “low self-esteem, impotence, and lack” (74). As a result, there is a dissonance between the effort to secure the narrative authority of a creolised female voice and the novel’s dominant themes. In contrast, Lovelace’s use of a male narrator in his latest

novel adds muscular authority to its narrative of national liberation. Bango's nephew serves as a privileged witness and participant in the journeys of its male subjects from political and cultural marginalisation to the centre of power.

Gender relations in the novel are defined as relations of power: male characters perform acts of resistance that confirm their manhood, whereas women struggle in their shadow. May, Alford George's mother, suffers for the "male and vainglorious martyrdom" that keeps his father poor and landless. From their first meeting, his father, Dixon had struck a pose of manliness beneath which May had seen "the wound, the bleeding" and the tragic desperation. His refusal to expose his failure and vulnerability characterises all the decisions he made in their life together. He settles in a remote spot of rented land, in a house that is permanently in the shade and where the dampness, seeping into her joints, almost cripples her. He insists on maintaining his job as a labourer, proving his indispensability while at the same time refusing privilege or promotion: the pile of unused bricks on the land signifies his refusal to be "beholden" to the anyone and his belief that he will one day own the land and therefore and be a free man (20). Whereas Shetty suggests that in The Wine of Astonishment Eva's function as narrator is to further adorn the heroic masculinity of its disempowered male characters, unlike his earlier work, in Salt Lovelace uses the female voice to comment critically on the male characters' performance of masculinity:

And we? But she didn't say it. She didn't have the heart to tell him how much of a fool he was. For she knew by then that his way to feel himself the equal of if not the superior to anybody was to give more and more of himself, this giving making him more martyred and heroic. (19)

Dixon's story is presented almost entirely from May's point of view but despite her sustained critique of his misguided attempts to be a man, the "equal" of any other, in this example, the narrative does not offer a feminine alternative to this display of masculine resistance. She is crushed by the weight of the men's physical presence and imprisoned in the narrow confines of her domestic roles, as the words "patched" and "threaded" suggests: "Yes, as surrender, not defeat, as the benediction she would employ in her life, patched with defeats and threaded through with illness [...]" (24). Their sons flourish as fighters and tricksters, "affecting the satisfied swagger of conquerors with no vision of a larger world" while May fades into sickness and distress.

This pattern of gender roles, relationships and their narration, is repeated throughout the novel, where the women are initially seduced by the awesome physicality of the men, then suffer and struggle in the margins. The narrative does explore, in powerful and revealing ways, the interiority of its female characters but the focus of their consciousness is their men, as sons, lovers or husbands. It is through the examination of male consciousness, though always from the point of view of the female characters, that the political and ideological themes of the novel are represented. Themes of liberation and resistance, therefore, however flawed, emerge from narratives of male self-consciousness; a feminine consciousness merely enables, supports and endorses however critically, national liberation as a male project.

An illustration of the narrative's complexly gendered representation of resistance can be seen in the relationships between Bango and Myrtle and Alford George and Florence. Whereas in The Colour of Forgetting, Collins characteristically avoids reference to sexual intimacy between men and women, in Lovelace's novel political and historical themes emerge from its narratives of sexual attraction and conflict.

Collins' female characters are either on their own, or with men who, like Ti Moun are broken, or like Ned silent. Generations of women named Carib give birth, without men, to versions of themselves: Mamag is the sole provider for five children with different fathers. As a result, she is independent and self-reliant. She says of her own involvement with the family land: "Why you think I long ago sell the piece I inherit and buy another piece? [...] 'I wanted to make sure', she say, 'that my bastard and them have land to inherit'" (44). Apart from her care for her son, the only other relationship she has with a male, her brother, is an antagonistic one. In Lovelace's novel, however, the women's relationship with their men is intense and it is the women who provide the narrative with its critical insight into the personal motivations and conflicts behind the public gestures of resistance.

Bango, like Aldrick in The Dragon Can't Dance, is committed to an ideology of non-possession which the text both celebrates and critiques. In an intense and moving account of her life with Bango Myrtle exposes as an obsession and an ideal his absolute commitment to national and cultural liberation, but she also reveals her complete absorption in his struggle and her own lack of self-definition. The juxtaposition of Bango and Myrtle's voices reveals Lovelace's differently gendered account of freedom, resistance and national identity. As with May, Myrtle's is the female gaze used to construct Bango, one which demonstrates their love but which also reveals the narrow self-regard that is a component of his political preoccupations and ambitions. Painstakingly, she recounts his attempts to save money for the land, silently endorsing the criticisms her sister ventriloquises for her: "'This is how this man have you? Working hard and making children? He giving himself to the village; you giving yourself to him: who giving theirsself to you? Who giving theirsself to Myrtle?'" (146).

Bango's alternative vision of national unity based on a spirit of community and collectivity is an act of faith; he ignores the changing times, the emergence of formal political parties and of material progress on an individual level. Against this political vision, which has its roots in a sweeping historical perspective, Myrtle, like Aldrick's mother (in *The Dragon Can't Dance*) who performed the "miracle" of their survival out of nothing⁷, works within the constraints of her domestic environment, their landlessness, and poverty. She is motivated not just by her love for and commitment to Bango but by a duty of care to her children. Like the women in Collins' novel, this ethic of care prompts her to sell in the market and to "Lorenzo Rumshop & Grocery to make the fortnightly miracle of stretching the little money she had into a supply of food for her family" (134).

Like the houses in Naipaul's novel, the house is given symbolic significance in Lovelace's text. Dixon is not able, through his own efforts, to convert his bricks into a house and Bango's unfinished house has the temporary and unstable quality that characterises their lives. Houses also, As Supriya Nair notes, signify "more tangible issues of "dispossession" and "rootlessness". While Bango refuses to prioritise individual ownership of land above the reparation of the whole community, Myrtle "longs for something concrete that was their own to show" (147), even as she supports the posture of resistance that he has assumed: "She was his support. And she found herself having to keep on believing in this thing that she herself didn't quite know how to explain [...]" ("Diasporic Roots"147).

The narrative values Myrtle's more limited vision, which exposes the absence of care in Bango's ambition for political freedom and reparation for the past; her "story" is used to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the male and female vision. Through Myrtle's patient care, and her intercession to Alford George, now a Minister of

Government, they are offered the land as a gift, but because of his refusal to concede, his determined “undefeat”, they are offered the land on Bango’s terms. Their ownership of the land is a testament to their interdependence and the value of differently gendered forms of resistance:

And I myself looking at him, seeing the Bango who stand up balanced on his bicycle in front my mother house years ago. And now he seeing me seeing him, seeing that comfort and a strange and lovely triumphant peace because in one flash she could see that Bango had recognised her. He had made me out. All at once he realize that in the journey he thought he had made alone, I had been with him the whole way. (165)

If the feminine voice is used in the narrative to reveal the characters’ interiority, to probe at the unexamined motivations of the male characters and to demonstrate the importance of the women’s commitment to the care of others and to the survival of the family, then the explicitly male voice articulates the struggle of the nation, celebrates the resistance of its people and makes an uncompromising bid for freedom. This difference can be seen in Lovelace’s juxtaposition of “Myrtle’s Story” and Bango’s story as told to Alford George. His account of the past is used to problematise the counter-voicing of colonial history that Myrtle hears at the National Party meeting. Although his version of the past is, like those in Collins’ narrative, based on memory, there is none of the hesitations, silences and disjuncture that characterises those accounts of the past. Bango’s story of his past is literally performed as an act of possession. In contrast to Myrtle’s story, which is firmly rooted in her present, his voice is used to dramatise the stories of past resistance, sweeping back into history and merging myth with ‘fact’.

Although, as Supriya Nair observes, Bango's focus on the past in his petition to Alford George reflects the cyclical and repetitive nature of historical time ("Diasporic Roots" 277-8), the repeated acts of resistance on which he focuses function as a sign of the uncompromised masculinity of his forefathers. The violence and brutality of their enslavement is resisted by their escape to fight the wars of liberation in South America, by marronage, by "malingering and pretending injury and illness so as not to work" and by confrontational violence. Bango's visit to Alford George is an attempt to resolve the injustices of the past and to look towards a less compromised future. His voice, as he petitions Alford George, is authoritative and challenging. When Alford looks questioningly at him he retorts: "They write their history down and you don't ask them nothing. You swallow it down even when it don't make sense" (187). His is not the tentative account of history constructed from memory, nor is it, like the women's stories, an intimate act of oral storytelling, it is an act of political oratory. Bango's story is not just a sequence of events but an ideologically charged deconstruction of the nature of oppression. As the grammar of the following quotation demonstrates, with its inclusive "our stupidity" and the transference of the wronged to "you", what is at stake for Bango is not simply reparation for past wrongs enacted on individuals and communities or even races but the humanity of the oppressed and their oppressors:

And unless we want to doom ourselves to remain forever locked into the terrors of the errors of our stupidity, we try to repair the wrong by making reparation: so many cows, so much land, so you could face again yourself and restore for yourself and the one you injure the sense of what it is to be human. (168-9)

At this event Myrtle is a silent witness, moved to tears by the telling and retelling of her past and as always at the margins of her husband's public acts of oratory; despite the appearance, in his story, of "one of the women who had hit the overseer with a rock in his head" the pattern of gender relations in Bango's account of the past reflects those in the narratives of the present. His grandfather Jo-Jo wrests masculine power from his powerlessness, "moving from woman to woman without anything to offer except the touch of his unconquerable spirit [...]" (171-2). They in turn, like Evelina, with whom he eventually settles, are moved to nurture and support him despite their desire for stability and a home.

Although in the novel the eye is a multivalent symbol, it is usually used in association with female characters and functions primarily to represent the gaze through which reality is constructed. Eyes are used to signify the narrative's many points of view and multiple perspectives, but, as the discussion of Myrtle illustrates, eyes are also a sign of the interconnectedness of individual histories and futures. The following analysis, which focuses on Florence and Vera, is used to suggest that, in these examples from the narrative, images of eyes and seeing represent a female point of view, which can be contrasted explicitly or implicitly, with male "vision". In her discussion of the novels of Wilson Harris and George Lamming, Joyce Jonas argues that the men in these novels "[...] have assumed the role of 'I' while the women are observers of action 'eyes' reflecting acts and images of husbands, lovers [...]". She continues:

The very visual form of the written characters "I" – "eye" links the "I" with the masculine and the "eye" with the feminine. The solitary "I" – erect, phallic, and aggressive – invites a verb, names action and intention. The "eye"

– womblike, embracing – is more feminine. It implies the seer, the see-er, and the seen; reflection and imagination. (90)

Jonas suggests that in these novels, the male and female positions remain polarised and “hierarchised” and destructive. As the analysis of Myrtle’s story suggests, however, in Lovelace’s novel the female gaze or “eye” can function as a connecting bridge that extends and embraces the vision of the masculine “I” and through this connection, creates a more effective model of resistance.

The following examples elaborate on Lovelace’s use of the female “eye” to dramatise the separation between the male vision and the female connecting gaze and demonstrates that in his novel a male identified vision of anti-colonial resistance is weakened by its disregard for the preoccupations and concerns of ordinary women. In the chapter “Vera’s Eyes” Vera first appears as a figure in a mural intended to celebrate the political independence of Trinidad’s multi-racial community. It is a carnivalesque representation of figures in stereotypical postures and relations and as such represents a falsification of history. The mural is described by Bango as “the green, comfortable, jolly brotherhood that our prize-winning muralist had depicted” (187), and as Jennifer Rahim argues, “the painting ironically testifies to the continuation of the imperial narrative”. She continues, “The mural’s stereotypical, hodgepodge panorama of the history and culture of the island inadvertently consolidates the old dichotomies of conquest [...]” (159). In her comment on Vera’s position in the mural, Rahim writes: “In ‘Vera’s Eyes’, the visionary impotence of the post-independence politicians is unveiled by the penetrative ‘sideways’ glance of an ordinary cleaner who bears the ‘ironic acquiescence and the stance of rebellion’” (159). Vera is no “ordinary” cleaner, however; she is Alford’s first lover who, like his mother, attempted to live through his dreams of escape, hoping perhaps that she could

escape with him. She is also the daughter Myrtle had before she met Bango and in whom she invested her early ambitions for independence, sending her to “Cosmos Business Academy to do shorthand and typing” (158). In the eponymously titled “Vera’s Eyes”, Vera is hardly present except as a figure displaced by the narrative into the margins of a mural; her stance might be one of “rebellion” but it is impotent against the unseeing politicians, including Alford George, on whom the chapter focuses. When Alford sees her, in the mural and one evening after cleaning the ministerial offices, his gaze denies her even the limited agency offered by the mural’s narrative:

When he sees her, he believes he owes her an apology.

[...] He wants to ask her why she was addressing him as Mister but he is ashamed. He wants to ask her what about the shorthand and typing? What about the dreams, the travelling? As if she had heard the questions, she shrugs.

(127)

The narrative receives these questions in silence and quickly moves to focus Alford’s vision of a newly constituted nation, one which serves to deepen his self-regard: “And he continued with unabated enthusiasm to trumpet his vision.[...] What we have to do is to see ourselves with new eyes, see a land where it is possible to create a new people and a culture of prosperity and dignity and freedom” (128). His discomfort when faced with Vera’s failed attempts to fulfil her own dream of “prosperity and dignity and freedom” is used to expose the “visionary impotence” he shares with the politicians in the mural.

Maarit Laatinen describes the physical appearance of Florence, Alford George’s lover, as a “form of resistance against imposed European beauty ideals and conventions”, and she describes her religious beliefs and practices, as a Shango

Baptist, as another form of resistance (133). In contrast to male acts of resistance, which are explicitly political and public, however, these acts of resistance are represented as primarily personal, though of course with political overtones. Whereas for Bango and his grandfather Jo-Jo, whose refusal to compromise their dream of freedom contributes to the realisation of themselves as men and affirms their manhood and warriorhood, Florence's self is realised through her dress, hair and finally through her relationship with a man. The achievement of self is a complex and fraught process, threaded through with her desire not simply for a man but for one who can accept her as she is. In addition, as with other female characters, Florence's narrative of self-actualisation is used to further elaborate on a male figure, in this case, Alford George. As in earlier examples, she is evidence of Lovelace's use of the female voice and female point of view to narrate male consciousness.

Through the description of their relationship from Florence's point of view Lovelace critiques the growth of Alford's sense of his own importance and his use of Florence, like his secretary Angela, as a support for his ambitions: "Angela Vialva was elected secretary, but was finding it hard to come up to Port of Spain for every meeting, so Florence was appointed to take minutes and to send out correspondence" (101). More humorous references suggest her marginalisation and the central role given to his political ascendancy:

For after observing that he did most of his lucid thinking in his talks after their lovemaking, she had made him a gift of a tape recorder for his birthday and a chain to tie it to his bedhead so he could capture his own thoughts in their post-coital bed. (130)

Significantly, the final chapter, "Independence Day" begins with Florence's point of view, narrating Alford's final journey of self-discovery and her own discovery of the

limits of their relationship; both are linked to the representation of the new direction taken by the nation in its journey towards true liberation and self-definition. She acts as the midwife, delivering Alford to himself, enabling him to see who he really is. Images of seeing and watching are used repeatedly in this section, suggesting that, like Vera's, Florence's is a distancing, critical eye, that constructs his fall even as she narrates Alford's rise to power: "She watched him as he changed into striped shirts to enhance his appearance on television, as he put on his Nehru jackets, his Orisha Dashikis, the better to relate to the racial diversity in the country [...]" (250). To Florence, her 'watch' is a form of protection, guarding him from a world and a self that he does not understand, but it also represents Florence's status as an outsider, excluded from the centre of public power, and without a role in formal politics. In this relationship, as elsewhere in the novel, the private and public sphere are demarcated along gender lines.

In the Shango Thanksgiving feast that Florence organises to mark his rebirth, she achieves voice and agency hitherto denied her in the narrative. In the context of the private and domestic space where she enables his emotional, sexual and spiritual fulfilment, she finally penetrates the public aura that protects him from her and forces him to see her. Seeing her coincides with Alford George's own process of self-discovery as he reconnects with his past and with "the people from whom he had stood apart from the beginning" (258). Though stripped of office and official authority he is, in the eyes of the villagers, undiminished. Like Angela and Vera, Florence, who had enabled him to move from under the "limbo" pole, slips from the narrative in the closing scenes; though other women are named in the narrative's list of marchers and Miss Myrtle, positioned at the side of Bango, is mentioned more than

once, the march itself belongs to the men: to Bango; the unnamed narrator and to Alford George.

As in Collins' novel the final scenes reflect the narrative's circular movements of recursive time, repeating earlier events in the narrative: in Salt, this repetition forms part of a spiral movement signifying the interconnection of recursive and chronological time. Mother Ethel, to whom Alford George's mother had gone when he was seven to get him to talk, returns to help him connect with a self and culture he had lost and with the people he thought he had left behind. Alford's articulated and unarticulated speech echo the words and thoughts of other male characters. The pose that he strikes, resisting "unfreedom", mirrors the stance adopted by Bango, Jo-Jo and his own father; even his insistence on the need to construct a "new world" is a repetition of Jo-Jo's words as he struggles to find his place in this new world of the Caribbean. Bango too directs the same march that he had led for years. Unlike in Collins' novel, however, the effect of this repetition is to reinforce, not interrogate, the legitimacy of this and earlier resistance struggles and to strengthen a bid for freedom based on reparation for the past.

In my focus on the gendered character of the novel's different points of view, I demonstrate that although the penetrating gaze into the interiority of its central characters is female, the object of that gaze is male. As a result, the story of resistance that these characters narrate is inflected by discourses of masculinity; furthermore, their perception of the nature of the struggle for freedom is conditioned by their proximity to male characters who are themselves central protagonists in the struggle for national liberation. The narrative's representation of time as progress and the achievement of liberation as incremental, despite being characterised by repetition, is a consequence of its focus on the achievement of masculinity as a necessary

component of anti-colonial resistance. In The Colour of Forgetting, by contrast, the narrative voices are those of ordinary and often marginalised women who occupy a central position in the novel. For that reason both the content and the language of its narratives of resistance are unheroic, and emerge from the experiences of the ordinary and the everyday.

Gender as a Category of Analysis: Narrative Voice and the Representation of Resistance, Time and Progress in Collins' The Colour of Forgetting

The storytelling voices in Collins' narrative often merge with Carib, a figure who exists on the literal and figurative margins of the island. While her incantations and the histories she has held in memory are reclaimed and authorised in the narrative, her experience of the present in which the characters live is defined by her position in the community. She has no experience of the politics of government. The women, such as Mamag, with whom her life is intertwined are ordinary women who work on the land and whose commitment is to their immediate family and small community. Very little has changed in the lives of three generations of women: Mamag, Cassandra and Willive. They are tied to the land and to the uncertain economic value of cocoa and nutmeg. The only members of the family to leave the island are men: Son-Son, Cosmo, Ned and Thunder. Although these women characters are given more agency than the older women in Lovelace's novel, they are, like May, Alford George's mother, similarly confined to their immediate domestic and geographical environment. They are affected by political change, such as the changes in land laws, the programmes instituted by the Revolutionary government, and its eventual collapse, but they do not effect political change. Their experiences of being women

and of being poor condition the way they tell history; but at the same time they are conditioned by history's failure to account for their experiences. What their stories reveal is that, despite political, even revolutionary changes, they remain discounted and hidden from history. Their experience of historical time, therefore, is cyclical; despite superficial amelioration they return to their original condition. The figure of Carib, who, for four generations, has remained the same, in name, in language and in geographical space, is the most extreme example of this experience of marginalisation. It is the repeated failure of history to account for the lives of the marginalised and powerless that Carib and the novel, mourn and attempt to redress. The narrative voices the point of view of these marginalised women, and even where a male figure, Ned, tells his own story, his point of view is similarly circumscribed. The political involvement of his son Thunder with the "Party" is represented very briefly and referred to with only partial comprehension by his father and mother. The dramatic, political events which occur towards the end of the novel, are narrated as they are experienced by these characters: as muffled, incomprehensible confusion.

In Collins' first novel, Angel, the events in the narrative mirrored those in "real" time but, as I suggest above, through the voices of the older women characters, the novel registers a more cyclical view of time and a more fatalistic representation of history. In The Colour of Forgetting, however, although the preoccupations of the narrative can be linked to political events in "real" time, Collins submerges specific references to history and keeps the narrative embedded in the mythical timelessness that oral narratives create. The narrative examines the dialectical relationship between two seemingly contradictory experiences of time by describing the characters' attempts to negotiate between the hope promised by a linear and progressive view of time, and a more fatalistic notion of time as cyclical. It is useful at this point to note

examples of critical work which have theorised relations between time, race, culture and gender, but it is important to emphasise that the novel treats time not as an abstract, external phenomenon but as experience, defined by history and economics as well as by culture and gender. James Snead, in his essay, "Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture", argues that an accommodation of the "discrepancy between our personal growth – the very model of linear development – and the physical plane upon which life unfolds, characterized by general recursiveness and repetition" is found in black culture and representation. Repetition is foregrounded in the rhythms of "black" music, dance, and speech patterns; it deals with "the aspect of time that is reflected in natural cycles and represents circulation and flow without "accumulation and growth" (67). Ong represents a similar distinction in his study of representation based on the difference between orally based perceptions, and the perceptions of a developed culture of literacy that attempts to "tame" time by treating it "spatially on a calendar or on the face of a clock" (76).⁸ "Real time" according to Ong, is continuous and has no such divisions. Julia Kristeva, while warning against dichotomised concepts of time, acknowledges that "time which essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity*" is traditionally linked to female subjectivity. She adds, significantly: "this repetition and this eternity are found to be the fundamental, if not the sole, conception of time in numerous civilizations and experiences" (17). Although as Kristeva suggests, time cannot be linked in an essentialist way to either culture or gender, theoretical conceptions of time provide a vivid way of linking some of the dominant themes of the novel with its forms of representation. Perceptions and representations of time are, for Kristeva, linked to political agency; "cyclical or monumental" time is a radical position occupied by certain feminists who, she argues "would rejoin the

discourse of marginal groups” as a way of opposing masculinist representations of time and history (17).

The characters in Collins’ novel experience time as both recursive, repetitive *and* progressive: only Carib, Kristeva’s “hysteric” preoccupied with “reminiscences”, exists in mono-temporal space. These complex and often paradoxical “experiences” of time are represented through the issue of land-ownership, used in the novel to illustrate the character’s complex and sometimes contradictory experience of time. Land-ownership is an issue which has dominated the history of Grenada since emancipation and one which, according to the novel, remained as a source of dissatisfaction during the period of the Revolutionary Government. In his account of Grenada during the nineteenth century George Brizan writes: “The dearest wish of the freedman was to have his own independent plot: this signified to him in a very real way his transition from slavery to freedom. Ownership of land, no matter how little, became the most important criterion of freedom to the Grenadian” (129). As more individuals acquired land, more and more small villages sprang up on the margins of the big estates, and as estates were abandoned and fell into disrepair, Grenadians were able to purchase their own small plots as well as continuing to work on estates that still functioned. Although, as Brizan notes, the majority of peasants in Grenada, a century later, owned less than two and a half acres of land, while the majority of land was owned by 138 proprietors, that small acreage saved many peasants from starvation. The 1939 West India Royal Commission, he states, noted that landownership alleviated the distress that might have been caused by the “adverse effects of the slump in cocoa”. Peasants were able to “supplement their cash earnings by home-grown foodstuffs” (229).⁹ Half a century later, in 1979 or just after, Ned tells Thunder that the small plot of land that they own, “Is we salvation as we know it”

(157). Willive writes to the Government Land Commission to argue that “[...] all country people, from a long time ago, own a little piece of land to help make two ends meet. If they don’t own it, they trying to own it” (164). In the novel it is the women whose lives are centred on the cultivation of the small plots of land. Market women sell small amounts of produce; women such as Mamag and Willive work on the estates in the nutmeg pools and supplement the income they earn there with the produce from their own plots or gardens. As a result, they are represented as most closely connected with the natural world, and, like Carib, listen to the messages of the birds, the wind and the trees. Although they hope that they will progress to landownership, they are aware, from their intimate experience of nature, that their experiences of poverty and dispossession might be repeated in future generations. At the same time, they continue to hope that the changes they witness in political and social institutions will result in an experience of progress in which they will share. Some of this paradox is evident in the language and imagery that characterises their dialogue. As the following example demonstrates, Mamag teaches Thunder that past dangers always recur in the future: danger cannot be prevented, but she advises him to be vigilant and to learn to survive. Her lesson derives from her experiences of nature and from her experience of the confines of her domestic world:

‘Thing changing. A lot of thing different. But, child, there is nothing new under the sun. When the rain set up in the mountain there, we look and we say, rain coming, and we rush and pick up the one-one cocoa on the ground, we pull the mace inside fast for it not to wet and rot, we pick up the two piece of clothes from the fence. And when the rain pour down now, everything inside. That good, You prepare. But sometimes you don’t even see the rain set up. [...]. You run and you turn you hand to something, pick up everything before

it get too wet, then when the sun come out again now, two-twos you back on course'. (85)

The narrative begins when Thunder is six, and through the spirals of the orally told sections of the narrative, it plots his growth to maturity, ending with his return as a young adult from his studies in England. The novel's structure reflects the characters' experience of time: a chronologically sequenced narrative is intersected by spiral or circular motifs of time coming, passing and returning. Its repetition of formulaic phrases, voiced by the women, are characteristic of oral narratives are used to suggest that although time progresses, experiences do not change. These provide an unchanging narrative rhythm: "Time come and pass" (18); "I tell you everything is one thing" (37); "Child, yesterday is today, is tomorrow, is the day after" (86). The narrator reminds her audience: "If people listen they will hear the wind telling the story that cause so much confusion. Trouble inside is not new story. Is story that here from time. Nation shall rise against itself"(36). Like the women's experience of time, their knowledge of their immediate world is informed by their experiences of nature. The narrator says of Thunder's grandfather Ti-Moun and Ti-Moun's brother, Cosmos: "It was as if they knew from early that they weren't struggling for the same sunlight. Living like they did in the heart of the mountain, they had seen trees grow together enough to understand" (31).

This knowledge, held by the women, is grounded in a culture which is disappearing with the increase of literacy and of legal and social systems that require interpretation by those who are educated. It is a marginalised knowledge of a marginalised people. Two central incidents dramatise the struggle between the forms of knowledge and understanding based on literacy and schooling and those derived from orally transmitted wisdom and knowledge. The first is an early part of the story

told to Thunder about his great Uncle Son-Son who, on his return from work “in an island overseas” decides that the land that had been divided equally by his father among his five children can only be inherited by his father’s lawful “heirs”. His reading and interpretation of the written law is in direct opposition to the traditions of entitlement practised by the community, based on word of mouth agreements and reflecting the inclusive ties that bind families together regardless of the legality of their relationships. The will that Son-Son reads reflects its origins: wills were designed to protect the property of the white slave owners, and to prevent it from falling into the hands of their descendants of ‘mixed’ blood. The “confusion” which follows, dividing the early generations of the Malheureuse family is predicted by Carib and remembered by the women and the elders in the community:

And is then they remember. What mother tell them, what auntie remember, what cousin say, what grandmother and grandfather declare Carib did prophesy when she dying. Land confusion. Coming back and dividing. Lord! She must be see it in a dream? (25)

Carib’s “prophecy” points to the division and destruction among families that arises, in the novel, from the conflict between the spoken and written contract, between the traditions and practices of generations and the law that is designed to maintain the power of a colonial patriarchy. As a woman Cassandra, Ti-Moun’s wife, is also excluded from rights of inheritance by laws modelled on those in effect during slavery; after her father died the land went to her brother; she says: ““Was the son of heir that inherit to share, and all the girls who married he didn’t give them nothing”” (52).

The second incident that fulfils Carib’s “prophecy” about land confusion centres on the programme of land reform instituted by the Paz government of 1979 and

reflects the policies of the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada which, in 1980, began to prepare a radical process of land reform. By 1983 the government had "leased" 9,000 acres of land from the big landowning families and had planned to turn them into collectivised farms. The aim, according to some accounts,¹⁰ was to eliminate individual ownership and to turn all farms into collectives or, as the market woman, speaking of her daughter says: "She that grow up in the yard there and know what boundary confusion do in we life. Now she talking to me about co-operative or how she say the word. Co-operative[...]" (167). These scenes of land "confusion" highlight the ideological estrangement of the younger generation, committed to party ideals but increasingly out of touch with the values and aspirations of their parents' generation. When Willive asks Thunder to be a part purchaser of the small piece of land she feels her father Ti-Moun, Son-Son's "unlawful" brother, was cheated of, he refuses, citing his commitment to the Party and its aim to eradicate individual land ownership. His father, Ned attributes his refusal to an over-reliance on the written word at the expense of experience and the traditions of family. He warns him against over valuing the knowledge of his educated friends: "I warning you about friend. I tell you you have to teach them, too, because they know book, they don't know life" (156).

The novel represents the relationship between orally derived values and knowledge and the values of literacy as complex and contradictory and mirrors, in many ways, the Peoples' Revolutionary Government's attempt to raise the standard of literacy, while at the same time urging respect for oral culture and expression. In his extensive account of the role of language in Grenada during the period of the PRG, Chris Searle suggests that the relationship between the two languages, Standard English and Creole, was an unproblematic one; the literacy campaign, he argues, "promoted *two*

languages”: “While the CPE was developing knowledge and confidence in the Standard English, and teaching basic reading and writing, it was simultaneously removing the stigma from the Creole and affirming its power and beauty through the mobilisation of popular culture” (Words Unchained, 52). Hubert Devonish’s analysis points to a more problematic relationship, one which reflected competing ideologies. He is critical of the disproportionate emphasis placed on literacy by the 1979 government who were themselves, he argues, part of a “Grenadian educated elite”, a class, created “by the book” (36). Of this political period in Grenadian history, Devonish writes: “Orally transmitted values and ideas are totally devalued and marginalised. The only ideas and values which are valid are those written i.e. those sanctioned by the revolutionary elite” (30). In these circumstances, literacy is used as a mechanism for control rather than liberation.¹¹ In contrast to the reliance on dogma, and on truth only as evidenced in the written word, Ned imparts an understanding of the past through more ephemeral narratives preserved in memory. Even his narrative, however, is enmeshed in the contradictory relationship between orality and literacy that the novel seeks to expose, and, according to Devonish, the 1979 government needed to suppress.

His story begins with the “Nigger-Yard”, a place that Thunder is shocked to realise really did exist. In the context of the classroom, where Thunder first heard about such places, “Nigger-Yard” had seemed as fantastic and as alien as all knowledge derived from school. In addition, the children’s snigger, as they heard their teacher speak about it, suggests discomfort and embarrassment about a part of their past they would prefer had remained hidden. Ned inserts into the official text book version details that attest to their dignity, despite the appalling conditions in which they lived: “Bamboo, you know, bamboo and cow dung. But not smelly. When it dry and prepare, not

smelly at all. Just wattle and daub [...] All get roundwood and straw. Things was better then. And a check curtain" (115). His story, which traces his African and Indian ancestry, simultaneously echoes the beginning of the novel that traces the genealogy of the Malheureuse family, and foreshadows the end, and the brutal political murders in the market square. His slave forefather, also called Ned, was beaten in the same market square as John Bull, beaten by Malheureuse, "a white carpenter man scratching to make a living in the heat of Pax" (17). John Bull's blood remains in the square as a warning of "blood" to come and a sign of the violence of the slave past. The cause of the death of both slaves is falsified in the official records.

Thunder's father's story mirrors and extends the stories of the women characters; it restores the truth to the account of his ancestor who was, he tells Thunder, beaten to death at the hands of the slave driver: "Is a hard thing to accept that it happen, but is like we working against weself from time. Is a hard thing to accept, but is true" (140). His words echo the narrator's voice describing the bloodshed some years later, again reflecting the narrative's pre-occupation with recursive time. Ned's oral narrative serves to counter-voice official records of the slave's lives and their struggle to resist colonial violence and their deaths, of the lives of peasant farmers in Grenada after emancipation and of the hardships endured by the indentured Indian workers on the estates. For Ned, however, his orally recounted stories, drawn from his own imperfect memory and the memories of others, cannot substitute for the authority of the written word. His ancestors exist on the margins of history because, he says, "In those times [...] only the white people that was in charge of estate that had voice to talk" (140). He urges Thunder and "everybody who getting education" to commemorate Ned by writing "Ned name in the ground [...] to say all the things that Ned couldn't say"

(141). But even as he encourages him to be educated he acknowledges its inherent dangers:

[...] I just never want you to forget us here. And by us I don't just mean me and you mother. I mean all of us people around here, you know, that know red mud. Those big people and them, their people have yacht and they living on beach and so on. Move with them, because with you education you might even have you yacht yourself one day [...] Make them know how you think, so you could bring them round to how you thinking. (142)

Ned's words articulate the challenge posed by the novel, and one faced by the Revolutionary Government of 1979. For Thunder and his family, literacy and education offers the opportunity for economic advancement, but more importantly, Ned suggests, it offers the descendants of slaves and indentured workers the opportunity to tell the past in their own voice. It allows for another point of view, and opposes the failure of colonial historiography to represent the everyday resistance and the struggle of those hidden or marginalised by official accounts of the past.

With its acute consciousness of revolutionary failure and the failure of an organised programme of political resistance and of progress towards full liberation, the novel interrogates the very basis on which teleological narratives of political and cultural liberation can be constructed. Individual memory as a repository of the past, oral storytelling as a means of learning lessons for the future, an organic relationship with the soil are all valued in the novel, but do not, in and of themselves, offer a means of liberation. Like the idiomatic sayings and proverbs of the 'chorus' of women in *Angel*, the chorus of repetition in *The Colour of Forgetting*, and its voicing and re-voicing of stories of the past, provide a certain security and solace in the face of disappointment. As in *Angel*, the narrative itself cannot abandon, even as it

undermines, a commitment to progress and hope for a liberated future. For John Bull, son of a slave and a slave-owner, for his son and grandchildren, freedom was the ownership of land; for Son-Son, freedom was literacy and the ability to combine knowledge of the written word with ambition in order to move beyond peasantry. For Willive and Ned, freedom for Thunder and the next generation is education as a means of escape from the land; Willive sees the red of the mace and says: "Watch the colour. You see it? That is how it living. By sucking me blood. I don't want it take yours." The other women echo her words: "Study you book. [...] Don't come as we. You is all we future" (100-1). The future, however, continues to disappoint. The fourth generation Carib says of Thunder's generation, "Is the younger ones to stop the blue from crying in between" (13), and Thunder, in turn, looks to his daughter's generation. Carib continues to mourn the absence of a monument to "weself" to commemorate the Caribs who died resisting, the slaves, and those who died in the market square during the 1983 assassinations.

On one hand the narrative's use of cyclical temporal structures to oppose concepts of time as "project, teleology, linear" (Kristeva 17) is powerfully oppositional but as the only way of reconceiving history, cyclical or monumental time does not offer the possibility of freedom. As the novel closes the contrast between Carib's words, urging remembrance, and the islanders' desire to forget the distant and more recent past, is made more stark. In a long section of interior monologue she hears the screams from the sea of those "Forgotten and drowned [...]. Want gravestone. Memory. Want remembering" (178). Her passage round the island is punctuated by place names that urge forgetting and emphasise and point to the tourist blue of the island; her words point to their ironic significance. The name of the island itself: "And peace on every face even if brain boxing and breaking, *pax*. Pax become Paz" (18). She names other

places, which are intended to lure tourists with their connotations of untroubled sea and sand: Paradise; Soleil; Mos Repos; Perd Temps; Golden Sands, “Golden Sands, they calling it. Golden Sands [...] And what happening if sea come up and say sand belong to it?”(187). The sea is used as a constant reminder of the precariousness and unpredictability of their lives. Like the symbol of the sea used in Benitez-Rojos’ work, the sea in the novel holds and hides a violent past and continues to exact vengeance in the present. It is also central to the novel’s pattern of imagery, used to suggest that events evolve in time as a series of repetitions, one of which is the cycle of forgetting and remembering, that frame the relationship between storytelling in the present and the island’s past.

The novel ends with the sea and its “forget-me-not blue” claiming another life because, as the passengers assert, all talk about the spirit in the water is “backwardness” (206). For Carib, who witnessed the death of the young baby on board the boat crossing from Paz to Eden, the spirit of the sea, containing the forgotten souls of those who died in the passages from India and Africa, and who killed themselves rather than be enslaved, is forcing its own commemoration: “Blood come in the north, blood reach in the south, but we still not building a stone for weself. The spirits still vex, yes. [...] The blue still vex and crying red in between” (212). Carib connects her stories, the genealogies of ordinary families, to the stories she hears in not only in the sea but also in the mountains, the wind, from the frog and the monkey:

What story the sea know? Look at it eh? And the mountain, what story it hiding? Walk back. Just look at life how it going! Watch the mortelle! When rain coming, mortelle bathing cocoa face with tears. (180)

Unlike the closing scenes of Angel, however, in which the natural landscape is used to signify hope, the ‘stories’ that the natural world tells in this novel are more ambiguous. This ambiguity is evident in the dialogue between monkey and crapaud, a truncated model of the rhetoric of Gates’ signifying monkey. As with the rhetoric of Gates’ “signifying monkey”, the language of the monkey in Collins’ novel “calls attention to itself as an extended linguistic sign” (53), and the response of the crapaud extends and revises the monkey’s words. Unlike the practice of “Signifyin(g)”, however, in which a collection of rhyming texts is developed, Collins’ monkey’s text is a cycle of repetitive calls and is met with the same response from the frog. What changes is not the words but the meaning inferred from the words: “Monkey say cool breeze/Crapaud say wait a while/ Monkey say cool breeze ...” (19). Throughout the novel the narrator points to the multiplicity of meanings that can be generated from this text:

Things cool for the monkey, you see, because the breeze always in Monkey face. So Monkey not wrong, and Crapaud not wrong. Is not a question of right and wrong really. Crapaud just in a different position. Close to the ground, it right on top of the heat. And whatever happening, it always hearing the pounding [...] But truth to tell, the mountain really cool. Even Crapaud feeling the damp. (18)

At other times, it seems as if the role of the frog and monkey are reversed: in later passages, other figures from the natural world “Signify (upon)” Crapaud’s words, using his tune but giving an opposite meaning. All nature is animated and the natural world, the nutmeg, the wind, the mortelle, the cricket, hold and repeat the stories of the island’s past: their stories, like the wind which weaves in and out of Mamag’s history, countervoice official accounts of the islands’ history. Carib says: “Mortelle

root never die. Who know the place where the root is have the secret to finish the case. [...] But mortelle know the story from the root" (180). The characters, on the other hand, only have access to partial accounts collected from unreliable memory.

By the end of the novel, Carib suggests that Crapaud's cautious warning is ineffective, whereas the Monkey's words are given ironic authority:

Standing up in the middle of the road in this modern day and thinking car light will stop if it just hold up the two front foot to say wait a while. And you see Crapaud as a result? Dead in the road. Four foot in the air. [...] And hot as it is, things cool, you know. Things well cool. (180)

The irony of Monkey's words is emphasised in the tragedy of the novel's ending. Just before the "Kicking Jenny", under the sea, rises to claim another life, a passenger says: "The water cool. Kick-em-Ginny dead, I tell you!" (207). Forgetting, insisting that "things cool" is both a strategy for survival but also a consequence of modernity. Peace, however, superficial, has to be maintained to "sell the blue". Equally Carib's words, like the frog's, are not only unheeded but impotent to stop the cycle of blood and destruction.

The death of the baby signifies the closing of the circle, the loss of hope and the impossibility of liberation without a real understanding of the past. Her death is accompanied by Carib's "prophecy", endlessly "Signified upon" but impotent against a vengeful past: "Red. Red. The blue still vex and crying red in between. But is all right. Is all right as long as we see and we know and we remember. Is young blood. Is the young people to stop the blue from crying red in between" (213). Carib still cries out for commemoration because the past has still not been atoned but the repetition and extension of the same words and phrases reveals their tragic emptiness. Although Collins' work can be represented as a "postmodern epistemological questioning of the

nature of historical knowledge”, the oral testimonies that are used to expose the silences and falsifications inherent in colonial historiography are not themselves subject to post-modern questioning. What is repeatedly questioned and unresolved is the possibility of historical progress, represented in linear chronologies and in teleological narratives of resistance and liberation.

Lovelace’s focus on a rhetoric of masculinity and his use of “legendary narrative patterns” (Petrov 84) results in a novel which is heroic, teleological and, as Rahim points out, optimistic. His characters are rescued from political marginality by their proximity to large, heroic characters such as Alford George, Bango, and his ancestors Jo-Jo and Guinea John. Collins more boldly insists on her characters’ marginality: she does not rescue Carib from her status as the voiceless “subaltern”.¹² Her warning to learn from the past goes unheeded and unheard. The other female protagonists in the novel are also outside public political spaces but they are conscious of the effect of a history of violence, counter-violence and resistance on their lives. What her novel says about the struggle for liberation is less encouraging and less optimistic than Lovelace’s but more firmly grounded in the everyday realities of the post-colonial subject. As with Angel, The Colour of Forgetting is as much concerned with the process of narration as with the content of the narrative and with the complex and problematic character of both orality and literary language as a means of representing the Caribbean past and its difficult present. Both novels, as I demonstrate in this chapter, “Signify upon” thematic concerns and formal representations in the writers’ earlier work, problematising their representations of resistance. Collins’ The Colour of Forgetting , however, represents a radical break not only with earlier fictional narratives of resistance and liberation, including her first novel, but also with contemporary narratives such as Salt which enclose within its pre-occupation with

time, history and progression a more conventional and, as I argue, more masculine representation of history as progress. Her novel demands a radical reconsideration of the commitment to oppositional resistance reinforced by a tradition of narrative production which celebrates the revolutionary potential of heroic insurgency.

¹ Linda Hutcheon writes: "the protagonists of historiographic metafiction are anything but proper types: they are the ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history" A Poetics of Postmodernism 113,114.

² It is important to note that Fox-Genovese notes: "In rare instances, as in the case of *Beloved* [...] 261.

³ Stephen Slemon. "Modernism's Last Post" 4-5. See also Helen Tiffin and Tiffin and Lawson cited in the introduction.

⁴ See Fredric Jameson "Import-Substitution in the Third World" 177-8.

⁵ Chris Searle, Grenada : the Struggle against Destabilization 5

⁶ Jennifer Rahim compares Guinea John's flight with the stories of the flying Africans in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon. She writes: "As with Morrison's (ilkman Dead, the myth becomes Alford's access to his ancestral past from which he is estranged" 153.

⁷ *The Dragon Can't Dance* 40.

⁸ See Graham Furniss Orality: The Power of the Spoken Word for a more cautious representation of orality as a means of structuring reality: he argues that Ong's notion of oral versus literate societies "is a direct descendant of the primitive versus civilized dichotomy [...]" 133.

⁹ Chris Searle writes that in 1950 the "plantocracy" still owned two thirds of Grenada's land, whereas the landholding of the Grenadian farmers was limited to five acres. Grenada: The Struggle Against Destabilization 5.

¹⁰ This is the view of the pro-American scholars Sandford and Vigilante in Grenada: The Untold Story 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid* 71.

¹¹ In "Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors" Spivak clarifies the issue of voice in relation to subalternity. She says: "So, 'the subaltern cannot speak', means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act" 292.

Conclusion

This thesis began by setting up new frameworks for exploring resistance particularly in the works of contemporary Caribbean women writers, demonstrating that by using gender as a dominant category of literary analysis and a dialogic approach to reading selected works, radically new meanings can be uncovered in an investigation of the often repeated themes of political resistance and liberation. As I argue in the introduction, interpretations of resistance in Caribbean literary criticism have so far been constrained by a rigid adherence to political theorists whose categorical definitions of resistance are used to shape literary theory and criticism.

Critics such as Edward Said and Patrick Taylor, whose work is influenced by the theoretical paradigms constructed by Fanon's work, have insisted on a clear demarcation between resistance and liberation: resistance, as Said insists, is a limited form of opposition, defined by processes of repetition and by the reinscription of the very forms it seeks to contest. Taylor also stresses the limitations of resistance, itself constrained by the tragedy of repetition. Political liberation, or true freedom, for these critics, moves beyond what Taylor describes as "reactive ethics", to point to the possibility of forward movement and national self-transformation (Narratives of Liberation 70). As I have shown in this thesis, much of the criticism that analyses themes of resistance and liberation in Caribbean literature has focused on tracing these distinctions in the literary texts they scrutinise. As a result, other significant categories of analysis such as gender have been obscured, and the literature's own complex, open-ended and inconclusive narratives of resistance has been marginalised in the process of further refining distinctions between anti-colonial resistance and liberation.

The argument constructed by this thesis moves beyond such paradigms of interpretation and demonstrates that categorical frameworks are inadequate for illuminating the complex intersection of gender, history and social relations particularly in the fiction of contemporary Caribbean women writers. The use of Bakhtinian dialogics as a central component in a critical paradigm that analyses resistance, allows for a reconsideration of the process of reinscription or repetition: this approach is used to argue that all inscriptions are re-inscriptions and that repetition is an important component of any forward movement in representation that involves language. Creative tension is produced from the engagement with the “already uttered” and that engagement necessarily involves opposition and contestation, as old assumptions are repeated, re-examined and transformed or adapted in every new context.

Dialogism necessitates a reading of post-colonial Caribbean fiction which emphasises what Stephen Slemon describes as the interrelatedness of the “refigurative, counter-discursive articulations” and its “manipulation of plot and character or theme and voice [...]” (“Monuments of Empire” 14). I use this thesis to demonstrate the interconnection between both the linguistic structures and content of Caribbean fiction, and between texts within a tradition of literary representation. This interpretative strategy challenges literary assumptions about the concerns of Caribbean women’s fiction and its dominant modes of representation. It has also resulted in the creation of new critical insights into canonical Caribbean fiction, and the dismantling of binary constructs that have shaped current literary criticism and produced fixed, oppositional categories.

The process of dismantling begins with a detailed analysis of Merle Collins’ Angel, demonstrating that her novel inserts into the creative re-inscription and

Caribbeanisation of the *bildungsroman*, considerations of gender. I use a detailed analysis of the formal structures of Collins' novel to demonstrate that her fiction does not merely re-position women's experiences and concerns at the centre of the *bildungsroman*, thereby creating a female version of this fictional form, but extends the Caribbean tradition of literary transformation: in this way her work marks a radical departure from the *bildungsroman*'s preoccupation with its self-regarding protagonist. Her novel's dominant themes, of political and cultural resistance and of women's negotiation of political considerations in their everyday 'realities', are shaped by her radical transformation of fictional structures: what emerges in this work is a concept of resistance re-defined and problematised by the conflicted identities of its central women characters.

In the third and fourth chapters I continue an exploration of dialogic relations between colonialist fiction, anti-colonial fiction of the 1930s and contemporary fiction by Collins, Zee Edgell and Brenda Flanagan revealing a pattern of echoes, revisions, re-inscriptions and transformations that characterises the writing across literary periods and centuries. Both chapters argue that the difference between the concerns, preoccupations and styles of male and female authored texts is one which has been artificially constructed to suit critical paradigms which need rigidly constructed divisions in order to advance theories of gender difference. As these chapters demonstrate, both male and female authored texts are concerned to represent political themes within the context of the small, inner, domestic spaces that women inhabit: the women-dominated yards or the the small houses of rural villages. Male and female texts are also concerned with women's sexuality and the abuse of their bodies by male colonial or neo-colonial elites. Where there is a significant difference in these texts, it is in their representation of resistance: in the female-authored narratives whose focus

is on women's resistance, the form that women's resistance takes is complex, sometimes contradictory and always inflected by personal considerations of care.

Despite these general conclusions I have tried to avoid an approach which fixes meaning in Caribbean women's representations of resistance. Collins' Angel and Brodber's text point to the importance of inclusion, of women and of other marginalised characters, in the project of anti-colonial resistance; in these texts resistance is closely allied to an ethic of care and consideration for others. Flanagan's novel, however, demonstrates a less compromised mode of resistance, using confrontational violence not only as a means of resistance but as the basis of political transformation. Whereas, as Taylor argues, Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin fails to capitalise on the transformative and revolutionary potential of the rioters' acts of insurgency, in Flanagan's work her female protagonist's act of confrontational violence is accompanied by the "leap of consciousness" necessary to transform both her own and the villagers' struggle against the exploitation of the neo-colonial elite (197).

I conclude this thesis by focusing on Merle Collins' The Colour of Forgetting and Earl Lovelace's Salt and use a dialogic reading of the novels to reveal the extent to which their differently characterised representations of resistance are mediated by ideologies of gender. The chapter demonstrates that Collins' novel, in its uncompromising focus on the silenced and marginalised inhabitants of Paz and Eden raises unsettling questions about the conditions and possibility of radical opposition and revolutionary insurgency in the post independence period. In a recent essay Paula Morgan states that it is "morning yet on creation day [in] literary representations of womanhood"; she argues for the need to focus on deconstructing stereotypical "paradigms of manhood" as a means of properly addressing literary representations of

women (291). Whereas her essay examines only fiction by contemporary Caribbean women writers, in this study I have shown that much of the fiction produced in the Caribbean in the twentieth century by male and female authors, displays a preoccupation with the effects of gender power on the condition of the colonised subject. Rather than a focus on contemporary fiction or the work of women writers, the process of investigating and dismantling gender stereotypes in literary representation requires what Collins describes in The Colour of Forgetting as a longer “walk back” into traditions of literary representation, and an analysis which uses the interrelatedness of themes and textual structures as a way of generating new meanings about gender roles and identities, and structures of gender power. I have used this study to contribute to that embryonic process of investigation.

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