“FROM THE ROOT OF THE OLD ONE”: RECONFIGURING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN ANGLOPHONE AFRO-CARIBBEAN POETRY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ÖZLEM TÜRE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

OCTOBER 2007

Approval of the Graduate School of (Name of the Graduate School)

_____

Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

_____

Prof. Dr. Wolf König
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

_____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M Sönmez
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik (METU, ELIT) _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M Sönmez (METU, ELIT) _____

Prof. Dr. Necati Polat (METU, IR) _____

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Name, Last name : Özlem Türe

Signature :

ABSTRACT

"FROM THE ROOT OF THE OLD ONE":
RECONFIGURING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN ANGLOPHONE AFRO-CARIBBEAN POETRY

Türe, Özlem

M.A., Programme in English Literature

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M Sönmez

October 2007, 134 pages

This thesis analyzes how Afro-Caribbean poets writing in English appropriate language and use memory as a thematic tool to articulate postcolonial identities. The present study is organized in three parts: the first part provides the necessary theoretical background regarding postcolonial theory, the politics of hybridity and resistance; the second part examines poets' struggles over language and social forms of poetry; the third part deals with the site of memory as a revisionary tool in rewriting history poetically, binding pre-colonial and colonial identities, and healing the fractured psyches of postcolonial societies. The struggle over language and the use of memory enable the Afro-Caribbean poet to reconfigure individual and collective identities. For these purposes, Grace Nichols' *i is a long memoried woman* (1983), Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *X/Self* (1987) and Linton Kwesi Johnson's *Tings' an Times* (1991) will be analyzed.

Keywords: Afro-Caribbean Poetry, Postcolonial Theory, Hybridity, Language, Cultural Memory

ÖZ

"ESKİNİN KÖKENİNDEN":
AFRO-KARAYİP KÖKENLİ İNGİLİZ ŞİİRİNDE BİREYSEL VE TOPLUMSAL KİMLİK OLUŞUMU

Türe, Özlem

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Edebiyatı Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Assist. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M Sönmez

Ekim 2007, 134 sayfa

Bu tez İngiliz dilinde eser veren Afro-Karayip kökenli şairlerin postkoloniyel kimlikler oluşturmak için dil ve belleği nasıl kullandıklarını incelemektedir. Bu çalışma üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm postkoloniyel kuram, melezlik ve resistans politikalarıyla ilgili gerekli kuramsal bilgiyi sağlamaktadır. İkinci Bölüm Afro-Karayip kökenli İngiliz şairlerin İngiliz dili ve şiirinin hakim biçimleri üzerindeki mücadelesini gözden geçirmektedir. Üçüncü Bölüm kültürel belleğin, sömürgecilik tarihini yeniden yazma, sömürgecilik öncesi ve sonrası kimlikleri bir araya getirme ve postkoloniyel toplumların bölünmüş zihinlerinin iyileştirilmesinde tematik bir araç olarak kullanılmasını incelenmektedir. Dilin ve kültürel belleğin kullanımı üzerindeki mücadele Afro-Karayip kökenli İngiliz şairlerin yeni bireysel ve toplumsal kimlikler tanımlamasına imkan vermektedir. Bu doğrultuda Grace Nichols'un *i is a long memoried woman*'ı (1983), Edward Kamau Brathwaite'in *X/Self*'i (1987) ve Linton Kwesi Johnson'un *Tings an' Times*'ı (1991) çözümlenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afro-Karayip Şiiri, Postkoloniyel Kuram, Melezlik, Dil, Kültürel Bellek

To My Family

Hatice, Nurullah, Çağdaş Özgür and Hakan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M Sönmez for her encouragement, guidance, intellectual and academic support throughout this study. I should express my earnest thanks to Assist. Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik for her constant support and academic inspiration. I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Necati Polat for his invaluable comments on Homi Bhabha and Derrida.

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Judith Yarnall for she created a stimulating intellectual environment in our African-American literature class, which has proved invaluable to the development of my understanding of the concepts and arguments in this thesis.

I am also grateful to my professors at METU, Programme in English Literature and at Hacettepe University, Department of English Language and Literature.

I wish to thank Fırat Karadaş for reading and commenting on the drafts of this thesis. Warm thanks also go to my fellow colleagues and friends for their constant support: Burcu Gündoğdu Yılmaz, Seda İlter, Hatice Emre, Zeynep Ölçü, Deniz Şallı Çopur, Reyyan Bal, Gülşah Doğrusoy Başkavak, Ceren Katipoğlu.

I am immensely indebted to my family for their unconditional love and support all through my life.

Lastly, I could not have survived this journey without faith, love and patience of my husband, Hakan Abacı.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

it is not
it is not
it is not enough
it is not enough to be free
of the whips, principalities and powers
where is your kingdom of the Word?

(Brathwaite, *The Arrivants* 222)

The thesis aims to explore how Afro-Caribbean poets' struggle over language and the employment of memory as a thematic device provide an important way for understanding the construction of individual and collective identities in Anglophone Afro-Caribbean poetry.

In recent decades, a significant amount of literary output has been produced in the former colonies of Britain. This inevitably leads to the geographical and physical extension of literature written in English. While novels and other fictional or non-fictional narratives proliferate in so-called West Indian literature, poetry has gained a gradual popularity among Caribbean literary scholars and intellectuals. Poetry became a crucial activity for historical and cultural revival, and achieving poetic identity has been one of the major concerns of Anglo-Caribbean writers. Jamaican poet, Lorna Goodison, points to the crucial role of poetry in transgressing boundaries between the living and the dead, that is, between the past and the present, and between cultures, eras, or places. She stresses that the space of poetry can never be limited to either the local or the global, it is rather "a translocation, verbally enabling and enacting, between specific times and places, cross-cultural, transhistorical exchange" (qtd. in Ramazani, "Modernist Bricolage" 446). Likewise, many postcolonial poets have aspired to create "answering forms and vocabularies for the cross-cultural juxtaposition, interreligious layerings, and polyglot interminglings of cross-hemispheric experience" (ibid., 448).

Among other literary genres, poetry provides possibly the best opportunities for reconciling and recording the contradictions of split cultural experience. The relationship between "postcoloniality" and "poetry" is discussed in Rajeev S. Patke's *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2006) in detail. He spends his first chapter on a discussion of how "postcolonial poetry" fulfils a meaningful function in literary and cultural studies, and he foregrounds the importance of poetry in a postcolonial context. The function of poetry in the "cultural aftermath of the Empire" is various. Firstly, poetry becomes a part of what Homi Bhabha calls "a mode of living, and a habit of mind" for people "who have been displaced or marginalized on the grounds of their cultural, civilizational, or, as it is often described, moral and spiritual backwardness" (qtd. in Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry* 8). Then, with a focus on local attachments, poetry "register[s] a sense of place as an affirmation of living in the here and now" (ibid., 8). Moreover, poetry enriches the "connotations of 'postcolonial' by keeping us close to the energies inherent to language and form" all the while revealing "how postcolonial preoccupations bring the aesthetic dimension of poetry closer to its cultural, political, and ethical implications." Patke also argues that "the role played by words, rhythms, idiom, and style" translates "cultural dependency into cultural self-confidence" (ibid., 14). Poetry also becomes a place, to put it metaphorically, where the poet creates his site of worship, for example Christopher Okigbo mixes Christian, classical and Igbo sources and forms his personal religion. In an interview, he addresses this function of poetry, "the way that I worship my gods is in fact through poetry" (qtd. in Whitelaw 55).

To have a sense of historical origins of the term "postcolonial poetry" in English, one should refer to the scope of literary activity in English corresponding to the size of the empire that formerly dominated much of the globe with its language. As Jahan Ramazani asserts in his analysis of contemporary postcolonial poetry in *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English*, "a rich and vibrant poetry has issued from the hybridization of the English muse with the long-resident muses of Africa, India, the Caribbean, and other decolonized territories of the British Empire" (1). Belonging to the contours of different cultures, postcolonial poets "indigenize the Western and anglicize the native to create exciting new possibilities for English-language poetry" (ibid., 2). Writers of the Caribbean diaspora have accordingly gained prominence because of a growing interest in redefinitions of ethnic, national

or racial identities. Postcolonial poetry for these poets comes to represent "the nomadic dimension of contemporary existence" (Patke, *Hybrid Muse* 12). As Imre Szeman examines in *Zones of Instability*, a growing amount of critical attention has been given to the Caribbean because "it has been as a paradigmatic space for the study of colonialism and postcolonialism, a space in which all of the contradictions and ambiguities of the colonial project have been revealed with particular acuteness" (70). The Caribbean context is not only complex but also very attractive for cultural and literary research as it is composed of different peoples and cultures such as the European colonial civilization, indigenous Caribs and Amerindians, and the African, Indian, and Chinese population of ex-slaves and once indentured labourers. Achieving poetic identity has been the major concern that settles the tensions between literary and popular cultures, local and colonial models, vernacular practices and those borrowed from African or British roots. In other words, West Indian poets reshape cultural and political pluralisms offered by Western poetic traditions by merging them with indigenous genres and vocabularies, landscapes and mythologies and by inverting racial, cultural and political agenda.

In the British West Indies, the first appearance of English poetry as a literary activity was imitative of the British canon and traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Later in the twentieth century colonial practices were scrutinized and anti-colonial and national models began to take the place of British norms. With the initiation of literary magazines in the 1930s and 1940s, such as *The Beacon* in Trinidad, *Bim* in Barbados, *Kyk-Over-Al* in Guyana, and *Focus* in Jamaica, Caribbean writing developed greatly. Along with these magazines and the BBC magazine of the air, *Caribbean Voices* (1946), Caribbean poetry entered "a new expanded and creative phase" (J. Barry xviii). At that time, many writers and critics concentrated on merging local tradition and working towards regional models. The interest in regional forms of expression soon gave way to a collective resistance, which is

> deeply bound up with survival, with a re-defining of the self and freedom. Inevitably, Westindians [*sic*] have come into confrontation with unresolved historical black-and-white relationships. Automatically, people who have not been able to express their hurt find that life in England triggers, releases and externalises a collective memory (ibid., xxii).

The development of the Anglo-Caribbean literary canon in the academic West, however, dates back to the immigration of young Caribbean intellectuals to England for labour or education in the 1940s and 1950s. At this time, major Afro-Caribbean writers lived in a "self-imposed exile" in England (Szeman 65). During this time influential writers such as George Lamming, Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, Una Marson, Louise Bennett, and Kamau Braithwaite first emerged and around them the English Caribbean literary canon and critical approaches to Caribbean literature have been constructed since then.

Frank Birbalsingh (1996) observes the Caribbean literary experience from the 1950s onwards in four stages. His outline of literary history distinguishes the colonial period, the period of nationalism associated with the Federation of West Indies (1950-65), the post-independence visions and disappointments of the "micronational period" (1965-80), and a "trans-national" period in which West Indian poetry is concerned with people of the "external frontiers" of a new diaspora[1] (xii). One of the most important events taking place on the third stage of this outline is the Caribbean Artist Movement (CAM) initiated by Kamau Brathwaite and Andrew Salkey to raise awareness in British society towards West Indian artistic forms. It is a movement (as a form of "empire writing back to the centre") that existed between 1966 and 1972, and was formed in Britain by mature intellectuals, artists and other diasporic figures. These intellectuals consciously

> sought to discover their own aesthetic and to chart new directions for their arts and culture; to become acquainted with their history; to rehabilitate their Amerindian inheritance and reinstate their African roots; to reestablish links with the 'folk' through incorporating the peoples' language and musical rhythms in Caribbean Literature; to reassert their own tradition in the face of the dominant tradition. (Walmsey qtd. in Harris 341)

The poets developed new orientations for experience and history, through which they attain cultural revival and restoration. As Barry suggests, "once political independence was on its way, and then actually happened for the people, new art forms had to be found," that is why, a re-defining had begun in the 60s (xxii). These

[1] These groupings are not so strict and some of these stages overlap with one another. For instance, some of the writers start writing before the second period and are still writing in the fourth phase. Their concerns and writing styles have also changed in time regarding the needs of the immigrants and effects of (post-)colonialism.

objectives of the Caribbean Artists Movement have been inherent in the poetic expression of Anglo-Caribbean writers' works ever since. Working towards a Caribbean aesthetics, Anglo-Caribbean poets have always taken into account the influence of British colonial educational policy and colonial policy, and neo-colonial strategies after political and economic decolonization that "exercise over the notions of the literary and of emerging post-colonial identities" (Donnell and Welsh 4). The academic study of Anglophone Caribbean literature, however, gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s. These preoccupations have extensively stressed the diverse nature of languages, literary trends and identities in the region without reducing them to simplified definitions and classifications.

This thesis specifically deals with the writers in the fourth stage whose "writings mostly deal with the diasporan experience on the external frontiers of the Caribbean" written after 1980. The works of these writers include memories of the Caribbean and their day-to-day life as black people in frontiers like Britain, Americas or other European countries. At the same time, writers after 1980 are concerned either with the fate of immigrants living on an external frontier, or with the fate of others like them (Birbalsingh xi).

To summarize what Anglophone Caribbean poets have in common is helpful to the background of the study in order to discern the crisis of self-representation in their work. They are born to colonial populations under British rule and have continued to write after political and cultural decolonization. Educated as colonial subjects and engaged in their native traditions and customs, these postcolonial poets grew up in the "potentially productive tension between an imposed and inherited culture"- productive in the sense that "this powerful literary mind can create imaginative forms to articulate the dualities, ironies and ambiguities of this cultural in-betweenness" (Ramazani, "Modernist Bricolage" 598). In this respect, this thesis examines some of the poetic qualities in the works of poets who were born in the Caribbean and came to Britain as teenagers or young adults. Moreover, it tries to bring insight into the patterns of feeling, habits of thought, and techniques for coping with the diversity of hybrid spaces experienced either by those who came to Britain as immigrants, by their descendants born there, or by those who wish to trace the roots of their parents' colonial origins. For this purpose, individual poems from three poetry collections will be examined: Grace Nichols' *i is a long-memoried*

woman (1983), Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *X/Self* (1987) and Linton Kwesi Johnson's *Tings an' Times* (1991).

i is a long-memoried woman is Grace Nichols' first poetry collection, which established its reputation a short time after being published and is now considered among the classics produced by Afro-Caribbean British women poets. *X/Self* is the third book of a trilogy by Edward Kamau Brathwaite. The first book of this trilogy, *Mother Poem* (1977), is about the women of the island, and the trilogy's second volume, *Sun Poems* (1982), deals with the experiences of African-Caribbean men and works up a lineage through the multiplications of fathers and sons. All three books form a family trilogy which aims to give an entire picture of the Caribbean experience. They were later published in one volume as *Ancestors* in 2001 in Sycorax video tape format. For this thesis, *X/Self* is the most suitable of the trilogy owing to its concentration on how the subject of the decolonization period creates and recreates identity positions and on how these identity positions are always in flux. Therefore, *X/Self* stands as an example for the continuous process of self-making. Grace Nichols' collection is closely related to the first book of Brathwaite's trilogy, *Mother Poem*, as she details the representations of Caribbean women by particularly focusing on their experiences of the Middle Passage. Thus, Grace Nichols's *i is a long memoried woman* and Brathwaite's *X/Self* have alter/native epic qualities which celebrate the survival of their protagonists.

The third poet whose work will be analyzed here, Linton Kwesi Johnson, has the angriest voice among other Afro-Caribbean writers, perhaps due to his interest in Black British politics. His poetry is an example of the type of poetry that brings together the experience of the black diaspora in the urban metropolis. In his work, the misery and anguish of the Middle Passage have been transported to the streets of Brixton, London, that is, into everyday life in Britain. Bhabha's comments on Naipaul's writing in his "Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition" are very applicable to the poems here, which are 'busy with activity, noisy with stories, garrulous with grotesquerie, gossip, humor, aspirations, fantasies" which are "the signs of a culture of survival that emerges from the other side of the colonial enterprise' (xiii).

1.1 Methods and Techniques

The thesis is organised into three sections. The first section deals with the theories concerning the construction of identity in Anglophone Caribbean literature in detail. The umbrella term for the theory part is postcolonialism. The theoretical background draws on the formulation of hybridity and third space to demonstrate the nature of postcolonial identity and agency. Around the discussion of hybridity, this part will try to discover forms of subversion in postcolonial literary and theoretical practices.

The methodology of the thesis depends on the argument that current postcolonial writings enforce an eclectic approach in the choice of theories and literary works. The second chapter focuses on the poet's struggle over language and its effect in the formation of identity. The third section mainly concentrates on the function of memory and especially the memories of African descent, colonial experience in the Caribbean, and post-colonial experience in Britain. The thesis does not identify the historical progression of Anglophone Caribbean poetry (which might be the concern of another study), but is interested in dealing with certain issues in contemporary Caribbean studies. For reasons of time and page limitation, the most representative poems in the collections will be chosen and dealt with, rather than engaging in the whole body of works. The chapters privilege the close reading of individual poems.

1.2. The Aim of the Study

This thesis is a preliminary research into postcolonial poetries. Thus, it aims to highlight basic qualities of postcolonial poetries, specifically in the West-Indian context. By focusing on three poets of Caribbean origin, it attempts to understand what kind of techniques Caribbean poets use to reconfigure their individual and collective identities. With the analysis of particular poems in their collections, I try to explore strategies in rewriting history poetically and writing back from the postcolonial frontier. The poets selected are those whose body of work facilitates an appreciation and comparative analysis of Anglophone Afro-Caribbean poetries. The poets featured here are consistently published and discussed in critical articles.

Although some of the poets started their careers earlier, I am interested in them as already established poets with poems that have been published in various mainstream and marginal anthologies. Their works endeavour to rewrite the post/colonial experience and create alternative concepts of cultural identity. Therefore, this thesis is an attempt to read the poems included in the study as narratives of contested identities and ethnicities.

1.3. Limitations of the Study

Within the limitations of a master's thesis, some definitions are given in a nutshell. By limiting the scope of the study to the last few decades, more careful analyses of Anglophone Caribbean poetry can be made. The West Indian situation is complex, as the islands are composed of a variety of communities formerly dominated by different colonial powers. This thesis seeks to bring to focus the works of Afro-Caribbean poets who were living in Britain, are educated in Britain and/or who still live in Britain, bringing together writers from different Caribbean roots: a writer from Jamaica, another from Guyana and the other from Barbados of African descent. However, the thesis doesn't account for the large Indian population in both Trinidad and Guyana, or communities indigenous to the islands.

Another point that might be distracting or misleading while reading this thesis is the interchangeable use of 'Caribbean' and 'West Indian'. It is useful to mark the difference between these terms. However, there are contesting definitions which are geographically and historically ambivalent. Firstly, these two terms compete with each other in use in different periods. For instance, as Donnell and Welsh analyze in their introduction to *The Routledge Reader to West Indian Literature*, the term "West Indian" appears in the pre-1950 period without any "radical imperialist sentiment of vision of a pan-African culture" (5). However, after the 1950s, it was used to "explore possibilities for a unified regional identity" (5). Bill Ashcroft et al, however, state in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998) that more accurately "'Caribbean' refers to all island nations located in the area" whereas "West Indian" refers to the nations formerly colonized by the British Empire, such as Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, St. Lucia, Guyana and St. Vincent. Etymologically, while "Caribbean" is thought to be a mispronounced word of

Amerindian origin, “West Indies” is taken to come from Columbus’ intended destination when he “discovered” the Caribbean in 1492 (31).

Belinda Edmondson helpfully elucidates the differences between the terms “West Indian” and “Caribbean” in her study, *Making Men*. While the term “West Indian” has nationalist implications, “Caribbean” bears regional connotations. Edmondson argues that “West Indies” employs a historical sense of metaphorical displacement and continuing as “an enduring trope of ‘Somewhere Elseness’ found in colonial and postcolonial discourse (37). Following Belinda Edmondson’s example, in recognition of the geographic similarities and history of small islands, I prefer the term “Caribbean” but use “West Indian” where it is previously called upon or where the sense of a national community prevails. Another reason for using ‘Caribbean’ is that it is more indicative of a “literature freed from the (re)centring tendencies of a colonial and Commonwealth framework” (Donnell and Welsh 6-7) and in every condition in the thesis the use of “Caribbean” has the connotations of Anglophone Caribbean, as a practical necessity.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

> Some would have me believe I am no one. I have no history, my people erected no monuments, coined no songs, mastered no languages, practiced no religion, created nothing worth mentioning, no past. This was both the implicit and explicit ideology that governed my reality growing up as a child in Jamaica, a small island under the hegemony of British Colonialism…We were being educated to believe that we could not write the poem of the pebble. (Adisa, "A Hybrid Caribbean Identity" 197)
>
> I as a colonial subject, always reminded of my innate ancestral inferiority, was expected to parody my master in every way, yet not harbor any resentment against him, knowing full well, at the same time, that I could never become him, but only a carbon copy…even if I should exceed the colonizer in skill or achievement, I would still always be judged, evaluated and ranked by him… (ibid., 205)

There are no relations of power without resistance.
(Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 142)

2.1. Post(-/)colonial(-ism/-ity): Naming the Unnameable

After any political or intellectual movement emerges, its naming process gathers the most intense debates, as the naming has political significance and depends on various power structures. Likewise, the term "postcolonial" has contesting definitions because, as a theory, it is still in formation and development. It draws its conceptual knowledge from a variety of disciplines and theoretical positions. Postcolonialism denies any easy definition in the arguments of many theorists who question the validity of postcolonial studies in the twenty-first century, as McLeod implies when he characterizes it as a "potentially vague umbrella term" (McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 257). The root of postcolonialism goes back to "historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control," as a result of which "political and conceptual structures of the systems on which such domination

had been based" were fundamentally challenged (Young 60). Thus, to offer a definition for postcolonialism one should hypothesize the meaning of colonialism.

Colonialism is by definition "transhistorical and unspecific" (Slemon 348), accordingly "*post*-colonialism" derives its meaning from a complex relation to "colonial". Elleke Boehmer's definition of "colonialism" seems practical in clarifying what is meant when the term "colonial" is used in phrases like "colonial power", "colonial ideology", "colonial discourse" and so forth. Boehmer defines colonialism as the "consolidation of imperial power" materialized in the "settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands, often by force" (2). Additionally, colonialism works to "colonize the mind" of the people into believing that it is the right of the colonising nation to rule and dominate with a civilising mission, making the colonised people internalise the idea that they are of inferior rank. When the colonised begin to speak the language of the colonizers and learn their values, colonialism can perpetuate its own power and existence. Therefore, "the internalisation of colonial sets of values" has been "an effective way of disempowering people" and also "the source of trauma for colonised peoples who were taught to look negatively upon their people, their culture and themselves" (McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 19).

Various definitions of postcolonialism will be provided without reducing this theory to a general narrative that eliminates the difference of very diverse postcolonial regions, terms and definitions. Patke provides a broad connotation of the word "postcolonial", which implies the consciousness of "the ways in which modes of thought and belief learned through colonial history continue to affect cultures after the formal collapse of empires" (Patke, "Postcolonial Cultures" 370). Postcolonialism critiques contemporary power structures as well as colonial histories. It operates on the assumption that "the intellectual and cultural traditions developed outside the west constitute a body of knowledge that can be deployed to great effect against political and cultural hegemony of the west". As Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o puts it, it is now the question of "decolonizing the mind" and "moving the centre" (qtd. in Young 65). Elleke Boehmer also stresses the power of the postcolonial to question and distort colonial authority. That power overthrows epistemologies, abusing violence and the self-validating conceit of

colonial authority in its relationship with the colonized. Postcolonialism, thus, applies to "theories, texts, political strategies, and modes of activism that engage in such questioning" that should idealistically "aim to challenge structural inequalities and bring about social justice" (Boehmer, "Postcolonialism" 341-2).

The prefix *post* and whether or not "post (-) colonialism" should be written with a hyphen generate a vast amount of debate amongst critics. It is unsettled whether the term connotes a historical or a literal meaning, or whether it has a chronological importance. As John McLeod expresses, the hyphenated form of the term 'post-colonial' is more likely to denote "*historical period or epoch*, like those suggested by phrases such as 'after colonialism', 'after independence', or 'after the end of Empire'." But "postcolonialism" without the hyphen involves forms of "*representations, reading practices*, and *values*" (*Beginning Postcolonialism* 5). Appiah takes the hyphen as the "space-clearing gesture" as a political act which is reminiscent of the "materiality of political oppression" (qtd. in Ashcroft, *Empire* 198). Moreover, if we assume that postcolonialism resists colonial ways of knowing, these ways of knowing are still on the way and do not disappear so quickly. As McLeod puts forward:

> [C]olonial oppression is far from over… the material realities and modes of representation common to colonialism are still very much with us today, even if the political map of the world has changed through decolonisation (*Beginning Postcolonialism* 32-3).

For this reason, one should be careful to avoid asserting that post (-)colonialism denotes a period and era that is finished. The possibility of change and the changes that have occurred so far towards neo-colonialism should also be considered. In this thesis, postcolonialism without the hyphen is preferred, except for its usage in direct quotations, to emphasize the fact that postcolonialism stands for more than a period term.

Apart from post-colonial and postcolonial(ism), another term is quite apparent in this discipline: postcolonial(ity). As Robert Young explains, postcoloniality emphasizes "the economic, material and cultural conditions that determine the global system in which the postcolonial nation is required to operate" (Young 57). Thus, it has a larger scheme than the conceptual undertone of postcolonialism. In the thesis, this term is taken as a state of mind "occur[ring] and

recur[ring] in individuals and communities whenever the ambivalent energies of their colonial legacy are shaped by, or give shape to, their writing". Another sense of the term might be "an ongoing process in which native inhabitants and non-European migrants struggle to find voice and representation within their cultural dynamics of a settler country" (Patke, "Postcolonial Cultures" 370).

2.2 Characteristics of Postcolonial Theory and Literatures

Postcolonial studies as an academic field emerged in Western universities, from the so-called centre of the (post)colonial power. Yet, "activists and intellectuals in or from the colonies and newly decolonized nations" have efficiently formed "the opposition to colonialism, imperialism and eurocentricism" in collaboration with Western intellectuals (Young 63). Postcolonial literature deals with critical and subversive scrutiny of the colonial relationship, it "set[s] out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspective" and is therefore deeply influenced by "experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire". Postcolonial writing overlaps with the period of decolonization which requires "symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings" (Boehmer, *Colonial* 3). It becomes an umbrella term to include all literatures written in countries or by peoples which were once colonized by European nations. The academic invention of the term took place in the 1980s especially after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978. Before Said, Fanon had addressed issues like colonial cultures, anti-colonial resistance and questions of race and nationalism.

In the second edition of *The Empire Writes Back* (2005), Bill Ashcroft et al spare a chapter to the development of postcolonial theory and literatures and to the future of postcolonial theory. For them, the elements in the margins begin to threaten the borders of the centre in a process defined by Said as "conscious affiliation under the guise of filiation" that is "a mimicry of the centre proceeding from the desire not only to be accepted but also to be adopted and absorbed" (4). Moreover, they observe that the emergence of postcolonialism does not take place in metropolitan critical texts but in "the cultural discourses of the formerly colonized peoples, peoples whose work was and is inextricably grounded in the experience of the colonization" (ibid., 196).

The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* offer four critical models for postcolonial literatures: the first one is "national" and regional models; the second is "race-based models" like the "Black writing" model; the third one is the use of a comparative model "of varying complexity which seeks to account for particular linguistic, historical, and cultural features across two or more post-colonial literatures"; fourth, they discuss a more extensive and comparative model which includes the theoretical discussions of hybridity and syncreticity (14). All these critical models more or less offer rereading or rewriting of the European literary and cultural record. In this respect, postcolonial literature and theory have a political stance since they interrogate "the apparent axioms upon which the whole discipline of English has been raised". Therefore, the idea of English Literature as a study which obstructs its own specific national, cultural, and political grounding and which is offered as a new system for the evolvement of 'universal' human values is "exploded by the existence of post-colonial literatures" (ibid., 221).

John McLeod, similarly, examines forms of textual analysis in postcolonial literatures and comes up with three main types. The first one is "re-reading canonical English Literature" to discover to what extent these works openly or latently support or criticize colonial discourses (*Beginning Postcolonialism* 23). A group of theorists, secondly, adopt the poststructuralist thought of Derrida, Foucault and Lacan to investigate "the representations of colonised subjects in a variety of colonial texts" by reading these texts against the grain and discovering certain instances of resistance and agency (ibid., 24). A third group is concerned with the aforementioned strategies of resistance termed as "writing back to the centre" which is engaged in the process of questioning and travestying colonial discourse and producing new modes of representation (ibid., 25). These reading strategies foreground a type of survival, labour and production against the power axes and binaries structured by prejudice to avoid "a deeply negating experience" which Bhabha claims to be oppressive and exclusionary (xi). Referring back to all these models listed, postcolonial reading can be characterized as a deconstructionist re-reading of cultural, literary and political 'texts' in its largest sense, to accentuate the effects of colonialism and discover its ideologies, practices and political expectations.

2.2.1 Theory or Practice: Reading against the Grain

When the general features of postcolonialism are read against the grain, it is possible to find its defaults and inconsistencies. Robert Young, for instance, goes so far as to claim that postcolonial theory is not even a theory, but a practice with a set of conceptual resources without a single methodology. It draws on a common range of theories and employs "a constellation of theoretical insights" with particular political, cultural and social objectives (Young 64). In other critics' discussions, postcolonial theory has been accused of being a new form of master's narrative or the perpetrator of colonial ideas and values.

Another objection to the term "postcolonial" is from Aijaz Ahmad, who claims that "it over-emphasizes the significance of the impact of colonialism on the societies that were colonized" (qtd. in Young 60). He also thinks that it neglects the class divisions and economics of colonialism. Similarly, the terminology of postcolonialism is criticized on the grounds that it "homogenize[s] difference, simplify complexity, misdirect reading and perpetrate new forms of conceptual colonization" that drags writers to a "conceptual ghetto" while struggling to place themselves nearer to the centre by emphasizing the marginality of post-imperial cultures (Patke, "Postcolonial Cultures" 370). Yet, critics like Meenakshi Mukherjee defend postcolonialism as "it makes [one] interrogate many aspects of the study of literature that we were made to take for granted" and enables us to "re-interpret some of the old canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of specific historical and geographical location" (Trivedi and Mukherjee 3-4). So this strategy offers a challenge to the colonial discourse because the critic or writer rejects what has been taught in the colonial education system. Anne McClintock, however, claims that the postcolonial perspective still stresses a "hierarchical relation between a colonized and a colonizing culture thus subordinating relations between postcolonial cultures" (qtd. in Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry* 13).

These writers stress the fact that thought and ways of life inflicted with colonial history continue to have effects on contemporary postcolonial societies after the official collapse of empires. Lastly, Anne McClintock especially criticizes "postcolonial" critics for their disregard of gender differences, and the same can be

said for class differences. Anne McClintock puts it very briefly that "women and men do not live postcolonialism in the same way", neither do they have equal opportunity in the field of postcolonial literature (qtd. in McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 27); Aijaz Ahmad pronounces and extends the same idea when he says "the image of the postcolonial subject which results from Bhabha's work is remarkably free of gender, class and identifiable political location" (ibid., 222). Criticisms over postcolonialism, of course, might be the topic of another piece of research; however, this study acknowledges that the debate over whether postcolonialism is a theory or practice is crucial in understanding and evaluating the future of postcolonial studies.

2.3. Strategies of Subversion and Resistance in Postcolonial Literatures

The current debates on postcolonial theory depend on how one interprets the idea of resistance and its efficacy in fighting colonialism's diverse effects. Artistic and literary decolonization includes a dismantling of European codes and a postcolonial subversion of the dominant discourse. Helen Tiffin describes "decolonization" as a process rather than an arrival, invoking "an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of it". Thus, the subversive is the characteristic of post-colonial literary activity in general. This subversive nature in postcolonial literature does not aim to take the place of a dominant discourse, but, as Wilson Harris's formula prescribes, it tries to "evolve textual strategies which continually 'consume' their own 'biases'" and simultaneously "expose and erode those of the dominant discourse" (Tiffin 99).

The forms of literary resistance have a variety of reading and writing strategies. As Stephen Slemon points out, literary resistance is a type of "contractual understanding between text and reader" having an "experiential dimension" and reinforced by "a political and cultural aesthetic at work in the culture" (351). In post/colonial terminology, resistance literature is taken as a sort of literary activity depending on and supporting an organized struggle toward national liberation. The present study does not aim to narrow down the instances of resistance and other subversive techniques in literary activity to mere opposition and political material, since the poems under scrutiny are written after physical decolonization and national

liberation struggles. In the same way, Slemon acknowledges that this area has an "untheorized position" and one should be aware of its critical flaws. For example, one should not take it for granted that literary resistance is simply there in the text "as a structure of intentionality, and there in the social text as a communicative gesture of pure availability" (352).

In "Figures of Colonial Resistance", Jenny Sharpe draws out two important key points: you cannot easily locate the sites of anti-colonial resistance since resistance is always an "effect of the contradictory representation of colonial authority" and resistance itself is never purely resistance, "but always necessarily complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress" (ibid.). Accordingly, literary resistance is partial, incomplete and embodies ambivalence, for it applies the tools of the colonizer to configure a form of resistance for the colonized. Homi Bhabha, in the same way, stresses the ambivalence of literary resistance which creates a kind of duplicity in texts, whether in their transmission or in their social locations.

The past of "cultural resistance" can be traced back to Franz Fanon who was politically active against France. He argues that the first and the foremost step for once colonised peoples seeking a voice and identity is the reclaiming of their past. Secondly, he stresses the importance of erasing stereotyped images of the colonised countries and of removing colonialist ideology with the rejection of colonial history imposed on colonised people. In addition to Fanon's strategies of resistance, postcolonial writers try to "evoke or create a precolonial version of their own nation, rejecting the modern and the contemporary" (P. Barry, 194). Language is another area of discussion in postcolonial criticism. Postcolonial writers maintain that language is tainted with colonial ideology, for this reason, it must be subverted to decentre colonial structures. The emphasis on "identity as doubled, or hybrid, or unstable" is also a widespread strategy of postcolonial reading (ibid., 196).

Bill Ashcroft interprets several strategies of resistance in *On Post-Colonial Futures: Transformations of Colonial Culture*. He refers to cultural transformation and postcolonial excess as creative and productive sites of resistance. Transformation lies at the heart of resistance, which depicts the means by "which colonized societies have taken dominant discourses, transformed them and used them in the service of their own empowerment" and through which "dominated and colonized societies have transformed the very nature of the cultural power that has

dominated them" (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Futures* 1). This type of resistance is apparent in literary and other representational arts and cultural practices. The poetics of transformation foregrounds the ways in which "writers and readers contribute constitutively to meaning" and "colonized societies appropriate imperial discourses…[or] interpolate their voice and concerns into dominant system of textual production and distribution "(ibid., 19). Moreover, through the poetics of transformation the operations of postcolonial texts can be discerned. Seizing self-representation is the main strategy in the transformation of colonial culture. Ashcroft defines representation as "the process of giving concrete form to ideological concepts …[which] involves the entire fabric of cultural life and the sense of identity that is inextricably woven into that fabric" (ibid., 2). The struggle over representation in linguistic, imaginative and cultural creations lies beneath all kinds of resistance.

Furthermore, adopting Derridean and Lacanian language, Ashcroft (2001) puts forward several kinds of excess in discourse, such as insistence, supplementarity, and hybridity. Among these types of excess, insistence in a postcolonial situation is often an insistence "upon *reality*, the reality and materiality of post-colonial experience" (119). He brings together agency and insistence in psychoanalytical language, referring to Freud's use of *instanz* as 'agency' and Lacan's mimicry of this word as *instance* – that means 'insistence' in French. For Lacan, the words "agency" and "insistence" are identical. So this "excess of 'insistence' in post-colonial discourse" becomes a "site of *agency* for the postcolonial subject" and this connection enhances the subject's ability "to resist interpellation of ideology and the subject formation of discourse" (ibid., 118). While resistance as mere opposition is defensive, insistence is "productive, assertive and excessive… Agency is most productive when it is involved in fashioning the self." Such a kind of self-fashioning "is *transformative* when it takes hold of the dominant language, genre, technology, and uses it for that purpose" while this process also transforms the discourse (ibid., 119).

While discussing the forms of resistance in postcolonial literatures, great care should be paid to avoid easy categorizations. The anti-colonialist project should not simply be equated to so-called "Third-world" writing produced from the formerly colonized nations. Such an equation contains two major pitfalls: firstly, it might

provide a false assumption that all literary writing from these regions has radical and contestory content and agenda; secondly, it might imply that no anti-colonial writing can be produced outside the borders of "Third-world" countries. As Stephen Slemon further explains, the most significant form of resistance to any power is produced "from the communities that are most immediately and visibly subordinated by that power structure" (348).

2.4. Homi Bhabha's Post/colonial Terminology

In the field of postcolonial criticism, Homi Bhabha stands as one of the most important critical theorists. Bhabha has become one of the leading voices in postcolonial theory since the 1980s with his often complex and esoteric style. He derives much of his theoretical inspiration from Lacan, Derrida and Foucault. Therefore, poststructuralist and psychoanalytical theories have been very crucial reference points in his theory and writing style. With concepts such as mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and sly civility, he challenges the colonizer's power which is "never as secure as it seems" (Huddart 1). Homi Bhabha's major contribution to postcolonialism is his theorizing over the notion of ambivalence immanent in the nature of colonial discourse, developing theories of in-betweenness and of what the different possibilities of resistance might be in a postcolonial world, where any attempt at resistance is unlikely to occur. The originality of his work depends mainly on two things: Firstly, he provides a conceptual vocabulary for "the reading of colonial and postcolonial texts..., [which] shows how rigid distinctions between the colonizer and colonized have always been impossible to maintain". Secondly, through this vocabulary Bhabha tries to show that "the West is troubled by its 'doubles', in particular the East", which forces the West to question its own identity and to "justify its rational self-image". So, Western civilization can never be simply Western, as other civilizations' resemblance to it overturns its 'superiority.' "So, on the one hand, Bhabha examines colonial history; on the other, he rethinks the present moment, when colonialism seems a thing of the past" (ibid., 2).

As some critics agree, Bhabha's work is often very difficult to understand at first reading "because of his compact and complex written style" or, as Arif Dirlik asserts, he is "something of a master of political mystification and theoretical

obfuscation" (qtd. in McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 51), which is partly true. Critics like Benita Parry and Rasheed Araeen harshly criticize Bhabha, and especially Araeen accuses him of being one of the "neo-liberal collaborators" in the late capitalist economy (qtd. in Huddart 161). Bhabha shows the enunciation as the site creating meaning and hybridity. Because of that, Benita Parry criticizes Bhabha for espousing "semiotic idealism" through which the meaning is produced and "located in the enunciative act, not in the substance of the narrated event" (Parry qtd. in Kraniauskas 240).

One can construct useful knowledge out of Bhabha's concepts of 'mimicry' and 'ambivalence' in the operations of colonial discourses. In his reading of colonial discourse, Bhabha stresses the move away from ready reception of images as simply positive or negative to a conception of "the *processes of subjectification*…through stereotypical discourse" (Bhabha 95, emphasis original). Colonial discourse seeks to establish an authority in the production of knowledges concerning the stereotypical construction of the colonizer and the colonized. Its target is to show the colonized as degenerate people and justify the colonial programme to 'civilize', administer and instruct these people. A colonial system produces the colonized "as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (ibid., 101).

2.4.1. Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse, Mimicry and Hybridity

Drawing upon Derridean and Lacanian concepts such as subjectivity and language, Bhabha concentrates on the slippages, ambivalences and splits that disrupt the supposedly unified authority of dominant discourse. The encounter of the colonizer and the colonized, for Bhabha, always affects both. While colonialism is an "affective experience of marginality" which prefigures fragmentation and indeterminacy for the colonized, the colonizer cannot escape the paradoxical connection with the colonized (Bhabha qtd. in Bertens 207). This psychic ambivalence on the parties of colonial relationship creates unforeseen ways for the colonized subject to outmanoeuvre the operations of colonial power, by way of a process described as "psychological guerrilla warfare". Ambivalence in identity or cultural difference becomes a subversive condition and a political act grounded in the nature of colonial discourse. Thus, colonial power becomes inherently

vulnerable to destabilization, which is termed "resistance from within" (Moore-Gilbert 130).

Moore-Gilbert divides major sources of Bhabha's theorizing and their function in understanding colonial relationship under three headings. Firstly, following Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Bhabha contends that like other forms of power, colonial authority "unintentionally incites refusal, blockage, and invalidation in its attempts at surveillance". Secondly, with a synthesis of Foucault's "material repeatability" and Derrida's "iterability" and "differance" in *Writing and Difference* (1967), he claims that "intransitive resistance" stems from the "vicissitudes to which all language is intrinsically liable" particularly by the processes of "repetition[2]" and "translation". Lastly, following Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1973), he argues that the gaze of the colonizer is always disrupted by the fact that "colonial identity is always partly dependent for its constitution on a colonized Other who is potentially hostile" (ibid., 131). Moreover, Bhabha borrows Lacan's concept of "identity as negation", which radically disputes that:

> the colonizer's identity is derived from, and exists in uneasy if not contradictory symbiosis with, that of the colonized... The colonized is that which the colonial occupier is not, the negative to his positive, yet the latter's authority would be meaningless were he not be able to invoke that 'is not' in order to constitute his authority within the colony, as well as his own colonial identity. (Boehmer, "Postcolonialism" 355)

For this reason, colonial authority is menaced by destabilization. While the control of the colonial power is threatened, the colonized can produce acts of resistance. In the same way, stereotypes are not as stable as they seem. One can discover an anxiety of "sameness" at the base of colonial stereotypes. The concept of ambivalence proves to be useful for the slippage or split in the intended meaning of stereotypes. As David Huddart defines it, "[stereotype] is a cliché that is robbed of its power to be newly meaningful—colonial discourse fixes identity, and denies it any chance of change" (41). He goes on to discuss the function of stereotypes as their ability to "glide over reality, licensing disgust, disavowal, domination, death" (ibid., 65).

[2] Interpreting this Derridean term, David Huddart defines "iteration" as the necessary "repeatability of any mark, idea, or statement if it is to be meaningful; a mark of that would appear only once would be meaningless…it is one of the processes from which meaning derives…these marks should appear in different contexts" (16).

Bhabha sees postcolonial discourse as mimicry of dominant cultures. The nature of colonial discourse is always split, ambivalent and menaced by mimicry. Mimicry, according to Bhabha, is not "a slavish imitation" or assimilation into a superior and purportedly dominant culture, it is the "exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas". Repetition is central to mimicry, because the act of repetition, rather than representation, disrupts originality. As Huddart maintains, mimicry is "repetition with difference" and also "a form of mockery". He also asserts that Bhabha's "post-colonial theory is a comic approach to colonial discourse", since it mocks the practices of colonialism and empire (57).

In explaining mimicry, Bhabha employs the Derridean idea of the crucial repetition of meaning. When this concept is transferred to the colonial context, Bhabha discovers that the European aim to duplicate their self-image on the colonized is distorted in the presence of the colonized:

> Any meaning, that is, in order to do its work, 'to mean', has constantly to be reasserted and repeated. This then is the role of the colonizer, ever anxious to reinforce his authority. But no repetition can ever be equivalent to the original meaning (or it would be the original itself). Here lies the leverage of the colonized, to demonstrate that the colonizer's power is never secure. (Boehmer, "Postcolonialism" 355-6)

Mimicry, thus, turns into "menace" rather than "resemblance", in opposition to the colonizer's plan (Bhabha 123). It also weakens the self-confidence of the colonizer. The colonized repeat the colonizer's social and cultural values in a somewhat deformed way. The colonizer is "othered" by its own distorted image; therefore, "the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (ibid., 126).

A destabilizing "ironic compromise…the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" lies at the heart of mimicry (ibid., 122, emphasis original). The colonial system tries to remake the colonized in its own image and also other to what they were before. However, as they are not European, or white, "there was always slippage of hybridization…in the meanings that they thus worked to reiterate". This "*not quite sameness*" causes unsteadiness in colonial consciousness because the colonizer, expecting the colonized to mirror a 'pure' image back at him, faces a troubling distortion: "an almost sameness, a not-quite otherness" (Boehmer, "Postcolonialism" 356). This is

altogether against the expectations of the colonizer, as subjects produced by mimicry are distorted images of the colonizer. This image damages the identity of the colonizer and simultaneously "disavows" and "rearticulates" its presence in the system of stereotype. Desiring to emerge as authentic through mimicry is an irony of representation. In terms of Bhabha's notion of mimicry, "[t]he colonizer has no absolute pre-existent identity which can be mimicked, and the colonized likewise has no real identity which he or she is betraying through mimicry" (Huddart 71).

Hybridity has become one of the most widespread conceptual terms in postcolonial theory and literature. Like the term postcolonialism, the notion of hybridity has duly aroused suspicion from theorists and critics who say that it terminates cultural distinctions. It is widely discussed that hybridity is an "academic euphemism for the Westernization of non-Western societies" and a part of "cultural imperialism thesis" (Mwangi 44). Although critical practices related to hybridity and ambivalence are mostly criticized for neglecting the material operation of power, they have been useful to "provide a subtler and more nuanced view of colonial subjectivity and colonial relationship than usual 'us' and 'them' distinctions" (Ashcroft et al, *Empire* 206). Bhabha's interpretation of the connection between the colonized and the colonizer is clearly put in David Huddart's explanation that "Bhabha's work explores how language transforms the way identities are structured when colonizer and colonized interact, finding that colonialism is marked by a complex economy of identity in which colonized and colonizer depend on each other" (3). Bhabha questions the nature of colonial domination in Said's *Orientalism* and concludes that the picture that depicts the colonized as inferior and the colonizer as the civilized and civilizing counterpart is undermined by the "sameness" of the colonized population. Thus, he criticizes Said for providing a tableau of the East continually and brutally subjugated by the West, instead he offers a space for the subaltern voice "falling outside histories of colonialism" (ibid., 6). In other words, instead of simple binary divisions, Bhabha offers a hybridity of cultures. He describes hybridity as an ongoing process on the contact spaces of cultures. For him, "there are no cultures that come together leading to hybrid forms; instead, cultures are the consequences of attempts to still the flux of cultural hybridities" (ibid., 7).

Jahan Ramazani defines the postcolonial poet as the "hybrid muse" who applies hybridity both in form and content (*Hybrid Muse* 17). Foregrounding

hybridity in his/her work, the postcolonial poet tries to reach at "an integrative manner" without reading texts only in their local contexts, but, rather, carrying them to "more active translocal and intercontextual sites of agency" (Mwangi 44). Hybridity is not only a theoretical and stylistic gesture; it is socially and politically functional as well. The notion of hybridity is closely related to resistance in various forms, which is the concern of this study. Bhabha takes up this view in "Culture's in-Between," in which he sees hybridization as a counter-strategy to colonial hegemony. The hybrid strategy or discourse makes available a space of "negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation might be equivocal". This counter-strategy leads to the development of, "interstitial agency", which "does not seek cultural supremacy, sovereignty, assimilation, or collaboration". Rather, hybrid agencies organize "the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; outside of the inside: the part of the whole" (Bhabha, "Culture's In-Between" 58).

Hybridity can also be interpreted in Bakhtinian terms as a mixture of genres, modes of expression, languages, and texts from temporal and spatial sources. In this view, hybridity is:

> a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor (qtd. in Mwangi 44).

Bhabha suggests that Bakhtin creates a space of enunciation where "the negotiation of discursive doubleness […] engenders a new speech act." Developing this concept of hybridity, Bhabha notes that he tries to depict "the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism and or inequity". So, strategies of hybridization, for Bhabha, divulge an estranging moment in the "authoritative" and the "authoritative inscription of the cultural sign" ("Culture's In-Between" 58).

Rather than presenting difference as destructive, hybridity represents coexistence, as Sakamoto (1996) explains, "[g]iving up the desire for a pure origin, hybridity retains a sense of difference and tension between two cultures, but without assuming hierarchy. It is not just new identity but a new form of identity" (qtd. in

Bolatagici 77). However, hybridization is not "some happy, consensual mix of diverse cultures":

> [I]t is the strategic, translational transfer of tone, value, signification, and position—a transfer of power—from an authoritative system of cultural hegemony to an emergent process of cultural relocation…opening up contesting, opposing, innovative, "other" grounds of subject and object formation. (Sheshadri-Crooks 370)

Hybridity is potentially subversive of dominant ideologies and practices, which causes a destabilization of essentialisms in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Papastergiadis refers to the positive feature of hybridity, where negotiation of difference takes up a crucial role in forming identities: "identity is not the combination of, accumulation, fusion or synthesis of various components, *but an energy field of different forces*" (258, emphasis mine). Yet it is not limited to a "cataloguing of difference" and its "unity is not found in the sum of its parts, but emerges from the process of what Bhabha has called a third space within which other elements encounter and transform each other" (ibid., 258). This two-sided transformation brings new insights into understanding postcolonial or hybrid identities.

Hybridity, in this respect, functions on two levels. First, there is a steady process of "differentiation and exchange" between the centre and periphery or centres or peripheries, thus it serves as a metaphor for the type of identities produced out of these connections. Hall's argument that hybrid identities are always incomplete does not imply that these identities aim "a sense of wholeness" and thus fail at being a finished product, "their energy for being is directed by the flows of an ongoing process". Second, the "politics of representation", thus, gets a new understanding with the anti-essentialist viewpoint on identity (ibid., 275). Homi Bhabha has a similar attitude towards identity in "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative" saying that "identity is ever possible in the negation of any sense of originality or plenitude, through the principle of displacement and differentiation…that always renders a liminal reality" (73). In the study of culture, hybridity is ideally thought of as a "metaphor for a process of mutual borrowing when cultures meet, intersect, blend, and transform each other to produce an in-between and third space between merging poles" (Mwangi 44).

Hybridity can be taken as a counter-narrative, criticizing the canon and its exclusion of "other" narratives. The importance of hybridity is that "it bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it…so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings and discourses" and, thus cultural hybridity creates "a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Rutherford 211). For Bhabha, it is the in-between space that carries the burden of cultural meanings. Bhabha asserts that hybridity denies essentialism and carries the traces of discourses at the same time due to the interference of cultural translation. Bhabha's use of "translation" refers to Derrida for whom "translation is another name for the impossible"; however, he slightly changes this for his purposes and 'translation', thus, can be seen as "a way of describing the negotiation of personal and group meanings within identity discourses", in which reflexivity gets crucial importance because of "the self others in which interactants engage in the production of identifications" (Tate 8). The use of metaphors is one way of tracing hybridity in a text and Bhabha's example of the use of "migrant metaphor" in Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* suggests that the use of migration as metaphor opens up a space for meanings which "are ambivalent, doubling and dissembling". As Bhabha puts it, "metaphor produces hybrid realities by yoking together unlikely traditions of thought" (Rutherford 21). It refers to the fact that cultures are not separate phenomena; they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to "cultural mixed-ness".

At the margins of hybridity lie cultural differences which negotiate and combat. This leads to a moment of panic which reveals, as Bhabha calls it, "a borderline experience". This borderline experience improves understanding of the nature of political struggle. The indigenous ethnic references "inside" are dislocated, "turned inside-out" and become "the circulating signs of an 'English' panic, disavowed by the official discourse of imperial language, represented in the language of indeterminacy" (Bhabha 296-7). The borderline existence depends on the acts of "survival". From the minority position, the migrant "dramatizes culture's untranslatibility" and faces an "ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity which marks the identification with the culture's difference" (ibid., 321).

With hybridity, the dominant discourse loses its power to be representative and authoritative. Therefore, "denied" knowledges enter into the dominant discourse

by subverting the rules of recognition. The presence of colonialist dominance is rendered invisible and the process of producing stereotypes is punctured. "[T]he knowledges of cultural authority may be articulated with forms of 'native' knowledges or faced with those discriminated subjects that they must rule but no longer represent" (ibid., 164).

Hybridity proves to be useful for postcolonial studies as it suggests a way of thinking beyond "exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial and national purity". This thinking is against totalising narratives of individual and communal identity. Hybrid identities are "never total and complete in themselves, like orderly pathways built from crazy-paving. Instead, they remain perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription" (McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 219). As poststructuralist thought would have it, subjectivity is constructed through changing discourse of power. This discourse "speaks through us" by placing us in specific positions and relations. We are never "the authors of ourselves" and identities are written for us; hence, the subject "cannot be 'sovereign' over the construction of the self" and is "de-centred in that its consciousness is always being constructed from positions outside itself" (ibid., 192).

Homi Bhabha refers to the "interstitial perspective" as one of the strategies of reading colonial and postcolonial cultural productions. The "interstitial perspective," as Bhabha calls it, replaces "the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation 'in itself' and extrinsic other nations" with the notion of "cultural liminality within the nation" (Bhabha 212). The liminal figure of the nation-space disclaims political control and authority. As the subject of cultural discourse, "the agency of a people" is divided with "discursive ambivalence" that competes over the narrative authority of the nation (ibid., 212). "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (ibid., 5). Therefore, the status of these people as "historical objects of nationalist pedagogy" or their capacity to perform themselves as "subjects of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary [national] presence" (ibid., 208).

"Interstitial spaces" are framed as contestory sites of cultural formation, transformation and forms of cultural resistance. In privileging liminality, "solid,

authentic culture" is undermined in favour of "unexpected, hybrid, and fortuitous cultures". Bhabha is more interested in the signification (the creation of meaning) rather than the actual borders between nations. The location of culture is both "spatial" and "temporal": "the liminal is often found in particular (post-colonial) social spaces, but also marks the constant process of creating new identities. Hybridity and liminality do not refer only to space, but also to time" (Huddart 7).

Bhabha deals with English colonialism from the "liminal space" where every confrontation between cultures produces a site of conflict, interaction and mutual assimilation. For Bhabha, the border indicates a place where "conventional patterns of thought are disturbed and can be disrupted by the possibility of crossing…so, it is argued that *imaginative* border-crossings are as much a consequence of migration as *the physical* crossing of borders" (McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 217). The liminal is significant in postcolonial theory as it refers to an "in-between" space where cultural transformation can take place. "Liminal space" includes constant interaction, contestation and appropriation. For instance, Ashcroft et al assert that postcolonial discourse continuously inhabits the liminal space "for the polarities of imperial rhetoric on one hand, and national or racial characterization on the other" (*Key Concepts* 131).

2.4.2. Time-lag, Catachresis and "Third Space"

Time-lag can be defined as a moment of "belatedness", "a contingent moment in the signification of closure" (Bhabha 263) between the signifier and the signified, through which the anti-colonial subject achieves a relative autonomy for his/her conscious intellectual activities. This time-lag is between the "event of the sign" and "its discursive eventuality" which gives a complex possibility of "negotiating meaning and agency through the time-lag in-between the sign and its initiation of a discourse or narrative" (ibid.). This moment creates a new space of control, and the signification process gives individual agency a new way for politics. Bhabha supports this idea in "DissemiNation" stating that "the aim of cultural difference is to rearticulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority that resists totalization" and this disturbs the

calculation of power and "produce[s] other spaces of subaltern signification" (ibid., 232-3).

Colonial authority becomes non-identical with itself due to this lag in the signification process. The colonizer's conscious or unconscious desire to exercise authority over the colonial discourse is overturned, as Bhabha suggests, "'Englishness' (what the colonizer's authority ultimately depends upon) is itself a belated 'effect' which emerges as a consequence of contact with alien cultures." This is an early formulation of time-lag which suggests that there appears a 'lack' at the centre of the colonizer's identity and which causes "the colonial discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative" (Bhabha qtd. in Moore-Gilbert 121). Bhabha describes this formula as follows:

> The time-lag opens up [the] negotiatory space between putting the question to the subject and the subject's repetition 'around' the neither/ nor of the third locus. This constitutes the return of the subject agent, as the interrogative agency in the catachrestic position. Such a disjunctive space of temporality is the locus of symbolic identification that structures the intersubjective realm—the realm of otherness and the social— (Bhabha 264-5)

At this moment, the colonized subject tries to identify itself with the colonizer other who is at the moment closed to being imitated; that is why this moment cannot create actual resemblance between the two parties, and only the subverted image of the colonizer generates. Bhabha calls this moment a "liminal moment of identification", in which the subject's own splitting in the time-lag of signification causes "the return of the subject as agent" (265). The articulation of the subject as agent has a double dimension:

> The signified is distanced; the resulting time-lag opens up the space between the lexical and the grammatical, between enunciation and enounced, in-between the anchoring of signifiers. Then, suddenly, this in-between spatial dimension, this distancing, converts itself into the temporality of the 'throw' that iteratively (re)turns the subject as a moment of conclusion and control: a historically or contextually specific subject (ibid., 267).

Through time-lag, the formerly colonized can "rearticulate themselves in terms other than those to which they had historically been assigned" such as primitive or savage,

and “subvert and transform the centre’s narratives of self-description, by revealing what has been left out or repressed in their constitution as ‘monumental’ symbols” (Moore-Gilbert 124). In other words, the process of agency emerges out of this “temporal break in representation” because “when the sign ceases the synchronous flow of the symbol, it also seizes the power to elaborate—through the time-lag—new and hybrid agencies and articulations. This is the moment for revisions” (Bhabha 275). Finally, time-lag keeps alive the making of the past.

In the “hybrid moment”, what the colonized re-write is not the original copy of the colonizer’s text, and misreadings and incongruities in these re-written texts reflect the “uncertainties and ambivalences of the colonialist text and deny it an authorizing presence”. This gives way to a “textual insurrection” against the discourse of colonial authority and colonized interrogates the English Book from within, through their own system of meanings, which Benita Parry calls, “a displacement which is read back from the record written by colonialism’s agents and ambassadors” (48). In this moment, Bhabha does not suggest that the colonized holds absolute power, however, he finds a lag, “liminal” or “interstitial” space where he can rearticulate the colonialist text.

In Bhabha’s conception of resistance, “the dominating is seen to be reciprocally dependent on (in “dialogue” with) the dominated” and the spontaneous and immanent resistance is misappropriating the sings of the colonizer “for political and economic empowerment through the praxis of the dominant” (Sahay 229). Another important un/conscious strategy is catachresis, which rhetorically means the misuse and abuse of word and terms. In order to justify colonial usurpation and rule, colonial discourse tries to establish the colonized as racially depraved people. However, the ambivalence in power and knowledge of colonial discourse creates a split in the discursive system. Benita Parry examines Bhabha’s discussion that the discursive split in enunciation forms “a dispersed and variously positioned native who by (mis)appropriating the terms of the dominant ideology, is able to intercede against and resist his mode of construction” (48). Spivak depicts the postcolonial position as “reversing, displacing and seizing the apparatus of value-coding” by constituting a catachrestic space. In this space, words and concepts are “wrested” from their proper meaning and turn into “concept-metaphor without an adequate referent” disrupting its enclosed context (Bhabha 263). In a broader aspect,

catachresis[3] is defined as a process by which "the colonized take and reinscribe something that exists traditionally as a feature of imperial culture", for instance, the colonized's adoption of parliamentary democracy (Ashcroft, *Key Concepts* 34).

The postcolonial discourse of "third space" has been articulated by Bhabha in numerous works. Third space is characterized as arenas where people on the margins create and re-create their identity, often in response to their marginalization. Thus, "third" pertains to the "constructing and reconstructing of identity, to the fluidity of space, to the space where identity is not fixed", also it denotes "the place where negotiation takes place, where…life in all its ambiguity is played out" (English 100). It is about identity politics; questioning that most crucial space of people's lives that makes one aware that identity is always in flux. In "Commitment to Theory", Bhabha emphasizes that meaning is never mimetic or clear; however, the production of meaning entails a third space representing general conditions of language and creates ambivalence in the act of interpretation. "The meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other", which gives way to a realization that "no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content" (53). It is this third space of enunciation which "ensure[s] that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (ibid., 55). This third space is, therefore, the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference.

The language of "otherness" depends on repressing or marginalizing the capacity of culture in the act of enunciation. The "third space" represents a strategy of enunciation that disrupts and dislocates the dominant discursive construction of us and them. Homi Bhabha defines the "third space" as follows:

> All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity is to me the "third space" which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom…The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a

[3] In Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of western philosophical discourse, catachresis refers to "the original incompleteness or impropriety that is a general condition in all systems of meaning" (Morton 34).

> new area of negotiation of meaning and representation (Rutherford 211).

Nations and cultures are constructed out of interactions with other cultures; therefore, cultural identity is for all time an assortment of differences. In its encounter with the colonizing culture, the oppressed culture is not simply silenced, yet it is active in the formation of identity that is neither that of the colonizer nor that of the colonized. A 'third space' is mutually formed out of this struggle. The idea of the 'third space' does not imply that powers in this struggle are equal but it tries to foreground the fact that that colonial relations are carried out in a constantly shifting space that results in both dominance and the possibility of displacement and subversion. The concept of a third space can be used in the analysis of the poems selected to show how cultural struggle between the colonizer and the colonized creates cultural hybridities, expressed with the application of subversive techniques. This in-between space provides a location for 'elaborating strategies of self-hood-singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity' (Bhabha 2).

2.5. Towards Postcolonial Identity and Agency

In a postcolonial text, the problem of identity turns into a constant interrogation of "frame, the space of representation, where the image—the missing person, invisible eye, Oriental stereotype is confronted with its difference, its Other" (ibid., 66). Adopting the Lacanian phrase "the shadow of the other falls upon the self", Bhabha proposes that identities have a narcissistic reflection of one over the other "confronted in the language of desire by the psychoanalytic process of identification" (73). It is necessary to think beyond narratives of originary and *a priori* subjectivities. This enables one to concentrate on the moments and processes re/constructed in the articulations of cultural differences.

Bhabha expresses the "right to narrate" as a strategy to attain national and global identity in a globalized world. This entails the revision of one's sense of "symbolic citizenship" and "myths of belonging" by means of elaborating fresh "starting-points" converging other national and trans-national histories and geographies (ibid., xx). Bhabha argues that there is power and necessity of narrative, the "enunciatory right" rather than an "expressive right" or the free expression of the

individual. This right is not of individual expression, but one gaining force through networks of narratives: "the right to narrate is not the individual who is narrating but a whole network of discursive, cultural, political, institutional, a network of events and enunciations and constructions and writings that construct the possibility of narration" (Chance 5). Bhabha contends that one should see narratives as "the poesis of political and social practice". Among these practices he includes "[m]aking of law, of ethics, the making of history, the making of event, is also part of the right to narrate" (ibid., 6).

Bhabha repeats several times in *The Location of Cultures* that agency is a form of "negotiation". Negotiation in this encounter allows for subaltern agency. Thus, Bhabha contends that "forms of popular rebellion and mobilization are often most subversive and transgressive when they are created through…cultural practices" (29). As Bill Ashcroft et al define, agency refers to "the ability to act or perform an action." In contemporary theory, it deals with the question of "whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed." Agency becomes specifically significant in post-colonial theory for it indicates the capacity of "post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power" (*Key Concepts* 8).

In *The Location of Culture,* Bhabha describes several instances of agency arising out of the challenge to imperial authority. In "Of Mimicry and Man," for example, he writes about the colonizer's attempt to promote a civilizing mission by creating "mimic men," that is, recognizable others who are "*almost the same, but not quite*" (122). But this ambivalence can easily be abused: mimicry readily serves as camouflage for menace or mockery, with the native threatening to deny (or denying) her master's desire for recognition or imitation. Similarly, in "By Bread Alone," the British stereotypically interpret a story—subsequently transformed into uncontrollable rumour by Indian villagers—about the villagers passing a *chapati* (flat bread) from hand to hand and village to village, as a warning sign of the impending 1857 "mutiny" (ibid., 289). *Chapati*'s meaning emerges in the time-lag, the temporal break, in social-symbolic ordering, which transmits rebel agency. The result is panic, and a disabling of British authority: "The iterative action of rumour, its *circulation* and *contagion*, links it with panic—as one of the *affects* of

insurgency," and rumour and panic are "double sites of enunciation that weave their stories around disjunctive 'present' or the 'not-there' of discourse" in times of social crises (286, emphasis original). They become the "circulating signs of an 'English' panic" disclaimed by the official discourse of imperial language; "their indigenous ethnic reference 'inside'" are disrupted and "turned inside-out" (ibid., 296).

Probably the most famous Bhabhaian instance of "spectacular resistance" can be found in the essay entitled "Signs Taken for Wonders." In this article, Bhabha brings the discovery of the English book as "a moment of originality and authority" (145). In the first week of May 1817, Anund Messeh, one of the earlier Indian catechists, makes a visit in Meerut. He finds about 500 people under trees engaged in reading and conversation. Anund asks people what they are reading, and get the answer "the Book of God!" Anund tells these people that this is the European *sahib*'s book, the villager answers "that cannot be, for they eat flesh" (*The Missionary Register* qtd. in Bhabha 146). Anund tells him that "God gave it long ago to the Sahibs, and THEY sent it to us" (147). The appearance of a printed book was miraculous for the villagers. The villagers willingly consent to conform to the customs of Christians except the Sacrament. They refuse this because "Europeans eat cow's flesh, and this will never do for us" (ibid., 148). The concept of the "English book" is offered as "universally adequate": such as "the 'metaphoric writing of the West', it communicates 'the immediate vision of the thing, freed from the discourse that accompanied it, or even encumbered it'" (ibid., 149).

Relying on missionary records of the early 19th century, the essay discloses how an Indian catechist's attempt to convert a group of villagers outside Delhi is subverted: the villagers refuse the sacrament and resist conversion on the grounds that the word of God comes from the mouth of a meat-eater, not a vegetarian. Proposing the idea of a "vegetarian Bible," the villagers are using "the powers of hybridity to resist baptism and to put the project of conversion in an impossible position" (ibid., 170). This time, the villagers taint the dominant discourse with their silenced religious practice, that is vegetarianism, and in so doing they undermine colonial authority. In this sense, as Bhabha reports in "Translator Translated", the episode is not just "an exchange between a muscular colonial Christianity that was keen to convert and an indigenous tradition that resisted conversion" but a "colonial

antagonism" that produces a "supplementary" or "incommensurable" discourse as a site of "resistance and negotiation" (Mitchell 114).

In this example, colonial Christianity is not only re-appropriated, "it is mis-appropriated, mis-interpreted, mis-translated, estranged"; for this reason, the villagers' vegetarian Bible is not "simply a variation, it is an incommensurable position" that confounds the colonial authority (Kapoor 566). This example of agency shows that resistance does not need to have a political intent or exclude the 'content' of other culture.

The notion of doubled, divided or fluid identity is explained through the teachings of poststructuralism and psychoanalytical criticism in Bhabha's work. The concern of poststructuralism is to show the unstable nature of personal and gender identity, and how the texts become a site of "shifting and polyvalent" currents of signification and inhabit multiple ideological struggles (P. Barry 196). Employing a Lacanian perspective on how the identity gets constructed, Bhabha emphasizes that the colonizer cannot be separated from the supposed identity of the colonized. The colonizer's identity is never self-sustained and it "has no 'origin' in himself"; it depends on the interaction with the colonized and "is differential, a 'meaning' generated by difference" (Bertens 207). Bhabha, likewise, comments on the nature of identity in "DissemiNation" that patterns of cultural difference "interpellate forms of identity which, because of their continual implication in other symbolic systems, are always 'incomplete' or open to cultural translation" (233).

As Bhabha asserts in "The postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency", identity is always ex-centric from a postcolonial perspective because it "is claimed either from a position of marginality or in an attempt at gaining the centre" (ibid., 254). To use Ashcroft et al's description of the type of identity in postcolonial situation, the decolonized subject refers to people whose "very disrupted, non-essentialist in-betweenness promotes the energy and power resident in the hybrid, and disrupts the fixity of colonizer-colonized binaries" (*Empire* 6). This idea of identity acknowledges that it is hardly possible to return to a completely pure pre-colonial identity.

Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and hybridity make it clear that cultures must be handled as "complex intersections of multiple places, historical temporalities and subject positions" (Mitchell 80). The third space replaces a

concept of identity based on traditional oppositions between the East and the West, which is why it can be analysed as a cultural strategy. Identity formation in the collections studied here highlights the social interaction of displacement and placing, and points to an ongoing process of self-making. This process brings together the positions of past and present identity. As Ganguly explains,

> remaking or recovering the past serves at least a dual purpose for the diasporic communities. Firstly, it is a way of coping with the conditions of the present without being very critical about the *status quo*. Secondly, it also helps to recuperate a sense of self not dependent on criteria handed down by others - the past is what the diasporic subjects can claim as their own. (40)

This thesis deals with the type of poetry that challenges a fixed and essentialist conception of identity. The process of identity formation of Anglophone Caribbean poets educated or writing in Britain is a constant mediation between past and future, belonging and displacement, "roots" and "routes". In this process, "authentic culture", ethnicity and what is related to the homeland become an important source of identity politics.

2.6 Postcolonialism and West Indian Literature

Jamaica Kincaid characterizes Caribbean people as a lost people who "cannot give an exact account, a complete account of themselves", which describes well how Caribbean literature is situated in the academic and theoretical fields (qtd. in Chancy 329). While the Caribbean critics' preoccupation with the problems of identity and dis/location introduces the complexities of the Caribbean, Caribbean authors make one feel at home with decolonizing struggles, locating Caribbean identities and the migrant experience as inherent characteristics of this literature. To locate theory in a Caribbean context one must consider how Caribbean writers theorise their own work. As Barbara Christian asserts, "our theorising is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking" (qtd. in Donnell and Welsh 10). This raises another controversy in this field: there are always distinctions between postcolonial theoretical formulae and the specific needs of local cultures. Ashcroft et al argue that, as postcolonial societies share common

methods for engaging colonial power, theory might be more useful while analysing local characteristic (*Empire* 211).

To put it plainly, the Anglophone Caribbean poetry under scrutiny is entrapped in the field of critical theory. The editors of *The Routledge Reader to Caribbean Literature* similarly acknowledge the difficulty in applying any Europe-based critical theory to Caribbean literature, especially when these critical theories are unquestioningly adopted. While the writers of Caribbean descent struggle against these "intellectual orthodoxies", there is also a need to strive for or make use of certain theoretical models. Donnell and Welsh offer postcolonial theory as useful for theoretical evaluation for several reasons, claiming that "with its foregrounding cultural difference as a key determinant within evaluation [postcolonial theory] has been enabling to both the analysis and promotion of Caribbean literature" (9). They further explain that in the 1990s postcolonial theory became influential in handling and canonizing Caribbean literature, "[u]nder the auspices of metropolitan universities, post-colonial criticism and theory has become the dominant paradigm through which Caribbean literature is constructed and read outside the Caribbean" and a growing number of Western academic journals give place to many Caribbean writers and critics (Donnell and Welsh 438). Donnell and Welsh rightfully argue depicting the Caribbean as syncretic, where cultural forms and identities are multiple, hybrid and fluid is just an intellectual ideal:

> Perhaps one of the most subtle and interesting problems which theory poses for readers of Caribbean literature is the seduction towards the intellectual 'post-colonial' ideal. By this we mean that the Caribbean, with its lived reality of co-presence and comingling, of hybrid and syncretic social and cultural formations, is almost the post-colonial intellectual utopia—an ethical model in which difference is seen as multiple, positive, and creative. This ideal is problematic because it is purely intellectual and not lived. (452)

Although postcolonial theory is claimed to have a homoginizing and generalizing inclination, the Caribbean has some unique qualities that do not fit into a larger conceptual framework, such as "the absence of alter/native languages, of a common pre-colonial culture, as well as the extraordinary cultural admixture" (ibid., 438).

The Afro-Caribbean poets writing in English employ certain strategies to assert their ethnic, cultural and racial identities and to reproduce alternative

his/stories to official colonial discourse. Although their poetry abounds with hybrid forms, these poets try to avoid establishing a canon that is directly related to Eurocentric practices, since the "forms of cultural dominance against which they struggled were often local instantiations of the imperium" (Ramazani, "Modernist Bricolage" 448). These "instantiations" designed to persist the colonial legacy are exemplified by Jahan Ramazani as

> Victorian sentiment and monologue, missionary prudishness and hypocrisy, colonial education and racism, a tourist industry complicit in the production of imprisoning stereotypes, and nationalisms and nativisms that mirrored European norms in reverse. (ibid.)

For Brathwaite, for instance, the premodern English lyric prevents the "cultural complexity of postcolonial experience" because this model hardly articulates "cultural discordance as being schooled to write poems about unseen snowfall while living in the hurricane-swept tropics" (ibid.). Afro-Caribbean poets want to foreground the differences between their literary productions and those from the imperial centre.

The cultural policy of the canon and the literature disseminated for colonial ideology with the aim of "educating" or "civilizing" the uncivilized other bring critical debates about the value and function of literature in the West Indies. Finding an "independent" cultural and literary identity has been one of the major struggles in the Caribbean. That Caribs, Awaraks and Amerindians, tribes indigenous to the islands, were mostly annihilated by the first colonizers, and later the islands were populated with slaves brought through the Middle Passage[4] from India, Africa, China, and so on, and that there exist various European countries as colonizers, all these elements provide an unmatched "ethnic admixture." This absence of a common culture "made the roles of imaginative forms more vital during the periods of nationalistic struggle" and the relationship between "Caribbeanness" and literature has become complex. Thus, as Donnell and Welsh put forward, in a

[4] It is one of the most brutal colonial encounters. This term is used to describe the transatlantic voyages of African slaves to the Caribbean and the Americas. The journey of slave ships from Africa to the Caribbean- The Middle Passage- becomes the focus of attention in the writings of many Afro-Caribbean poets. It was called the Middle Passage because "the slave trade was a form of Triangular Trade. Ships left Europe for African markets, then sailed to the Americas and Caribbean where the Africans were sold or traded for goods for European markets, and then returned to Europe" (Lovejoy 499).

society as plural and hybrid as the Caribbean, there is “a growing acceptance of a syncretic model of cultural definition which is inclusive and accepts diversity and hybridity as the foundation of both Caribbean aesthetics and cultural identities” (6). For this reason, this study tries to foreground the hybridity and plurality that best characterize the Caribbean literary and cultural experience. This aesthetic does not forgive history and “refuses to recognise it as a creative or culpable force”, and poets think of the language of this history as “enslavement” and while looking for an identity they “respect only incoherence and nostalgia” (Walcott, “The Muse of History” 355).

CHAPTER III

"WHERE IS YOUR KINGDOM OF THE WORD?": THE STRUGGLE OVER LANGUAGE

in my mother's mouth
shall I
use
the father's tongue
cohabit in strange
mother
incestuous words
to revenge the self
broken
upon
the word
(Nourbese Philip, "Testimony Stoops to Mother Tongue" 82)

The father language Philip talks about is the language of the white male colonizer. She mentions a "linguistic rape" and "subsequent forced marriage" that is bestowed upon the Afro-Caribbean people. Forced to write in the father's language, Philip claims that she needs to "engender some alchemical process…a metamorphosis within the language from father tongue to mother tongue" ("Absence" 278). The father's tongue used to oppress and dominate must be replaced with the mother's tongue that gives comfort and meaning, to resist victimization and empower the self/image. Only this way can artists reacquire the power to create their own images with their own tools. The only way to revenge, then, is through "incestuous" adoption of the imposed language. In *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* (1971), Brathwaite stresses the struggle over language in West Indian society, "it was in language that the slave was perhaps most successfully imprisoned by his master" and it was "its (mis-)use of it that perhaps most effectively rebelled" (237).

The West Indian writer needs to find a new way of expression because it is through the use of the colonizer's language that British colonial legacy, the

representation of the colonized's inferiority and the colonizer's values are perpetuated. Therefore, the subversion of the colonizer's language as a means of cultural contestation has been a major outlet for reclaiming individual and collective identities. As Ashcroft et al suggest in *The Empire Writes Back*, language becomes a means through which "a hierarchical structure of power" is sustained and "conceptions of 'truth,' 'order,' and 'reality' become established." Postcolonial writers reject such power "in the emergence of an effective postcolonial voice" (7). The voice patterns inherited from the African and Caribbean heritage and a mixture of Standard English and Creole provide ways to rewrite post/colonial history. Through the rhythms of their poetry, poets stir the sound, the event and the world-view of the postcolonial subjects they are representing.

Postcolonial writers' position on language is characterised by two major concepts: appropriation and abrogation. Appropriation refers to the aspects postcolonial societies adopt to articulate their social and cultural identities. As Ashcroft et al explain in *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies*, "the dominant language and its discursive forms are appropriated to express widely differing cultural experiences, and to interpolate these experiences into the dominant modes of representation to reach the widest possible audience" (19). In appropriating English, postcolonial writers manage to (re)cipher subversive and problematic meanings. Using the dominant language enables a postcolonial writer to reach a wider audience, all while the language of the postcolonial text is hybridized with forms and languages the writer is native and/or 'other' to. Also, making use of aspects of the colonizing culture subversively "generate[s] transformative cultural productions" and helps "*define themselves* not as much in contradistinction to the former colonizer, as *from within* the colonists' word" (Boehmer, "Postcolonialism" 359, emphasis original). Abrogation, on the other hand, applies to the postcolonial writer's refusal to use the Standard English. It has a significant political intent, as abrogation suggests "a counter to the theory that use of the colonialist's language imprisons the colonized within the colonizer's conceptual paradigms" (Ashcroft et al, *Key Concepts* 5).

Edouard Glissant's model for this encounter between two or more languages is to "'make them opaque to each other,' to recognize and perhaps intensify the 'irreducible density' of each language". Glissant wants to reach a point "where other

is not readily grasped" and persists in "recognizing and respecting the irreducible difference of the other" (Josephs, pars. 17-18). This strategy also translates "forced poetics" into cross-cultural poetics. By "forced poetics," Glissant refers to the inconsistency between the lived experience and its expression in an alien system of signification. The writer struggles to convert "forced poetics" into a cross-cultural one by "cut[ting] across one language in order to attain a form of expression that is perhaps not part of the internal logic of this language" (Glissant 121). The writer, thus, forms a "third space" through conscious strategies of appropriation and/or abrogation. Recognizing the inherited colonial language as an insidious symbolic system, the postcolonial writer presents language "as shock… as antidote, a nonneutral one through which the problems of community can be restated" (Dash xxvi).

The difference of the Caribbean from other colonies is that they hardly have a single native language to return to. Slaves brought to the Caribbean consisted of different tribes with different languages. Talking in tribal languages was banned by the slave-holder to prevent possible revolt. The English language was imposed at the expense of tribal languages or other linguistic registers indigenous to the island. This led to a "submerged" language which had a potential for cultural resistance. Brathwaite's critical work and poetry are related to debates on creolization, nation language and oraliture[5] in West Indian literature. He elaborates all these discussions in his seminal book *History of Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* first printed in 1984. In this work, Brathwaite names this submerged language as "nation language" and shows its relation to the colonizer's language:

> Nation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/ Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them might be English to a greater or lesser degree…it is not English that is the agent. It is not language, but people who make revolutions. (13)

[5] This is one of Ernest Mirville's neologisms, merging "orality" and "literature". Brathwaite uses this term frequently in his works of criticism.

Brathwaite stresses a common cultural experience with the culmination of African speech patterns and those of the English language. The use of this language provides the formerly colonized peoples with a strategy. This strategy offers a theory of voice against the colonizer's "denial of voice, whether poetic, polemical, or political" (Hitchcock, "It Dread Inna Inglan" par. 3).

Brathwaite's use of "nation" is catachrestic for it does not stand for a distinct Caribbean nation but, practically, for the mixture of the Caribbean linguistic practices and those inherited from the African and European. McLeod discusses that it does not support "a *strict* sense of Caribbean collectivity;" however, its variety suggests "innovation and heterogeneity." The term paradoxically extends its borders by including those of Indian or European ancestry apart from Afro-centred epistemology (*Beginning Postcolonialism* 129). Thus, the term is more figurative than literal. It is also reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's discussion of "imagined communities," which are imagined as both "inherently limited and sovereign." This community is imagined because "members will never know most of their fellow-members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." It is limited because it has "finite, though elastic boundaries beyond which lie other nations" (6-7).

Nation language enables the process of creolization which is widely discussed as a major Caribbean issue. The in-betweenness suggested by the creolization process "is a site as much a space…containing counter-hegemonic potential" (Khan 168). It is the "interlapping of experiences" that fabricates "a new kind of cultural imagination." With the arrival of Africans in the Caribbean, the culture they brought with them interacted with the culture of Europe, the conquistador, the Amerindian, the native inhabitants, which bred a new creolized social structure. Thus, Brathwaite asserts that "we start with the ruins and our responsibility is to rebuild those fragments into a whole society" with an underlying effort "to in-gather, to restore" (Mackey, "Interview" 23-4).

Moreover, nation language is employed in West Indian literature for its subversive quality. This distorted hybrid language becomes "intransigent un-English," a kind of master's language that the master hardly comprehends (Brathwaite qtd. in Nair 246). This idea is reminiscent of Bhabha's notion of mimicry. While the colonizer wants the colonized to speak his language and receive

its values, the colonized produces a distorted version of his linguistic registers. It threatens with abnormal and strategic production of "conflictual, fantastic discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power" that is indefinable because it hints at "no essence, no 'itself'" (Bhabha 129). The language becomes a means through which the postcolonial subject can hide itself, camouflage his personality and preserve his culture (Brathwaite, *History of Voice* 16). Spivak also discusses this point in her argument of catachresis, "loan-words, the importation of non-standard, non-English, or foreign, or like-English-but-not…partake of 'catachrestical concept-metaphor' making: they 'move history out of methodological necessity of a presupposed origin" (qtd. in Hitchcock, "Decolonizing (the) English" 761).

The noise is a contributing factor to nation language. The impact of sound in West Indian poetry occurs when "the iambic scribal text loses its thrust as a cultural signifier for the Anglophone Caribbean" (Hart 216). Brathwaite expresses the inefficiency of iambic pentameter, the dominant metre of English poetry since the early Renaissance, for the Caribbean experience in his oft-quoted axiom, "the hurricane does not roar in pentameters" (*History of Voice* 10). For Brathwaite, the iambic pentameter represents different colonial practices. These values, laws and aesthetic standards are perpetuated through its staccato rhythms that recall "the march of the imperial soldiers rather than the sound of the pebble, as it plays on the sea and in the wind" (Naylor 143). Employing local musical forms, sounds and images, and the cultural importance of drumming rhythms, Brathwaite tries to reflect the "environmental experience," which gives a sense of place in lieu of displacement and fragmentation. These components of nation language also inspire an instance of resistance and cultural self-definition.

The linguistic activity of Anglophone Caribbean poets is best described by Nourbese Philip, who also foregrounds the function of nation language:

> The formal standard language was subverted, turned upside down, inside out and sometimes even erased. Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; tonal accentuation took the place of several words at times; rhythms held sway. This used to be and sometimes still is referred to as bad English, broken English, patois, dialect, idiolect, but it is also the living legacy of an experience, the living legacy of a people trying and succeeding in giving voice to their experience in the best and sometimes the only way possible. ("Absence" 275)

Nation language therefore becomes more than a variant of Standard English. It is what people invent to have an aural and visual equivalent to the hybrid and complex nature of their identities. Poets at times use nation language and Standard English together. This may have several reasons, such as showing the ability to write in both languages, trying to foreground their similarities and differences on the same page or reaching the widest possible audience.

The first point of discussion in the following sections is how Afro-Caribbean poets experiment with form and language. They largely deal with discovering unconventional discursive strategies to "reshape the dominant epistemological borders of the English canon" and to invent "new frames and more fitting aesthetic correlatives to house their diverse and syncretic cultural background" (Nasta 572). In this way, English poetic forms are indigenized. Voice also becomes the active component of poems as the bearer of utterance. In *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), Mladen Dolar analyzes the social function of voice and its connection with meaning. For him, it has a strange persistence within and beyond the multiple significations it carries:

> As if the voice were the epitome of a society that we carry with us and cannot get away from. We are social beings by the voice and through the voice; it seems that the voice stands at the axis of our social bonds, and that voices are the very texture of social, as well as the intimate kernel of subjectivity" (14).

Any sign, on the page, including spaces and silences, is designed to produce a particular voice of experience. Brathwaite contends that it is a type of English "which is like a howl, or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave" (*History of Voice* 13). Intrusive punctuation and unexpected spacings enhance the voices of the text. The functional use of punctuation, conscious grammatical mistakes, and neologisms and broken words help iterate a new cultural expression. The poets sometimes insert indigenous words, sighs, cries and other exclamatory expressions to problematize the oral and the written binary in their work. Music accompanies the spoken word in the rhythm of the poems. Brathwaite's poetry is indebted to Jazz and calypso, Grace Nichols' to folk rhythms, hymns and worksongs and Linton Kwesi Johnson's poetry is informed with reggae rhythms and dub performance. Some other commonplace aesthetic forms among Afro-Caribbean writers are literary archetypes

that "interweave disparate genealogies," metaphors that unite dissonant cultural perspectives, "ironies that rhetorically twin warring meanings" and genres that fuse the disciplinary and literary forms of the colonizer with the inherited oral traditions of the colonized" (Ramazani, *Hybrid Muse* 180).

Moreover, visual aspects of the poems accompany its voice system and support the thematic concerns of the poet. All the tools a word processor enables on the page, Brathwaite calls "nuances of language," such as "fonts, line (dis)placements, typeface, typographic symbols, wordplay and page margins" and these become means of distortion to build up Afro-Caribbean "kingdoms of the Word" (Nair 245). The speaking "I" or the collective "we" in the poems of these postcolonial poets implies the "location and locution of poetic voice" that "repeat[s] and reverberate[s] across historically specific moments of the minority predicament" (Bhabha xxii). The speaking subject tries to appropriate an interstitial place in the "uncanny fluency of another's language" (ibid., 199).

"Naming" the New World with the appropriation of signs is another point that will be analyzed in the poems. As Derek Walcott discusses in "Fragments of Epic Memory" the language of poetry opposes colonial ideology and its established institutions. People formerly subdued by slavery and indenture, thus, should rename nouns, for "the process of renaming, or finding new metaphors, is the same process that the poet faces every morning of his working day, making his own tools like Crusoe, assembling nouns from necessity…even renaming himself" (506-7). Bhabha defines this strategy as "the right to signify" that provides a medium of agency:

> [A] specifically postcolonial performance of reinscription, the focus shifts from nominalism of imperialism to the emergence of other sign of agency and identity. It signifies the destiny of culture as a site, not simply of subversion and transgression, but one that prefigures a kind of solidarity between ethnicities that meet in the tryst of colonial history. (331)

(Re)naming has a crucial importance in regaining identity. It enables an "agency of initiation" that again possesses "the signs of survival, the terrain of other histories, the hybridity of cultures" (ibid., 336). In *Tings an' Times*, Johnson remaps London through his renaming of places of Black youth and of recent historical events. In Grace Nichols' collection, only by renaming their experience and landscape with words "from the root of the old one" can the long-memoried woman and other slave

women assert their identities and create a hybrid language. Naming becomes a symbolic act in *X/Self* as the "X" self explores its identity through a culmination of words misappropriated, mispronounced and/or newly coined.

Nourbese Philip draws attention to the use of image in any art form. Image in her definition refers to "all verbal techniques used by the writers to convey meaning and non-meaning at the source of which is the process of imag-ination." These techniques include simile, metaphor, symbol, myth and so forth. The major function of images is "the fuelling of the artist's imagination" ("Absence" 272). For the communal identity, these images prove to have different functions. It may change how a society perceives and its collective consciousness gets a new shape. "The role of the image, image-making and image control are significant" for the Caribbean society, which has long been dominated by the images of the colonizer (ibid., 273). Therefore, Afro-Caribbean poets should create and control their images and the process of image-making to materialize their New World experiences.

Afro-Caribbean writers produce images of hybrid experience and mostly misuse the images of the colonizer. In *Roots*, Brathwaite catches an instance of creolization referring to an essay written by Caribbean girl. The essay characterizes the image of snowfall on cane fields, which is against the local reality. Brathwaite records the creole picture in the girl's mind, "the child had not yet reached the obvious statement that it wasn't snow at all, but rain that was probably falling on the cane fields. She was trying to have both cultures at the same time…that is creolization" (264). Nourbese Philip refers to the essential tension between the image and the word that gives voice to the image. The identification of an image with a word, signifier and signified, depends on the medium of "familiarity." The balance between the image and word has been disturbed by the colonizer and alien and negative images infuse into the Afro-Caribbean psyche. Therefore, "reclaim[ing] the experience required autonomous image makers and thereby a language possessing the emotional linguistic and historical resources capable of giving voice to the particular image arising out of the experience" (Philip, "Absence" 274). To control his/her own images, the Afro-Caribbean writer should distill the past in English language and articulate images by simultaneously naming them. Although many different images are at play in Brathwaite's *X/Self*, the following section of this chapter will focus on the image of the circle as an African

expression and the rewritten story of Caliban and Prospero as a "cultural parable." Secondly, the imagery of beads as an expression of the displacement and reunion of individual and communal identities of slave women will be discussed in Grace Nichols's collection. Finally, apocalyptical imagery, especially the image of fire that turns London into a place of rebellion is studied in *Tings an' Times*.

This chapter analyzes how poets produce new forms of expression of the in-between reality and identity through their language and poetic techniques. As Brathwaite explains in "Metaphors of Underdevelopment," dichotomy and paradox correspond to West Indian literary characteristics as well as "the contradiction… paradox of style and theme; contradiction of position; dichotomy of sensibility; the intellectual plural in a static and divided world" (237). Image making becomes an important tool for claiming rights over language and power to produce meaning. This time the images of the colonizer are abandoned for new cross-cultural ones. By claiming "rights to signify" from the so-called periphery of (post)colonial relationship, they find a space of enunciation in the authoritative language of the colonizer. This site is the third space of enunciation where there is a possibility of resistance and interaction of cultures. The poets discover their "Calibanisms," as Brathwaite calls it, by "inventing a third lexicon which is neither English nor nation-language" (Mackey, "Wringing the Word" 144).

The common criteria for the analysis of poems and the structure of the chapters below will focus on the following aspects: the subversive use of voice and language; how the visual aspects of poems are related to larger thematic schemes; how the process of (re)naming "environmental experiences" produces a counter-strategy to create new meanings in the New World experience; finally, holding the power of image-making as a form of re-claiming voice and identity.

3.1 X/cifying[6] language and identity: Brathwaite's *X/Self*

> **Caliban:** You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language' (*Tempest* 1.ii.331-32)

[6] I coined this verb to bring together Brathwaite's concept of "unknown self" represented in X and the effort to "spe/cify " it in this chapter especially in his understanding of language and identity.

As a historian, critic and poet, Brathwaite is one of the most prolific Afro-Caribbean intellectuals who continue to teach and write at the "frontiers of the empire." Brathwaite has a huge contribution to the recognition of language varieties in the Caribbean and linguistic inventiveness. This has inevitably helped to decolonize the Caribbean psyche and rehabilitate "a culture's collective self-confidence" (Savory 208). His major preoccupation has been to subvert the dominant cultural values, stereotypes and linguistic burden imposed through the colonizer's language. Thus, his poetry reflects in its forms "the breaking down of the word as Western icon and the reworking of it as African-Caribbean 'xperience'" (ibid., 217).

For Brathwaite, the major task of the first generation of postcolonial authors writing in English has been "to identify and to analyse [their] consciousness." However, the second generation, among whom he includes himself, has largely tried to "transcend and heal it" (Brown 152). *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite* (1995) edited by Stewart Brown and Paul Naylor's article, "Tidalectic Rhythms," in *Poetic Investigations* (1999) provide a great deal of insight into Brathwaite's experimentation with language and reinscription of a history for Afro-Caribbean community by creating new "Kingdoms of the Word." This chapter aims to analyze how Brathwaite invents new techniques to express cultural in-betweenness and the need for a cross-cultural poetics. He (re)names many historical figures and events, and creates creolized images to work through a new understanding of history. At the interstices of these historical events, he discovers the common predicament of disenfranchised minorities affected by slavery, colonization and capitalism. This chapter will focus on the images of circle/cycle, and the Caliban and Prospero story rewritten as a "cultural parable."

Structured in five parts, *X/Self* progresses through a single poem discovering the relations between different cultures, histories and languages. This cross-cultural exchange flowers a global history and a "self" which gets constructed "in each crumpled fold" of history. Edward Chamberlin describes *X/Self* as a "journey home, a journey both geographical (from Africa and Europe to the West Indies) and psychological (from a diminished sense of self to a liberated one), and both linear and cyclical" (qtd. in Naylor 168). In "Metaphors of Underdevelopment," Brathwaite states that his poetry is characterized with tidal metaphors of "historical

and cultural equilibrium/ disequilibrium." He defines the roots of his poetry and how X/Self, as "a literature of subversive underdevelopment," is fashioned:

> t[7]he nature of our catastrophe, the effects we feel, have ancient, subterranean but identifiable sources; that our condition: frustration, exploitation, underdevelopment, slavery, colonialism; *our very sense of self and literature itself* [*sic*], stems from the original empire on which we impinge, from which the metaphors of our public and official language flow
> VII
> To create X/SELF: a literature of subversive underdevelopment: from MAMMON or UNPROSPERO: to its creative op- posite: NAM, SYCORAX, MABRAK [*sic*]
> VIII
> X/SELF (238) (*sic*)

Brathwaite revises concepts and images that readily come to the poet through the imposed language. With this experiment, he crosses cultural borders in new and experiential ways by "arrest[ing] the linguistic sign in its symbolic function" (Bhabha 69).

Brathwaite searches for the origins of poetry in speech; hence, his poetry contains constant play with sounds, with neologisms and namings. In this search, the performance gets crucial importance; his written text "ripples out into story" together with song and "into sign and sound". Moreover, performance foregrounds "tacit agreements between speaker and listener," in which certain things are taken for granted and some questions remain unasked. Performance in poetic expression and the interaction between text and the reader "invoke an admirable sense of the text as always potentially present, always enacting meanings" (Chamberlin 35). Moreover, competing voices in his poems represent the intersections of different cultures and point to a borderline experience between genres, languages, traditions and places. Brathwaite's poetic imagination is combined with "the naturalness of voices" which embodies the interstitial space between "languages (African and European), of registers of language (the literary and the local; within each, the formal and the casual), and of genres (lyrical, dramatic and narrative)" (ibid., 37).

Brathwaite's linguistic and typographical tactics offer a critique of dominant approaches to history and how history is inscribed. With his experimentation with

[7] Brathwaite does not capitalize any word in "Metaphors of Underdevelopment, so I remain loyal to the text.

language, he tries to form a new linguistic order. Brathwaite uses "the printed page as if it were sound. All written poetry is a raid on the border between the inner and outer voices, what is heard and what remains in the mind" (James 73). The major linguistic "cannibalisms"— a term Brathwaite uses to refer to the combination of English and nation language expressions— are "fractured words and neologisms [that] question the very notion of proper speech" as a way of decolonizing the word (Naylor 158).

Brathwaite develops many strategies on word level to play upon the meaning of words and discover possible other meanings. Firstly, the meanings of words are used against themselves through puns, neologisms and made-up phrases. As Chamberlin argues, these strategies "reflect a deep seriousness about the ways in which words determine our representations of self and our perception of others" (33). In "X/Self's Xth Letter From the Thirteenth Provinces," Caliban writes a letter to her mother Sycorax "in computer& learnin prospero language&" (*X/Self* 84). This poem is full of puns, neologisms and catachrestic use of Prospero's language. As an allusion to what Caliban says to Prospero, "I know how to curse," Caliban plays upon the word "curser":

> for not one a we should responsible if prospero get curse
> wid im own
>
> curser (85)

"Curser" refers to both a computer device which is similar to a mouse, a cursor, and Caliban himself as the person who calls a curse down upon Prospero. Brathwaite further gives place to verbal and visual puns like "sa/hara" and "sa/hell" in "Mont Blanc," which stresses the hellish feature of the Sahara. Likewise, in "Salt," Brathwaite play upon the word "harm/attan" which is "dry, drought-causing wind of the Sahara" (*X/Self* 114). "Mont Blanc" represents the West, whose destructive actions like "the frozen first atomic bomb," "holocaust of dome" give way to climactic changes in Africa (*X/Self* 31-2). In his notes[8] to *X/Self*, Brathwaite puts forward that "[s]ince the mid 1960s, the Sahara has been undergoing one of its

[8] Brathwaite provides the reader with nineteen-page notes at the end of *X/Self*. He writes these notes with great reluctance, saying, "since the irony is that they may suggest the poetry is so obscure in itself that it has to be lighted up; is so lame, that it has to have a crutch; and (most hurtful of all) that it is bookish, academic, 'history'…In many cases, like you, am I reading [*sic*] these Notes for the first time" (113).

cyclical expansions, bringing drought and famine into much of Africa" (119). Thus, literally Sahara turns into a hell, "Sa/hell," for African people. Moreover, Christopher Columbus's first name is produced as "Christ/opher who?" in "X/Plosive Video Tape Salesman" (*X/Self* 47). This refers to both religious colonization of Caribbean people ("Christ") and the so-called 'unrecognized' discoverer of the Caribbean archipelago. Brathwaite shows his discontent with dominant historical accounts of Columbus's "discovery" in *History of the Voice* (1995), "In 1492 Columbus 'discovered' (*as it is said*) the Caribbean, and with that discovery came the *intrusion* of European culture and peoples and fragmentation of the original Amerindian culture" (6, emphasis mine). Christopher Columbus makes constant appearance in *X/Self* not as a discoverer but as a destructor of indigenous tribes on the island, bringer of slavery and promoter of European expansionism.

Bill Ashcroft et al argue that development of neologisms in the postcolonial text is one of the tactics of syntactic fusion that becomes "a sign of the coextensitivity between language and cultural space, and are important features of the development of English variants (*Empire* 71). The title of one of the poems "Nuum," for instance, is the mixture of "doom" and "noon," it is "negation of "Nam," name and Nummo, and the darkening of the sun" (Rohlehr, "Rehumanization" 167). Brathwaite also inverts names for his own purposes such as "for/nicalia" instead of "California" (*X/Self* 88). He coins the word "Twoom" as the combination of tomb and room (*X/Self* 88). He plays upon the word "*ash*anty" to emphasize the ecological and psychic damage wrought upon African countries:

> they have cruelled their faces of fire
> of fear of the plague. of the ark. of the aaardvark
> fresh from the bellows they smile seeds of colonies
>
> they sow islands
> basalt and dischord coral among the butterflies
> *ash*anty towns arise and rust within the oxides
>
> confound against their ikons
> *ash*. twits. sparrows (35, emphasis mine)

Pun on the word "ashanty" is reminiscent of the ethnic groups in South Ghana and its devastated situation in ashes and "the oxides." Gordon Rohlehr argues that the operation of empire becomes more devastating because of advanced technology; therefore, "it pollutes, devours and kills for profit, converting Ashanti to ashanty

towns…the 'ikons' left by the miners of empire are ash, starvation, bewilderment" ("Rehumanization" 183). Brathwaite also employs made-up phrases. For instance, in "Twoom," he calls the pregnant woman "bell & belly woman" (88); or "since menelek was a bwoy" means "for ages or as far as I remember" (85). Brathwaite aims to show the instability and fragility of the words by techniques discussed above. Nathaniel Mackey further discusses:

> Returning to the smallest particles of language, syllables and letters, he assaults the apparent solidity and integrity of words, destabilizing them (showing them to be intrinsically unstable) by emphasizing the points at which they break, dissembling them and reassembling them in alternate spellings and neologistic coinages. ("Wringing the Word" 137)

Unexpected line breaks are common in *X/Self*. A line break can occur in the middle of the word, the prefix is separated from the stem, or even a single letter or punctuation mark can enjoy the luxury of a line. Symbolically, "x" is scattered all around the text, and most of the time takes the place of prefix "ex." In "Shaman," Brathwaite shows the destructive forces of capitalist economy and Western expansionism. He reflects his thematic concern by splitting words, breaking lines and playing with the words that carry with them the signs of Western capitalism:

> i cried out that these sticks you brought into the village were
> x
> plosives and not olive
> […]
> their lobster sponges dried out breathe
> ing rasp & rust and raaspan angles banggalang & booming babylon
>
> &
>
> life/line biscuit bins
> so. prano tins
> tom. toms of bathtub tombs abandoned by the marat sade (66-7)

Brathwaite resists Mont Blanc's economy of imposed debris of word, food and toxic waste "wrapped up in cellophane & xmas paper you'd paddle up…into the darkened reaches of the man/grove swamp" (*X/Self* 67). The poet/shaman tries to shock his reader through unusual signs on the page in order find solution for people's indifference. Brathwaite makes use of the connection between sounds that show the interrelation between words. "Words are reopened, broken open, their semantic

integrity unsealed by 'shadows of meaning' which are played upon and thereby shown to permeate 'the Word'" (Mackey, "Wringing the Word" 140).

Playing with punctuation marks is also a very efficient tool in Brathwaite's poetry. Brathwaite subverts the usual role of punctuation marks in written English and assigns them new duties in the text. Brathwaite ends none of his poems with a full-stop, which ties all poems to one another forming up a macro-poem and an X "self". As Nathaniel Mackey observes "words are broken not only by line breaks but by punctuation marks inserted between syllables" (""Wringing the Word""138). Brathwaite uses colon between the same syllable "immobil:e"(31); or divides –ed that is used to form past participle "legg:ed" (7); or uses slash to divide compound nouns or break words into meaningless fragments such as "god/head" (17), "ping/pong" (27), "co/balt" and "part/icles" (82). In "Letter to Roma," Brathwaite diminishes the signifying power of servant-master binary to single word:

> through hot and burnished eyes to see her son become the *sir*
> *vant* of the sacred emperor
> …
> apart in ostrich pharaohed canopies *sep.*
> *arate* like critics (1-2, emphasis mine)

Typographically, some of the slashes "function like images of weapon- the knife, the axe, the hammer, slashing, bashing" (Morris 18). In "The Fapal State Machine," third part of the poem expresses the difficulty of producing the "word" of particular experience:

> this word is
>
> writ
> ten soon and known as holy writ and late holly
>
> wrood
>
> be stowed on all for all ever or on some
>
> select/elect
>
> how/man how/ many few how/ furious
> how/ black how/ brown how/byzantine
> how/ever fat how/bit into the apple how incurious (19)

The poem questions the fact that the authority of the word is readily acknowledged and disseminated. As soon as the word gets written, it is received as "holy writ and

late holly," as Mackey says, the word's "monumental premises" are established. Thus, the main function of this linguistic subversion at the explicit level is to show "the divisibility and the alterability of words, their permeability to alternate arrangement, variability, change" (Mackey, "Wringing the Word" 139).

For Brathwaite, "the power of giving, taking, and imposing names" is of utmost importance in a postcolonial situation (Naylor 142). As he explains in "Metaphors of Underdevelopment," any word "that is used, acquires unto itself a whole burden of meaning and connectivity and as you probe into the experience which is the poem" (243). Brathwaite explains what "name" means in *Barbajan Poems* (1994) emphasizing the importance of naming to gain identity in a post/colonial society:

> **name**
> **therefore becomes important and what we name and call ourselves be comes even more important, especially in a colonial and post-colonial situation where we have been named by other people and where it is therefore our re-sponsibility to rename & redefine ourselves.** (*sic*) (qtd. in Naylor 143)

The persona of the poem is named "X." Brathwaite's use of "X" creates complex meanings in the volume by showing variable identity positions. 'X' points to both 'borderline experience' and the medium of unknown. With "X", the poetic persona can easily cross borders between languages, cultures and geographies. "X" is like a mathematical formulation the poet tries to solve until the end of the poem. It also helps generalize the experience of the colonized Caribbeans to a larger frame of slavery and other machinations of colonization.

Brathwaite coins a new word, "tidalectics," to characterize naming and meaning-making process in his poetry. The notion of tidalectics, "the ripple and the two tide movement," represents hybridization in his poetry (Naylor 145). Meanings that can be derived from visual and verbal aspects of his poems are in a tidal movement. They "**drag tidalectic into this tangled urgent meaning to & fro. like foam. saltless as from the bottom of the sea. dragging our meaning our moaning/ song from Calabar along the sea-floor sea-floor with pebble sound** [*sic*]" (Brathwaite, qtd. in Naylor 162). It is a notion of sound-space that imitates the movement of waters "backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic" as the

subversive mimicry of Hegelian notion of dialectics (Mackey, "Interview" 13). Tidalectics also refers to the transatlantic passage of African people to the Caribbean, then to their migration to America and England in modern times.

"Nyam" becomes central to Brathwaite's understanding of the agency of naming. He explains in his notes to *X/Self* that "nam" or "nyam" is "*indestructible self/sense of culture under crisis*" (127, emphasis original). Brathwaite searches for the root of this word throughout *X/Self*. "Nam" is man in disguise when written backwards "man/nam" or "the *main* or *mane* of *name* after the weak e or tail has been eaten by the conquistador." Apart from these connotations, it might denote the future potential of "atomic explosion: nam…dynamo…dynamite and apotheosis: nam…nyam…onyame…" (*X/Self* 127). The meaning of "Nam" is appropriated by moving from one image to another. The first lines of "Nam" represent the African man with cinematic images: "hot cinema tarzan sweat/ rolling moth ball eyes yellow teeth/ cries of claws slashes clanks" (73). African people are ironically described as savage and demonic. In the next image, Brathwaite refers to an instance of resistance by Soweto schoolchildren[9] and subsequent violence exerted upon them:

> the dark dark barks of the shark
> boys
> the cool juice of Soweto…
>
> out of this dust they are coming
> our eyes listen out of rhinoceros thunder
> darkness of lion (73)

The images of rebellion are mixed with the images of violence: "the police who shot Patrice who castrated kimathi/ and clattering clattering clattering clattering/ the veldt's gun metal's wings/ rise from their last supper their hunger of bones" (75). The persona goes on to name tribes ("kasuro mokhati namibia azania shaka the zulu kenyatta the shatt" 73), types of nation languages (basuto, zulu, maasai, herero, kiyuku, Swahili, luo 77) and people from African history (mokhethi, nzinga, patrice Lumumba) as if to drive from their names energy, power and benediction. As Rohlehr argues, "Nam" tries to discover the "essential personhood inherent in every

[9] Brathwaite explains Soweto children's resistance as follows: "In June 1976 South Africa's black townships burst out in the most serious racial violence since the creation of the Union. It began in the huge Soweto…with a protest by school children against the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. It soon spread [to other] townships." His allusion to this event is a "lament for the hundreds of Soweto children slaughtered and wounded by the S. African security forces" ("Notes" 126).

human being which, surviving man's direst efforts at its mutilation, is perpetually rediscoverable" ("Rehumanization" 167). In "Nam," Brathwaite employs untranslatable words that move back and forth between new territories of meaning:

> ufuka akuqheleki kodwa ke
> kuthiwa akuhlanga lungehlanga
> lalani ngenxeba nikhuzeka (75)

Untranslated words in Brathwaite's poems show the power and presence of diverse cultural and linguistic registers. The X Self, the spirit of the poem, thus freely moves between different uses of English, African languages or words that are untranslatable, which shows the hybrid character of its identity. At the same time, it affirms that "when a culture [is] in crisis- 'maimed' but still in possession of a 'nyam' that, although submerged, is capable of exploding in a dynamic moment of apotheosis" (Naylor 161).

Brathwaite structures *X/Self* in a circular movement. The circular structure of the work universalizes Brathwaite's specific concerns with the rise and degradation of humankind. The volume presents "a cyclical process of creation, destruction and reconstruction" (Rohlehr, "Rehumanization" 163). Although he borrows the image of circle from African cosmology, it becomes a unifying symbol for the fate of all nations and peoples. He achieves a more profound effect by collecting histories of nations that are oppressed, empires which are built and which cease to exist.

As Gordon Rohlehr states, circle represents "wholeness of psyche, integrity of aboriginal world-view." Brathwaite, thus, structures *X/Self* depending on cyclic sense of time. The image also pays a tribute to "sensibility in harmony with the rhythms of the land and cosmos." Slavery and colonization is taken as the intrusion of European into this circle and circle is shattered by "missile culture" ("Rehumanization" 167). Brathwaite finds the origin of slavery in Roman Empire, the conquests of which are likened to the encircling motion of vultures:

> rome burns
> and our slavery begins
>
> vultures wheel over kiev over kybir over ayub khan
> vultures wheel over the ganges over the crossed swords of shiva
>
> over the dead garden of mahatma Gandhi

vultures wheel over the styx over maggorie over the ice
…
they wheel high over the desert over tripoli and tunis over
the head waters of the nile over (8-9)

The encircling movement of the vulture has a destructive force over various geographies that are colonized by various empires. The system of slavery is "simply one manifestation of the vulture." It converts people into commodities, which is "a prime act in humanity's ceaseless dehumanization of History, lacerating both flesh and Spirit" (ibid., 164-5).

"The Visibility Trigger" becomes the central poem that employs the image of circle. This poem exemplifies the effect of imperialism on those who are colonized or made victims. Brathwaite defines the space of the European culture as "missile culture" and the black space as "subsistence culture":

> when europe expands, as europe becomes powerful and imperialist, she has to feed that power… and to obtain enough fuel for this, she has to burn/ consume an increasingly wide area; first in its own neighbourhood (wars in europe) then increasingly further and further afield… into our black space…so the symbol of subsistence exploited cultures become the **circle**, hole or target…so the main problem for such subsistence cultures is naturally defence: ... and its subsistence symbol is the circle: with Africa its chief subsistence source and model. The drums are round, its dancers dance a circle; the villages and their houses; also round…and the elders sit in their circle and the farm. Surround the villages in dispositions like wheels; and time is a wheel: ancestor, spirit, child… ("Metaphors of Underdevelopment" 250-1)

When the "missile culture" tries to intrude this circle, the only way of survival for the people of "subsistence culture" is to protect this circle through practices and tools that iterate it:

> And unprepared and venerable I was dreaming mighty wind in trees
> Our circles talismans round hut round village cooking pots
>
> The world was round and we the spices in it
> Time wheeled around our memories like stars
> …
> Birth child hunter warrior
> And the breath
>
> Which is no more

Which is birth which is child which is hunter which is warrior
Which is breath (49)

The world of the "subsistent culture" is maintained by circle: round hut, round village, cooking pots, round breads, "circles talismans," wheeling time. The life of a villager also proceeds in a circular mode as reflected in the repetitive pattern of last two lines: birth, child, hunter, warrior. However, the "missile culture" penetrates, thus, threatens this circularity by "vertical hull calling" (*X/Self* 49). Thus, the poem depicts "the shattering in terms of images of the broken circle and the riven despoliated tree" (Rohlehr 167). The speaker turns to silk cotton tree "odoum," at the end of the poem to keep his spirit intact and to restore the circle.

The trope of Prospero and Caliban has been frequently employed by Afro-Caribbean writers. Caliban learns Prospero's language only to curse fluently, which is the enslaved's revenge on the enslaver. Metaphorically, Brathwaite's description of nation language is akin to the submerged and forgotten language of Sycorax. As Elaine Savory argues, Brathwaite takes the story further by "explor[ing] the possibilities for Caliban in returning home, linguistically and therefore spiritually, to his mother, Sycorax, the true possessor of the island" (211). In "X/Self's Xth Letters from the Thirteenth Provinces", Caliban is writing a letter to his mother, Sycorax, in computer, the key technological machine that represents Western capitalism:

Dear mamma

i writin you dis letter/wah?
guess what! pun a computer o/kay?
like i jine de mercantilists! (80)

As Mackey comments, "Caliban has become an anti-colonial/ Third World symbol of cultural and linguistic revolt" ("Wringing the Word"143). Through father's — Prospero's— language and his tool, computer, Caliban ironically discovers his mother's voice for the first time:

say
what?/ get on wi de same ole

story?
okay
okay
okay
okay

if yu cyan beat prospero
whistle? (80)

Caliban tries to discover how to dismantle the master's house by using his tools and to "unprospero" his language and identity through computer. Caliban misuses words and punctuation marks as he is not familiar with the written form of Prospero's language ("hinvent," "rice & fall," "writely"). Moreover, Caliban does not know where to use full-stop:

.
why i cyaan nuse me hann & crawl up de white like i use
to? (82)

He does not end a sentence with a full-stop, but starts with it. There is an authorial intrusion when Caliban asks, "Why a callin it/ x?" (84). Caliban's answer is one of possible interpretations for the use of "X" in the volume:

a doan writely
know
...
but is like what i tryin to sen/ seh &
seh about muse/
in computer &
learnin prospero linguage & (84)

The poem and *X/Self* in general show the poet's struggle with the master's language. By recovering the submerged langugae of Sycorax, Caliban mixes it with that of Prospero. The process of "learnin prospero linguage" is one of the most striking examples of mimicry in *X/Self*. Caliban produces the sing of "double articulation" by "a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the Other" (Bhabha 122). While Caliban tries to speak like Prospero, he only stutters. He cannot pronounce the words like Prospero does, but "words of the master become the site of hybridity—the warlike, subaltern sign of the native" (Bhabha 172):

like de man still mekkin i walk up de slope dat e slide
in black down de whole long curve a de arch

i
pell
ago
long
long
ago
like a

tread
like a
tread
like a
tread
mill
or mile
stone
or pet
like a pet
like a perpet.
ual plant
or

plantation &
mamm/a (86-7)

In his *Sun Poems*, Brathwaite coins the word "stammament," which is the combination of stammer and monument. By this term, he offers stammering as a strategy to produce the postcolonial speech, "unprosperoing" the colonizer's language. "Stammering" subverts the authority of words, and meaning is consciously delayed. Thus, "[w]hen the sign ceases the synchronous flow of the symbol, it also ceases the power to elaborate—through the time-lag—new and hybrid agencies and articulations" (Bhabha 275).

To conclude, the X self, divided, fractured and reunited at the end of the book, is "a Calibanization of what [Brathwaite has] read" and a major source for identity politics in Brathwaite's poetry. Although Brathwaite pays tribute to Africa and concentrates on Caribbean experience, his work is revitalized by the histories and imagi/nations of different cultural origins. The well-known Caliban and Prospero story is employed as a "cultural parable," as Elaine Savory calls it, to represent Brathwaite's struggle over language. Caliban's identity and language depends on Prospero, yet the form of Caliban's "*resemblance* [to Prospero] is the most terrifying thing to behold" as Caliban's "profit on't/ is [he] know[s] how to curse" (Bhabha 129). Like Nourbese Philip's insistence on the use of mother language in "Testimony Stoops to Mother Language," Caliban turns to discover Sycorax language. The computer, a symbol of Western technological and economic power or a 'neo-colonial machine' for conscious agenda of globalization, becomes the tool through which Caliban attacks the master's house with master's tool. Caliban does not abandon Prospero for Sycorax, "but learn[s] to hear both of them at the same time; eventually

hoping that they may speak to one another freely and begin to resolve their differences" (Savory 224). Caliban, in a way, creates a third space, where "the meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other" (Bhabha 53). Only by this way, the X Self is released from its tortured past, emerge into selfhood and participate in a community whose historical nothingness is denied.

3.2. I am "holding my beads in my hands": Language and Identity in *i is a long memoried woman*

Grace Nichols came to wide notice after her first volume of poetry, *i is a long memoried woman*, was published in 1983. As a Guyana-born London-based poet, Nichols deals with the history of slavery and Western exploitation from women's perspective. In her poetry, Nichols "celebrates the body and uses of metaphors of sexuality and colonization to undermine each other" (Childs 202). She establishes her text as an arena where different voices compete. Her poetic manner is "sly, brash, exhuberant, laid-back and wonderfully economic, refusing cliché" while bringing in the images, languages and values of the old and new worlds (Walder qtd. in McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 123). She inhabits various social, political, historical and cultural positions that produce a "creative dialogue," from which the Afro-Caribbean woman writer "not only speaks familiarly in the discourse of the other(s), but as Other [because] she is in contestorial dialogue with the hegemonic dominant and subdominant or ambiguously (non)hegemonic discourses" (Henderson 260).

Nichols' poem is divided into five parts that give a whole picture of "passage" from displacement—whether linguistic, cultural or geographical— to limited agency, from loss of identity to the emergence of a hybrid identity. The first part, "Beginning," pictures slave women's captivation from their native land, and the horrible Middle Passage journey, knowing that "it was the Black Beginning" ("One Continent/ To Another" 6). In "The Vicissitudes," she is sceptical about adopting the new place and the colonizer's language. It represents constant shifts between roots and the New World, the past and the present by reviving her memories of the lost homeland and appropriating the new place with "the mice of despair" ("Among the Canes"27). The long memoried woman exerts a limited

agency in "The Sorcery" and "The Bloodling" through the practices of oral culture and employment of nation language. "The Return" shows the point of reconciliation with the New World and she recognizes her "power to be what I am/ a woman." After this cyclical journey, the Afro-Caribbean woman is empowered through her dynamic voice and rituals. In *i is*, Grace Nichols "not only chronicles the personal history of the slave woman, but all of the collective histories embedded in the middle passage journey" (Restovich 51).

Grace Nichols' volume represents "a long meditation on the problem of geographical and psychological displacement, [and] then [the]—linguistic— aspect of deterritorialization[10] is embodied and enacted in her poems" (Williams 114-5). The opening poem of the sequence illustrates the strategic purposes of language variance and mimicry. Grace Nichols largely uses Standard English with "broken" syntax; however, when women slaves are first brought to the island and when they show conscious acts of resistance, they speak "nation language":

> From dih pout
> of mih mouth
> from dih
> treacherous
> calm of mih
> smile
> you can tell
> **i is a long memoried woman** (1)

The long memoried woman reverses the uses of "the" and "my" into "dih" and "mih." As Patrick Williams discusses, such linguistic uses are deliberate attempts at reterritorialization. Nichols uses creole in a more "restrained and contrastive" manner combining it with Standard English in the same poem (115-6). Her "smile" becomes a strategy to both reflect and subvert the colonialist stereotype which dubs the slave as "treacherous" and thus untrustworthy. However, her self-definition shows that she is "calm" and full of memories to unfold. As Dowson and Entwistle argue, the prevalence of the lower-case 'i' in feminist poetry "figures the equivalence of poetic and political, moving beyond the assertion of an autonomous

[10] Deleuze and Guattari refer to deterritorialization of language in their article, "What is a Minor Literature?" in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Deleuze and Guattari assert that there are three major characteristics of a minor literature. Firstly, language is affected with a degree of deterritorialization. Then, everything in minor literature has a political intent; and thirdly, "everything in it takes on collective value" (Williams 111).

and individualist model of subjectivity to an exploration of the way identity emerges from within linguistic and social nexus" (151).

The volume's "Epilogue" indicates the appropriation of the master's language and how a language of hybrid experience is forged:

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

The first line refers to the transatlantic slave trade. The physical crossing of the ocean also has a metaphorical importance, for it signifies the crossing between cultures, languages and ways of life. The main component of this mulatto language is her root, the "old"/ "one". The other element is the language imposed after women are thrust upon the New World ("how she stumbled onto the shore/ how the metals dragged her down" 5). The line "I have lost my tongue" implies the oppression and physical violence executed upon the slaves to submerge their African languages. The speaker's hesitation to quit her ancestral language is obvious, as "one" pertaining to "old" language occupies a line alone. The emphasis put on "one," "which enjoys the status of a line all by itself, makes us wonder. Will she speak just one language or does she only want to give the old one its due attention" (Papaleonida 127). The verb "spring" suggests that the emergence of the "new" language is abrupt and by force. Moreover, lower-case "i" of the prologue is capitalized in the prologue, showing "the linguistic tear of the Middle Passage" (Ramazani, *Hybrid Muse* 3).

In the colonizer's presence, slave women mimic the identity that the colonizer forces them to adopt. The slave women's mimicry is "at once resemblance and menace" because their adoption of the colonizer's values deauthorizes his authority (Bhabha 130). In "Epilogue," the speaker mimics the language of the colonizer but she becomes "*almost the same but not quite* [sic.]" (Bhabha 127). In Bhabha's analysis resistance is not necessarily a political act, it is the "effect of ambivalence" as reflected in the appropriation of the colonizer's land, language and values and "produced within the rules of recognition of dominant discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and… deferential relations of colonial power" such as hierarchy, normalization and marginalization (*Location of Culture* 158). Against marginalization, slave women soon form a community and use their

tools to subvert the colonizer's language through indigenous untranslatable words, sighs, cries ("Drum-Spell"), songs ("Hi de Buckras Hi!"), and sorcery ("Old Magic", "Night is Her Robe").

Alison Easton's reading of Grace Nichols' poetry in terms of "writing the body"[11] focuses on the use of metaphor with the purpose of including both history and the body. She examines the historical meanings in Nichols' images and questions how these representations of past produce images of insurgence and agency. As Gabriel Griffin discusses, the new identity Nichols discovers is "bound up closely with the body and power of speech" combining it with "an African-Caribbean oral tradition which takes its inflections from the body and with an idea of a timeless African female community" (qtd. in Easton 58). Integrating historical meanings into images "which may not overtly seem to have them"—such as the body, the sea, sugar cane, maroons, beads— Nichols transforms them into "images of resistance" (Easton 63).

Stunned by how colonial exploitation and sexual abuse change the natural environment, the slave woman discovers a hostile nature that is under the colonizer's control. In "One Continent/ To Another," she tries to comprehend the New World that is condemned or "bereft of fecundity" with colonizer's acts:

> No she wasn't prepared
> for the sea that *lashed*
> *fire* that *seared*
> *solid earth* that delivered
> her up
> birds that flew
> not wanting to see the utter
> *rawness* of life everywhere
> …
> that loss of deep man pride (6-7, emphases mine)

The speaker describes the colonizer's tools of oppression, such as "lash," searing fire, "solid earth" (the slave ship) delivering her up and in collaboration with nature. All these practices lead to a loss of "deep man pride" due to constant humiliation. In the following poem, "Web of Kin", she replaces "the rawness of life" with images of her African homeland which suggests productivity, strength and blessing of nature:

[11] I consciously avoid discussing Cixous's Utopian notions of the female body and Kristeva's semiotic, for reasons of the limitations of space. As I have stated in the "Limitations of the Study," some definitions are given in a nutshell to keep the argument intact. Methodologically, indulging in a feminist reading without an efficient background might have harmed the coherence of the study.

I come from the Season-of-Locust
…
and days of endless raining

from the sea that washes the Ivory Coast
I come from coral reefs
from distant tum-tum pounding
…
from long and twisting niger-rivers
I come from web of kin
…
I come from a country of strong women (8)

By recalling the qualities of her homeland, she resists the colonizer's social order of world. Her home, though present only in her memories, still defines her identity; therefore, she "intensifies surveillance and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (Bhabha 123). She cannot understand "the silent women/ suffering" and does not want to be inert and ready to accept domination like them:

[it] will pour it in the dust will set
us free
the whip will have no fire the sun
no flame
…I will *submerge* myself
Swimming *like* one possessed (9, emphasis mine)

She rejects the imagery of lash, fire, solid earth, the oppressive tools of the colonizer described in "One Continent/ To Another". Her conscious strategy of resistance is pretending to be "submerged" by the colonizer's rule and to be "possessed" by the colonial system.

Establishing bonds with the island's history and its ancestral past, the slave woman produces her own representations of the island. In this way, she hopes to resist "fixated form of representation" that "constitutes a problem for the *representation* [*sic*] of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations" (Bhabha 107). In order to unite with the island, she needs to express it in her own language. This language has a bond between her body and the topography of this alien place. "The body and corporeal images," Michael Dash points out, "provide insight into the psychic condition of the enslaved individual" (xxvii). Firstly, when the women are brought to the islands away from their homeland, the long memoried woman describes her arrival in the New World through child-bearing language. It

displays the displacement of her body and "evokes the uncertainty and the powerlessness that characterise a newborn's position outside the womb, the very emotions of the speaker in the New World context" (Cilano 131):

> Child of the middle passage womb
> push
> daughter of a vengeful Chi
> she came
> into the new world
> birth aching her pain
> from one continent/to another
>
> moaning
>
> her belly cry sounding the wind (5).

The middle passage is personified as "women's birth canal" that "pushes" painfully and "lashed" by the waters, and finally the new-born is delivered into the new world. In addition, her depiction of 'birth aching her pain', ironically "subjugates the physical pain that is associated with childbirth with the spiritual pain that is the result of birth into slavery" or into an alien symbolic order (Restovich 59). The slash between "one continent/to another" becomes a useful tool that divides Africa and the Americas, the mother's womb and threatening outer space.

In the poem, "In my Name," the woman both rejects and owns her middle passage child. She tags it with different names that emphasize its being the "fruit" of rape and abuse. The use of the possessive pronoun "my" shows that she holds tight to her baby, but adjectives she uses to define her baby are of paradoxical nature:

> my curled bean
>
> my tainted
> perfect child
> my bastard fruit
> my seeding
> my sea grape
> my strange mulatto
> my little bloodling (56).

She has dilemmatic feelings toward her unborn child. She wants to see her baby as the "perfect child," but it is "tainted" as the bastard of one of the slave owners. By announcing the middle passage child as her "bloodling," she sets out a new pedigree on the island. The slave woman's womb unites with Middle Passage waters. After

painful and "tearful" labour, the middle passage child is baptized by "blood" and is ready to mix with the waters of the Atlantic, thus to be included into the middle passage history:

> For with my blood
> I've cleansed you
> and with my tears
> I've pooled the river Niger
>
> now sweet one it is for you to swim" (57).

The child becomes the "perfect" medium between what belongs to Africa and what belongs to the New World. With poems like "In My Name" and "Ala," Grace Nichols questions the "ethical positioning of the slave mother, who becomes the enunciatory site for seeing inwardness of the slave world from the outside" (Bhabha 23). The speaker remembers the rebel woman, "Ala", who mutilates her child to free it from the manacles of slavery. Ala is represented as a mother "who gives and receives/ again in death/ Gracious one" (23) and also as a rebel woman

> who with a pin
> stick the soft mould
> of her own child's head
>
> sending the little-new-born
> soul winging its way back
> to Africa—free (22)

The slaves used to think that when they commited suicide or killed their children, their souls fly back to Africa. Ala's murder of her baby has contiradictory motives. She wants to both free her baby from slavery and to get rid of it, as the baby reminds her of rape and sexual abuse. By quoting Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Bhabha asserts that "murder, self-mutilation and infanticide [are] the core psychological dynamic of all resistance" in times of slavery. These extreme forms "capture the essence of the slave woman's self-definition" (24).

After a state of total confusion, hesitation and displacement, the slave woman begins to represent the island from her perspective in "The Vicissitudes." There emerges a latent bond between the New World and the slave woman, which is reflected in the repetitive use of "these;" the thing, the idea, the person is near and present in the speaker's mind:

> These islands green

with green blades
these islands green
with blue waves
the islands green
with flame shades (31)

She regains a limited agency by claiming rights over the natural life of the island. After the harmonious description of the islands, she is immediately struck by the reality that indigenous people of the islands are exterminated by the first colonizers. The poet foregrounds the experience of fragmentation and violence exerted upon the native tribes of the island by splitting words on the page:

these blue mountain islands
these fire flying islands
these Carib bean
Awarak an
islands
fertile
with brutality (31)

The speaker breaks words "Carib bean" and "Awarak an" to stress the "brutality" forged upon these tribes. The prevailing sense at the end of this part is hope rather than despair and fear. The slave woman tries to construct herself a dream to overcome the loss of pride and sense of dislocation: "one dream is all I need to keep/ me from these blades of hardness/ from this plague of sadness" (Nichols 38).

In "I Coming Back" and "Hi De Buckras Hi!" the speaker employs creole and African oral qualities such as the use of song, call-and-response pattern and drum beat (Nichols 42-3). Moreover, breaks are "created not by punctuation but by the need to draw breath, by how the body moves as it recites…[and] nothing comes to an end with a full stop" (Griffin 26).

I coming back
hiss yuh ear
and prick in yuh skin
I coming back

bone in yuh throat
and laugh in yuh skull
I coming back

I coming back "massa"
I coming back (42)

Employing nation language suggests a linguistic challenge to the colonizer's attempt to resist the "sign…disseminated in the codes" that perpetuates a "sense of the circulation and proliferation of racial and cultural otherness" (Bhabha 97). The use of nation language plays a community-binding role for the slave women who are threatened by the stereotyped images of the colonizer. She names the white man "Massa", and uses "Buckra," an informal and derogatory West Indian term for the white wo/man. In "Hi de Buckras Hi!" the slave woman refers to both "buckra" man and woman. The master's wife, "buckra woman," is "being helped by carriages/ being lifted over ditches." She is "not even looking/ not even seeing/ the pain and rage and black/ despair." She is marked by her physical appearance among slave women with her "blue eyes/…head high/ she too fenky" (44).

The slave women threaten "buckra" man and woman with their sorcery: "she better take care she don't turn/ zombie." Her spell makes the "buckra" man impotent and bemused: while he chatters idly, her sorcery "suddenly so turn[s] him/ weak and dizzy" (44). Sorcery becomes a medium of agency against the colonizer's system of exploitation. The slave woman is engaged in an *obeah* type of sorcery in "Night is Her Robe". Obeah is an African type of witchcraft practiced in the West Indies. "[S]he's gathering strange weeds/ wild root" with "all the care/ of a herbalist" and the culmination of all these ingredients produces a "property" "both to harm and to heal" (Nichols 46). Richardson discusses, "[o]beah as constructed within the colonial discourse [and raising] fears [among the British at home and abroad] in order to play upon and redirect these fears toward the need to 'control' the transplanted slaves" (qtd. in Cilano 161). The sorcery is the "property" left for the slave woman that heals their soul but gives harm to the colonizer's possessions ("wild root/ leaves with the property/both to harm and to heal" 46). The "old magic," thus, stands for their roots and "menace" or "strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (Bhabha 159).

Visual aspects of Nichols' poetry support her thematic concerns. She frequently splits words and breaks lines to foreground the sense of displacement and violence exerted upon slaves. In "Sugar Cane," she powerfully creates meaning out of the shape of the poem and dramatizes plantation culture through the unexpected appearance of a cane of sugar on the page. The eye runs down the page to enact the upward movement of the cane:

Slowly
pain-
fully
sugar
cane
pushes
his
knotted
joints
upwards
from
the
earth
slowly
pain-
fully
he
comes
to learn
the
truth
about
himself
the crimes
committed
in his name (34).

The choppy lines and the splitting "pain- / fully" shows the painstaking growth of the cane. The gender of sugar cane is marked as "he" representing the male-dominated, capitalist plantation system. This is also explicit in the shape of the poem, in which the sugar cane turns into a phallic symbol. Although sugar cane is the reason of their exploitation and slavery, it turns into a piece of "art" and a means of life and death for the slave. Her relation to sugar cane is paradoxical and cynical, as she is conscious of the fact that it is "us who groom and weed him," yet "we feel the/ need to strangle/ the life/ out of him" (33). It is like a vicious circle for her as the sugar cane grows she crops it because she knows "either way he can't survive" (33). She, in a way, takes her revenge on the male colonizer by strangling life out of him. At the same time, she is aware that all that plantation system depends on her body and existence.

"Drum-spell" brings together visual imagery with the sound of the drum, which is a source of inspiration for slave women. The sound of the drum is like a

spell that helps her transgress the border between past and present, brings about the memories of home and provides an instance of resistance:

I feel the dizzying
mid-day
drum-spell
come over me

the melting
hotness
of my blood

the cutlass slipping
slowly

the drum-beat
rising
faintly (28)

The beating of drums is both a source of pain and spiritual healing. Its sound gives the effect of a cutlass cutting through her body slowly. Yet the rising voice of drum, no matter how it "faintly" plays, becomes a source of connection with the past and heals her pain and suffering:

O once again
I am walking
roots
that are easy

Once again
I am talking
words
that come smoothly
…
Osee yei yee yei
Osee yei yee yei
…
Rejoice!
Rejoice!
Rejoice!

She is back
She is back
She is back

Waye saa aye saa oo!
Waye saa aye saa oo! (29-30)

The italicized words are unknown to the colonizer and are sung by a chorus of women. She rejoices at the idea that she is back again in her village walking through "mounds of my mother's yam" (28) and seeing her father "nimble, catlike crouching/ with his spear" (29). The sound of drum mixes with the cry of other women who turn into a chorus expressing pain and mirth simultaneously. With repetitive lines underlying the drum-beat, the past is rhythmically invoked. Words of the lost language "come smoothly" to her and fuse with the beat of the instrument (*i is* 29). At this moment, the colonizer is "othered" by indigenous rhythm, words and song.

Finally, the imagery of beads is employed to symbolize the displacement and reunion of the slave women's identity. African women used to wear jigida beads as a sign of chastity and protection against sexual abuse. It was also a sign of virginity as unmarried girls would wear them around their pelvic regions. When the slave woman sets foot onto the island, she is physically controlled by the male colonizer and tries to come to terms with how slavery rips away her autonomy over her bodily functions. Although she loses control over her body, jigida beads still "guard" her chastity:

> From the darkness within her
> from dimness of previous incarnations
> the Congo surfaced
> so did Sierra Leone and the
> Gold Coast which she used to tread
> searching the horizon for lost
> moons
> *her jigida guarding the crevice*
> the soft wet forest
> between her thighs
> […]
> Now she stoops
> in green canefields
> *piecing* the life she would lead (5-7, emphases mine)

Jigida is the only hope for the slave woman to keep her body intact. There is again a reference to beads in the last line. She tries to join the parts of her life together in order to envision "the life she would lead". The dissolution of identity in the "Black Beginning" is symbolized through the scattering of jigida beads. Away from her female ancestors and without a weapon to resist, her identity is like "scattered beads" that she "gathers" throughout the poem:

But I
armed only with
my mother's smile
must forever gathering
my life together like scattered beads ("Sacred Flame" 19)

This metaphor refers to her vision to articulate a new identity by protecting herself with "her mother's smile." "[S]cattered beads" refer to her displacement which can only be recovered through her memories. What belongs to her home and family becomes a source of revival. Moreover, in "Taint," the speaker notes that women are "traded" by her tribesmen for beads. These beads, "manufactured in Britain for trade in Africa in exchange for slaves become a potent metaphor of a new life" (Easton 63). Her chastity is sold in her tribesmen's bargain with the slave-owner. Furthermore, the beads imagery becomes the central force in the structure of the poem:

> [T]he multiple connections with her past in Africa and the Caribbean, with tribal traditions, and with other women across and within time…are emblematised through the recurrent symbol of string of beads (reflected how dots are used), scattered at first but gathered by the end of the sequence of poems which, at the level of content, form both a sequence (the move from Africa to the Caribbean) and a circle (from freedom to freedom) like a string of beads. (Griffin 31)

In "Holding My Beads" scattered beads are threaded on a string again. All through the narrative sequence she tries to collect beads and manages it in the penultimate poem:

I am here
a woman …..with all my lives
strung out like beads
before me
It isn't privilege or pity
that I seek
it isn't reverence or safety
quick happiness or purity
but
the power to be what I am/ a woman
charting my own futures/ a woman
holding my beads in my hands (86)

She comes to terms with her-story, with "pieces" of her life. Rather than suppress it, her life "strung out like beads/ before [her]." She here threads the scattered beads,

and regains power for herself and her female companions. The slave woman reclaims her liberation once she holds her jigida beads—the crucial sign of her individual and communal identity.

The crucial texture of black women writers' texts is "multiple-voiced, dismantle[ing] given semantic order, fragmentary, but constantly stating, questioning, inserting the silenced self in history" (Boyce Davies and Fido 4). Nichols' long memoried woman ruptures the silence inflicted upon her by appropriating the dominant language of the slave-holder, rejecting his representations of the New World and her identity, and by renaming the New World with her own terms. She constantly visits her ancestral "bloodling" and forms up a lineage of brave women connecting the history of "one continent/to another." Nichols uses a mixture of creole and Standard English by forging a "new tongue" and a creolized identity out of "the root of the old one". The long memoried woman's in-between identity claims "the borders of culture's insurgent and interstitial existence" (Bhabha 26). By this way, Nichols tries to reverse the stereotyped versions of Black women's lives that history has passed down through ages.

3.3 Dubbing de Queen's English[12]: Linton Kwesi Johnson's *Tings an' Times*

muzik of blood
black reared
pain rooted
heart geared
("Bass Culture" 15)

[12] I refer to Linton Kwesi Johnson's technique of dubbing which is a creolizing event in his poetry and to John Agard's poem, "Listen Mr Oxford Don," which is famous for the following lines:

I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but *mugging de Queen's English*
is the story of my life

I don't need no axe
to split/ up yu syntax
I don't need no hammer
to mash/ up yu grammar (Agard 100)

Linton Kwesi Johnson is a London-based Afro-Caribbean dub poet writing mainly about the lives of Black people in Britain. His poetry is called “dub poetry,” which is a kind of performance poetry characterized as the “sound of diaspora, and its doubling, its versions” (Hitchcock, “It Dread Inna Inglan” par.2). Johnson has been an influential figure in the Caribbean Artist Movement was a member of the Black Panther Youth Movement in the 1970s. Therefore, his poetry is more political and fierce in tone than that of Nichols and Brathwaite. Moreover, unlike Nichols and Brathwaite, Afro-Caribbean history before decolonization is not central to his poetry, though important in his political stance. His work and life connect the postwar generation of immigrants with their children’s generation, those born in Britain “who reached young adulthood in the 1970s and 1980s who had grown up knowing the city as their home” (McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 130). This section of Chapter Three firstly deals with Johnson’s dub poetry as an expression of the in-betweenness of an Afro-Caribbean subject living in England, then analyzes dread and reggae “riddims” as a subversive poetic tactic that produces an insurgent voice, and finally examines apocalyptical imagery, especially the image of fire symbolizing resistance and “di great insohreckshan” in London.

In his detailed analysis of Johnson’s dub poetry, Peter Hitchcock defines “dub” as the presence of being inbetween (“It Dread Inna Inglan” par. 2). Designed as both a "speakerly text" and a “textualizing voice,” dub poetry is the third space between the poet/performer and the reader/audience. Thus, voice becomes an importance source that supports the meaning of the written word. Technically, dub poetry is the combination of the reggae rhythm, a beat out of bass and drum, and the spoken word. Repetition, refrain and extended run-on lines are its major characteristics. Furthermore, as Middleton asserts, dub poets “hardly ever pay attention to either grammar or established laws of poetry … [and they] have always known how best to create strong messages out of patois’ unique and powerful word stock” (76).

Johnson uses Jamaican creole, or what Brathwaite terms “nation language;” however, in some of his poems he mixes it with lines or stanzas in Standard English. This shows that his implied audience/reader is not only Black Britons, but also the white majority. His simultaneous use of creole and Standard English in the volume

foregrounds double-consciousness[13] of both the performing artist and the hearing/reading subject. As Robert McGill argues, preferring to use phonetical spelling and following the demands of pronounciation, Johnson reduces the power of a standardized written word and communicates with the readers through the oral quality of his poems. Moreover, he often abuses his own "spelling idiosyncrasies to create complex visual Joycean puns such as 'revalueshanary', further blurring the written–oral dichotomy" (568). As indicated by Peter Hitchcock, who calls dub poetry the sound of diaspora, it produces different versions and the sound is in continual flux (par. 9). Referring to Bhabha's "DissemiNation," the diaspora experience that at once brings displacement is also a source of "gathering" "on the edge of foreign cultures; gathering at the frontiers;...gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues;...gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines" (199). Dub poetry offers such a gathering for the Afro-Caribbean diaspora, experienced in its performative quality, the paradox of the poet's voice, "the word as the presence of the absent voice," and the presence of reggae and dread rhtyhms. Hitchcock comments on the nature of voice in dub poetry, saying that:

> Dub is instrumental reggae, reggae with the lead vocal track removed and replaced with various sound effects…Dub reggae's very emphasis on production, on mixing, is itself a challenge to the ideology of the artist as performer or originator…dub poetry lays down the voice as an instrument within the reggae beat; indeed, the voice is so closely allied with this beat that if you remove the reggae instrumentation you can still hear its sound in the voice of the poem. Dub means simultaneously instruments without voices and voices without instruments. This neat chiasmus is not a tribute to the wily signifier so much as a product of dread identity, subaltern subjectivity as sound, silence, and warning. (par. 12)

This long paragraph brings together many aspects of dub poetry. Dub rhythm is constructed with a beating drum, again a latent sign for the Afro-Caribbean

[13] I use double-consciousness in the sense that African- American critic W. E. DuBois outlines. DuBois describes the black man as born "with a veil", a mask which is put by the dominant white culture to label blacks with certain qualities, which is an impediment for black people to discover their selves. Black people, thus, understand themselves through the veil of white society that considers their existence with "pity and contempt." DuBois's vision of double-consciousness rejects the attitudes of submission and adjustment to the white's rules. Instead, he views Negroes as a part of America, as American citizens, whose rights must be legally acknowledged.

community. When drumming was banned in plantation life, it turned into a night-time underground act of communication. Its sound echoing through dark spaces thus "symbolized a physical and spiritual threat of retribution within the dominant imagery" (Maysles 94). Drumming was a comprehensible language for the African diaspora, who, "robbed of their language and forcibly tied to instruments of capital", developed "musical forms which were means of both communication and inspiration" (Campbell, qtd. in Maysles 93-4). Thus, drum and bass become the voice of a submerged history and dub is linked to a history of rebellion.

Dick Hebdige refers to the multidimensional role of drumming for slave communities in *Cut' n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music* (1987). Drumming helped slaves express their anger and frustration, and their power to unite secretly under the colonizer's gaze. It kept alive the memory of Africa and freedom from European forces. Moreover, with the *abeng* (cow horn), it used to be a signal of threat and a call to arms (26). In "Reggae Sounds," a drum beat is so perceptible both on the page and to the reader's ears that it incites the mood of resistance in the implied black audience when the poem is performed with accompanying music:

> Thunda from a bass drum sounding
> lightning from a trumpet and a organ
> bass and rhythm and trumpet double-up
> team-up with drums for a deep doun searching
> (Johnson 18)

Johnson orchestrates all the sounds of accompanying instruments of reggae-dub on the page. These instruments are likened to thunder and lighting, or the hurricane of the Caribbean. This performance functions to search deep down into the "black story" that has long been forgotten. The drum-beat revives snapshots of this story, and the first thing discovered is "the root of pain" that "shape[s] it into violence for the people" to rebel (Johnson 18). It also grows a knowledge of self that holds autonomy:

> shock-black bubble-doun-beat bouncing
> rock-wise tumble-doun soun music
> foot-drop find drum blood story
> bass history is a moving
> is a hurting black story (18)

Johnson claims that he discovers “black history” through music as a cultural resistance. The role of the artist here is to “shape it into violence for the people” (18). The violence here is not a physical one, but one achieved through linguistic and rhythmic violation on the page and during performance. The dub poet believes in his/her power to direct people “what to do they will do it” (Johnson 18). The reggae beat becomes a source of disclosing a “hurting black story” and turns cultural resistance into a historical situation. The poet is aware of the fact that his/her performance provides only a limited agency. Therefore, in “Reality Poem,” in which he warns his community not to “check fi antiquity” or “deal wid mitalagy” but act in the same line with “di age af reality” (Johnson 30). As an artist, Johnson feels it necessary to raise social and political consciousness.

In Johnson’s poetry, dread is identified thorugh various ways. According to Gordon Rohlehr, dread symbolizes the historical tension between the slave and the colonizer, a quality that “defines the static fear-bound relationship between the ‘have-gots’ and the ‘have-nots’.” In return for the execution of power on the part of the colonizer, the slave produces “introspective menace and the dream of Apocalypse” (Rohlehr, “The West Indian Poetry” 322). This aspect is manifest in the production of sound as a marker of subversion and in the conscious production of noise. According to Kobena Mercer, voice produces dread in two ways:

> At a micro-level, the textual work of creolizing appropriation activated in new forms of black cultural practice awakens the thought that such strategies of disarticulation and rearticulation may be capable of transforming the 'democratic imaginary' at a macro- level by 'othering' inherited discourses of English identity. The second instantiation…is to make the voice noisy; that is, to employ sound as syntax, as syncopation, as "sonority contrasts." (qtd. in Hitchcock, pars 21-22)

The sound becomes the driving force of the poet, whose performance allegorizes a community which is addressed in the poems. The sound structures of the poems are designed with the consciousness of an audience, which can be transformed into a community through the shared experience of performance. This is the main quality of oral poetry as Walter Ong explains, “sound and voice imply an audience…the fact that sound signals present, ongoing activity gives it immediate value in establishing

social relations, particularly flexible ones in variable situations. Sound reciprocates" (123).

Johnson self-consciously politicizes Black literary production and originates an ex-centric voice with "dread" and "beat". He reconfigures personal and communal subjectivity with reggae-based dub "riddims' and Jamaican patois. In "Bass Culture," dread becomes a central form of resistance rhythm. Rooted in Jamaican Rastafari, dread depicts a communal understanding of "the awesome, fearful confrontation of a people with a primordial but historically denied racial selfhood" (Owens qtd. in Hitchcock, par. 10). The poet overtly identifies the characteristics of this culture in the first stanza. It is built by "black," rooted in pain, causes the heart to throb and gives courage. It is tensed up "in di bubble and di bounce/ an di leap an di weight-drop" (Johnson 15). The poet describes dread beat as the "di beat of di heart" with a bubbling bass. It is "a bad bad beat" that pushes the black to the "wall" which blocks the black community. They realize how their community is relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within British society.

> More generally, [dread] connotes a sense of crisis whether political or cultural, of apocalyptic nature in which social contradictions cannot be answered accept by an intense destabilization of the "order of things." And, of course, there is dread as danger, because every stand against injustice invites retribution from those who see inequity as a niggling but necessary by-product of their barbarism. (Hitchcock, par 10)

Dread rhythm gathers passion "like a frightful form/ like a righteous harm/ giving off wild like is madness" (Johnson 15). This form opens the way for political action and foregrounds cultural traits conveyed through bass:

> latent powa
> in a form resembling madness
> like a violence is di show
> burstin outta slave shackle
> look ya! Boun fi harm di wicked (Johnson 16)

This stanza self-reflexively describes the poetic form as madness that boosts violence. Dread, thus, becomes menace because it resists the dominant poetic form, language and the world view "Babylan" represents. "Latent powa" in dread beat goes back to days of slavery. It is the only expression that breaks "slave shackle" and sets them free from captivation and oppression. The pounding bass beat becomes the

topic of the poem. The poem also imitates the power and sound of hurricane that is taken by Brathwaite as the true form Afro-Caribbean natural expression. Therefore, the violence registered by the poem "has everything to do with the tropical storm it imitates and the history of oppression it records and from which it learns" (Hitchcock, par. 23). The voice of thunder makes a sharp noise, "SCATTA-MATTA-SHATTA-SHACK/ what a beat!" This is also the voice of rebellion, which fuels passion for freedom. In the last stanza, the function of dread beat is summarized:

> for di time is nigh
> when passion gather high
> when di beat jus lash
> when di wall mus smash
> an di beat will shiff
> as di culture alltah
> when oppression scatta (Johnson 17)

Slaves would use drums at night to communicate and to warn against a danger. In the first line, there is a reference to this underground activity when "time is nigh." It is time to gather passion and confidence to produce a moment of insurgence. The slave-holder's tool of oppression, the lash, is now grasped by the black man who uses it to "shatta" the wall of oppression. When the beat shifts, the poem will pass on to another historical position. Hitchcock argues that dread signifies in two moments of identity. "The first is the colonial condition in which dread is the "latent powa" that eventually comes and the second moment, however, is the dread present where this same latency must be utilized to "scatta" oppression within postcoloniality" (par. 23). While dread becomes the source of anger, frustration and passion to "strike back," it is paradoxically the controlling force that purges these feelings at the moment of performance.

Dread comes to represent open rebellion in "It Dread inna Inglan." Johnson writes this poem for George Lindo, who is "a working man, a family man" and "nevah do no wrang," "carry no daggah" or "nat no rabbah" (Johnson 22). Although Lindo lives decently, he is "awftin foun guilty widoutn being tried" (Johnson 50). The police arrest black people without having a specific reason, their being suspicious of them is more than enough. The poem goes onto criticize Margaret Thatcher's policies: "Maggi Tatcha on di go/ wid a racist show/ but a she haffi go/

knaw" (Johnson 21). Against all these policies, the speaker is determined to stay in Britain and defies the police by shouting "dem bettah free him now!"

> far noh mattah wat dey say,
> come wat may,
> we are here to stay
> inna Inglan,
> inna disya time yah…(21)

Dread here is employed to describe "the material conditions of Black Britain, or Inglan, an existence suppressed or marginalized in the consciousness of England, or White authority" (Hitchcock, par. 11). The speaker calls all black people to rally against police brutality and other state practices: "rite now/ African/ Asian/ West Indian/ an' Black British/ stan firm inna Inglan" (Johnson 21). Dub techniques and dread beat, thus, try to make a challenging response to the social conditions of Black Britain.

Apart from dread beat and dub's different versions, apocalyptical imagery changes the mythic representations of London and creates a community that resists in specific ways. Firstly, Johnson remaps the streets of London by drawing the borders of black community. He names the places in postcolonial London and rewrites the history of these places recording it from black community's perspective. Dick Hebdige explains that when the first wave of immigrants arrived in "Landan toun" they came across a hostile environment, so they became firmly attached to one another. Many landlords refused to house newly-arrived immigrants and most of these people jammed into tenement buildings.

> Areas like London's Paddington, Brixton, Shepherd's Bush and Nothing Hill became ghettos. Faced with discrimination, prejudice and the prospect of poor jobs, poor housing and poor lives, the immigrants began to seek refuge in their own, West Indian culture… The West Indian way of life survived the transition in Britain. (Hebdige 91)

In poems like "Five Nights of Bleeding," "New Craas Massakkah," "Di Great Insohreckshan," "Mekin Histri," these places are renamed as places of resistance where "hurting black story" is remade. Reggae music and bass-drum riddims are empowering signs in these places:

> night number one was in Brixton
> SOPRANO B sound system
> was a beating out a rhythm with a fire

[…]
night number two doun at SHEPHERD'S
right up RAILTON ROAD
…
soun coming doun NEVILLE KING'S music iron
the rhythm jus bubbling an back-firing
…
night number three
over the river
right outside the RAINBOW
inside JAMES BROWN was screaming soul
outside the rebels were freezing cold
…
night number four at a blues dance
…
splintering fire, axes, blades, brain—blast
rebellion rushing doun the wrong road
storm blowing doun the wrong tree
…
night number five at the TELEGRAPH
vengeance walked through the doors
so slow
so smooth
so tight an ripe an smash!

These places are sites of defence against "Babylan" like the Kilimanjaro against "Mont Blanc" in Brathwaite's *X/Self*. As John McLeod asserts, Johnson's poetry helps remap the city in connection with the places, people and events pertaining to black communities. In this rewriting or re-"naming", Johnson tries to mirror "a sombre geography of the city's realities that is grounded in the experiences of British-born or -raised black youth" and it is also "a rehearsal of tenure and a defiant celebration of the rooting of black peoples in the neighbourhood" (*Postcolonial London* 132, 137).

In Johnson's apocalyptical imagery, London is in fire, in panic and congestion in opposition to harmony and peace. The utopic land of opportunities for the first generation of immigrants lose its attraction for the black youth who are "duped/ doped/ demaralized" and "dizzied/ dazed/ traumatized" ("Tings an Times" 52). In "Inglan is a Bitch," Johnson shows the disillusionment of an adult speaker when he first comes to "Landan toun." The city loses its utopian potential for the persona who starts working "pan di andahgroun". He names a few manual jobs which are, in a way, new forms of service to the master. He gets "a lickle jab in a big

'otell," or works as "dish-washah;" he "dhu day wok" and "nite wok," "clean wok" and "dutty wok" (14). Although he works in any job, he is dubbed as lazy: "dem seh dat black man is very lazy/ but if y'u si how mi work y'u woulda she mi crazy" (14).

Apocalyptical imagery envisages "a community united in resistance to the machinations of 'Babylon'" (McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 132). It is an alternative community which inflames a spirit of rebellion and resistance against oppression. The image of fire becomes the central force in Johnson's apocalyptic vision. For Afro-Caribbean poets, apocalypse has "a social and political idea" that involves two processes: "the violent destruction of an old world and the coming into being of a new one" (Rohlehr, "Rehumanization" 171). With this imagery, Johnson "offers us a vision of chaos and violence, a hopeless vision of endless oppression and retaliation" (Jones 47).

There is a close connection between the reggae sound and the image of fire in "Reggae Sounds." The rhythm is like "a tropical electrical storm" producing "flame-rhythm" and "burning" (Johnson 18).

> flame-rhythm of historically yearning
> flame-rhythm of the time of turning
> measuring the time for bombs and for burning (18)

Expressions of pain "deep doun" fuel the incendiary rage that leads to acts of insurgence. The "flame-rhythm" symbolically links the history of rebellion in colonial times with the tactics to fight racism in post/neo-colonial era. Similarly, in "Bass Culture", the cultural wave is "hatta dan di hites of fire/ livin heat doun volcano core" (Johnson 15). The more the beat intensifies, the angrier the speaker gets. His apocalyptical imagery describes London damaged by rage, "destruction all aroun" taking a way of a "deadly storm" (16). Also, in "Dread Beat and Blood," music gets its inspiration from the burning fire:

> muzic blazing sounding thumping fire blood
> brothers an sisters rocking stopping rocking
> music breaking out bleeding out thumping out fire
> burning
> (Johnson 9)

Music becomes a way of survival that keeps the fire of rebellion alive. The medium of rage is measured by "the heat an the hurt" of fire. Exploding fire becomes the sing of "bitterness and wailing blood" that unveils "hurting black story." Fiery resistance

described here is not considered as the racist cruelty of the state turned against itself, but "the incendiary activities of black youth are of a different nature and originate from alternative social and cultural histories" (McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 137).

The image of fire represents a conscious social and cultural response in Johnson's representations of London. The city is pictured as "a fiery apocalyptic urban space where law and order do not function equitably, violence and death are rife, and the city is suffering social meltdown" (ibid., 135). In opposition to oppression and racist attacks such as firing the disco in New Cross, music of blood and rhythms of fire fill the artist and his reader/hearer with passion and call for action. "New Craass Massakkah" is one of Johnson's most sombre poems with stanzas "rackin to di riddim." It records the events of New Cross Fire, in which fourteen young people lost their lives. The pleasant atmosphere of the party before the fire starts is expressed thorugh a quick reggae rhythm. Then, the rhythm captures the state of chaos once the fire starts:

> den di crash
> den di bang
> an di flames staat fit rang
> di heat
> an di smoke
> an di people staat fi choke
> di screamin
> an di cryin
> an di diein in di fyah
> …
> di weepin
> an di moanin
> o di harrow af di fyah (Johnson 42)

It is an infernal scene where people are swallowed by fire. The music stops when he tries to memorialize the dead. And he records the black community's answer as follows:

> yu noh remembah
> how di whole of black Britn did rack wid rage
> how di whole a black Britn tun *a fiery red*
> nat di callous red af di killah's eyes
> but red wid rage like the flames af di fyar (38)

This event gives way to "fiery" protests and pain at the same time. Fire is appropriated by Johnson as an image of rightful rebellion unlike the inveterate hatred of the "killah's eyes." Although Black Britain's response is "red rage," Johnson rejects any kind of murderous action. "Di Great Insohreckshan" is Black

Britain's response to the New Cross events. The rioters set the George public house on Railton Road on fire. The speaker says that this place is known as a racist locale:

> dem she wi bun dung di George
> wi coulda bun di lanlaad
> wi bun dung di George
> wi nevvah bun di lanlaad
> wen wi mash-up plenty police van
> wen wi mash-up di wicked wan plan
> wen wi mash-up di swamp eighty wan (Johnson 43-44)

Unlike New Cross Fire, the speaker notes that they spare the landlord and do not slaughter people. They burn the police van as a reply to ideological forces it represents. By firing the van, they "mash-up" the police's wicked plan called 'Swamp Eighty Wan'—"a reference to a policing operation in the area in 1981 which targeted the black community" (McLeod 137). As reflected in these poems, Johnson's city turns into a place of disorder and resistance. The cultural force of reggae music and dread beat try to "mash-up" the old system and replace it with a new one. Apocalyptical imagery enables the poet to capture the anguish of inner-city, as McLeod calls the places where black people live, and to convey the fiery response to particular socio-political upheavals by "tekkin di struggle to a highah stage" (Johnson 54). Fiery resistance described in the poems is not "considered as the racist cruelty of the state turned against itself;" however, it suggests a way that black youth can rewrite alter/native social and cultural histories (McLeod 137).

As a conclusion, Johnson's poetry conveys the experience of Black people in England with dread and reggae beats, fiery social commentary and a spirit of resistance. Dub poetry and rhythms are grounded in an "understanding of eternity that facilitates construction of a noncapitalist, non-Western symbolic order" and its "revolutions power the subaltern mind and body to acknowledge freedom from, yet coexistent with, the continual experience of exile" (Maysles 99). His technique of dubbing, using a mixture of Standard English with Jamaican patois, and the provocative social dialogue with his both white and black readers accentuate double-consciousness in his work. Language, thus, becomes a space of struggle where he articulates notions of being black in Britain and investigates the values of dominant culture. Johnson employs the imagery of fire as another instance of resistance complementing his use of language and reggae beats. While fire destroys the inner-city life and people, it has a powerful effect in picturing a London in chaos and

insurgence. These representations of London question the dominant discourse that tries to normalize and reflect conflicts and struggles from the perspective of the powerful.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORY IN LIVE PERFORMANCE

> No it isn't easy to forget
> what we refuse to remember
> (Nichols 18)

Recent postcolonial theories deal with memory as a thematic and technical device to rewrite history from the perspective of the "disenfranchised minorities" and diasporic communities. Memories are selective representations of actual or imagined experiences. As Paul Ricoeur defines in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004), when memory is used "in the singular" it refers to "the capacity, an effectuation", but "memories are in the plural: we have memories." The main characteristic of the domain of memories is "their multiplicity and their varying degrees of distinctness." Therefore, memory as an aggregative faculty is most of the time characterized as unreliable. Even if memory is distrusted, one discovers that "it is our one and only source for signifying the past-character of what we declare we remember" (Ricoeur 21-2). The multiplicity of memories and their articulation in different forms creates a site of struggle over meanings.

Remembering the past is a social and political act, apart from being personal. As Kevin Everod Quashie puts forward, "memory is a political practice linked with consciousness and decolonization…it is an essential and defining corpus, a quintessential characteristic of personal but especially collective identity" (100). Postcolonial writers complicate the emergence of a fixed identity with the politics of remembering. It is required to return to the past, Patricia Brett Erens argues, so as to find answers for the present and to recover from trauma. In both cases, memory serves "as the means for recapturing and re-evaluating the past" as well as an "agency through which a new identity is constructed" (45). It becomes a significant tool for the (re)appropriation of Afro-Caribbean identities and rewriting the history of the Middle Passage from the "disenfranchised minority's" perspective. As argued by Stuart Hall, identity goes through an ongoing process that entails "the retelling of

the past" and "imaginative rediscovery," and is thus articulated by glimpses of memory as an "act of reprocessing and modifying in the present." Therefore, for Hall, the retelling of the past leads to the "production of identity" rather than the "archaeology of identity" ("Culture" 227). Chapter Four focuses on the role of memory in the construction of alter/native Afro-Caribbean histories that have been forgotten and erased in dominant historical narratives. This chapter is especially concerned with examining the ways in which contested representations of the past and their impact in the present are infused with the politics of remembering and forgetting. It tries to analyse how memory (re)constructs new identities "from the root of the old one" and generates a new sense of home in the third space.

The use of memory in postcolonial literatures has several functions. Firstly, postcolonial writers employ acts of remembering and forgetting as a "counter-memory," which is a way to dig into the past for "hidden histories of those excluded from dominant narratives" and to offer "revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past" (Lipsitz 162). Homi Bhabha stresses the same necessity to recover the excluded perspective of "disenfranchised minorities," which provides not only the "proliferation of 'alternative histories of the excluded'" but also "a pluralist anarchy" (8). Secondly, by employing memories, the writers try to reintegrate the psyche, which is displaced by traumatic experiences, and heal the traces of trauma. In his analysis of Wilson Harris's fiction, Paul Sharrad refers to "the pursuit of the organization of the psyche." In order to lead the man to "the whole history of the world remembered from above," the postcolonial subject tries to master the landscapes and places where memory is embodied. This creates an "alchemical equilibrium," through which memories swing between "the living and the dead, the living and the living, the living and the unborn" (101-2). Thus, memory constructs an "interstitial space" where past events are synchronically narrated in connection with the present and future. Moreover, postcolonial artist foregrounds the paradoxical relationship between re-membering and forgetting. While s/he sinks into conscious oblivion, s/he discovers the base of remembering, "peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification" (Bhabha 231).

It is a common observation in West-Indian critics' work that West-Indian people are marginalized to a point outside of history. Therefore, claiming rights over

history has been one of the major preoccupations of West-Indian artist especially after political decolonization. Gordon Rohlehr stresses the need to reorder history by recalling and disremembering "Old World structures" and to work through the emergence of "New World ones" ("Rehumanization" 172). The West-Indian writer performs a dual task in his/her relation to history and its distorted versions through memory. The first of these tasks is achieving imaginative freedom "from the tyranny of a history which denies them a past (and thus a *presence*)." The second task is the "immersion in history to recover/recreate a past" (Sharrad 94). Against the linear flow of time controlled by dominant forces in history, West-Indian writers create texts that contest the linearity of history and cause-and-effect relationship by moving back and forth in time. In opposition to the conquistadors' national memory that justifies their acts, the postcolonial artist struggles to "create a fictional memory of suppressed legend, silent folklore, forgotten images." For Sharrad, this process does not depend on "documentary epic, official records or social realism, but on subjective, tentative deconstruction of dominating presence to show the shadows of reconstructions from absence" (97).

"Re-connect" or "re-memory", as Morrison terms it, has been a central impulse in the structuring of black thought. The process of re-memory establishes a bond between the individual and community. "Re-memory" refers to the practice of "uncovering and voicing the history so long repressed and ignored by the monologic master narrative" (Reid 181). Historical events are re-membered in a new way and identity positions are negotiated by "bringing all the parts back together" (Boyce-Davies 17). Toni Morrison, in her essay "The Site of Memory", explains the writer's obsession with the past and the need to journey back to an "original place":

> [T]he act of imagination is bound up with memory. You know they strengthened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and liveable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. 'Floods' is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through. What the banks were like…It is emotional memory—what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our "flooding" (119).

By re-memory, Toni Morrison blurs the boundaries of place, time and language to harmonize "flooding" associations and fill the gaps in the silent history of slavery. In "The Postcolonial and The Postmodern," Bhabha discusses that discursive time-lag enables historical revision and the construction of political and cultural agency. Rewriting history requires the reordering of the symbols. "When the sign ceases the synchronous flow of the symbol," it also captures the "power to elaborate… the new and hybrid agencies and articulations" (275). In "Bread Alone," Bhabha has recourse to Toni Morrison's notion of "rememoration" as the configuration of popular memory which "turns the present of narrative enunciation into the haunting memorial of what has been excluded, excised, evicted, and for that very reason becomes the *unheimlich* space for the negotiation of identity and history" (284).

The analyses of poems in the following sections, firstly, deal with the thematic function of memory or other mnemonic devices. It has been a crucial step for Afro-Caribbean poets to defy a single version of history through discordant and empowering memories. They cross-fertilize histories and "repossess both a true sense of one's time and identity, proposing in an unprecedented way a revaluation of power" (Glissant 93). Artistic imagination becomes crucial in directing disparate memories into a meaningful whole and adopting alter/native strategies to rewrite history poetically. Moreover, poets turn to memory and the cultural trauma of slavery "to make political and moral claims about historical oppressions in the past and present" (Hua 13). Memory becomes a form of resistance to machinations of slavery, colonization and racial discrimination. Brathwaite links the history of slavery to the fall of the Roman Empire, and searches for contemporary global networks of slavery. Slavery in this sense is both "an artistic, mythic reservoir and memory of a trauma passed down through generations" (Low 110). Grace Nichols problematizes the male-dominated history writing by recording the memories of female slaves. Linton Kwesi Johnson re-collects the stories of racial discrimination and acts of rebellion (contemporary maroonage) in Black Britain.

Secondly, memories create an "interstitial space" between the past and the present. Making use of different techniques, Brathwaite, Nichols and Johnson wander freely in this in-between space where individual and collective identities are simultaneously defined and re-defined. Sidonie Smith explains the relationship between the past and the present as follows:

> The present wraps itself around the past as the past unwraps and rewraps itself around the present, its future. In the present (of time and of narration) the past constantly materializes in and as memory. And the remembering subject is herself the embodiment of the past. (55)

As Homi Bhabha discusses, such art creates a hybrid cultural space that disjunctively inscribes cultural memory. The writer does not simply recall the past "as social cause or aesthetic precedent." S/he "renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living" (Bhabha 11).

Finally, through memory, ancestral roots are visited as a means of cultural healing and benediction. In "Timehri", Brathwaite underlines the importance of ancestral recognition:

> In the Caribbean, whether it be African or Amerindian, the recognition of an ancestral relationship with the folk or aboriginal culture involves the artist and participant in a journey into the past and hinterland which is at the same time a movement of possession into present and future. Through this movement of possession we become ourselves, truly our own creators, discovering word for object, image for the Word. (350)

Memory assembles different perspectives and mythical accounts into a composite mental construct. Brathwaite and Nichols reside in the memories of ancestral gods and figures like Maroons, Ananse, Ogun, Shango and Toussaint L'Overture. Different from Nichols and Johnson, Brathwaite employs the magic montage technique to defy the Western mode of linear and rational narrative form. Linton Kwesi Johnson's poetry is more concerned with recent political upheavals in Black Britain. He recalls the figures and events of the recent past so as to heal the psyche of the black youth in London.

4.1. Ancestral Memory and The Use of Magical Montage Technique in *X/Self*

I wear this
past I borrowed; his-
tory bleeds

behind my hallowed eyes
"Sunsum", *The Arrivants*, 150

In his interview with Nathaniel Mackey, Brathwaite defines *X/Self* as "my widening sense of history, of the influences that make up not only the biological history of the Caribbean but the personal one, the intellectual history." Brathwaite's constant references to the histories of other nations and his cross-cultural exchange of languages and historical events are "a Calibanization of what [he has] read, the things that informed [his] growth in terms of ideas" (15). He believes that rewriting history is a means of survival for Afro-Caribbean poetic and cultural identity. His X Self moves between past and present by discovering Afro-Caribbean ancestral voices and by searching the roots of slavery in global history. This chapter discusses Brathwaite's use of magical realism through montage technique to (re)write history of slavery and colonial exploitation in *X/Self*. It further analyzes how ancestral memory gives way to the flowering of a selfhood.

Gordon Rohlehr discusses in "The Rehumanization of History" that Brathwaite rehumanizes history in *X/Self* by employing different techniques to reconsider history. For him, Brathwaite deals with "a History that he presents as dense, multi-layered, many-dimensioned and meaningful" (163). He achieves this through "magical realism" or "magical montage." This term has a long history in Latin American criticism and comes to wider use with Jacques Stephen Alexis's "Of the Magical Realism of the Haitians" (1956), which observes that "many postcolonial societies a peasant, pre-industrial population had its imaginative life rooted in a living tradition of the mythic, the legendary and the magical" (Ashcroft et al, *Key Concepts* 132). Magical realism seeks to return to those forms in order to discover the pre-colonial traditions and obtain a moment of resistance. Mythic and magical traditions have been the "collective forms by which they gave expression to their identity and articulated their difference from the dominant colonial and racial oppression" (ibid., 132).

Writers using magical montage are characterized as "a conduit for endless reiterations of a reified irrationality" (Moudileno 28). The postcolonial writer can create alter/native socio-cultural realities and narrative modes through magical montage. It questions the rational, linear characteristic of Western realist fiction and "enclose[s] it within an indigenous metatext, a body of textual forms that recuperate

the pre-colonial culture" (Ashcroft et al, *Key Concepts* 132). Lydie Moudileno analyzes how magical realism comes to have syncretic function in postcolonial literatures:

> The critical currency of the term now extends to many other postcolonial narratives in which magical or mythical elements of "indigenous" cultural origin are incorporated and naturalized within a Western language and framework, including Oceania, Africa, the African Diaspora, and South Asia. It has become a privileged modality for the expression of syncretism, paradox, and other such dualities that characterize contemporary postcolonial societies (30-1).

Magical realism, therefore, brings together worlds, systems, people, languages and geographies that look irreconcilable. Within a plurality of experiences, Brathwaite's X Self situates itself in a liminal territory where it negotiates cultural differences. Brathwaite's metaphors and images are intertwined so seamlessly that past and present collide with each other. He defines his poetry as "magic realism…the transformation of reality into this prism of imagination and light":

> What I'm saying in *X/Self* is that whenever two empires meet or two people, like Herodotus and Herod, meet, the result of their *frisson* and fusion is a creole event. And that they can live together in the same space, even if they come from two different time centres. I mean, you increasingly can bring all sorts of people together to participate in a new, magical event, because they share this business of osmosis. Their cultures are informing each other, exchanging information… Rome in fact becomes like the metropolis of the modern Caribbean. Nero could have been any of the slave-masters who were dancing in the Caribbean at that time (Mackey, "Interview" 22).

Brathwaite interfuses Greek, Roman, Egyptian, African and the Caribbean myths and histories underlying the themes of slavery, the rise and fall of empires and the brutal global effects of capitalism. The history of colonization and slavery is linked to the rise and fall of Roman Empire, repeated several times in *X/Self* in the following lines, "Rome burns/ and our slavery begins" ("Salt" 5, "Edge of the Desert" 10, "Mont Blanc" 31, "Ice/Nya" 103). Rome, for Brathwaite, formed up "some kind of law, order, structure, for the ancient world." With its fall, "mercantilism, commercialism and materialism, unbridled materialism, rushed into

to fill the gap." The slave trade begins with the fall of Rome as "[t]he death of Rome signals the beginning of western expansion" (Mackey, "Interview" 15).

Turning to the past of slavery, the poet tries to reflect its effects on the destruction of self, how the self finds strategies of resistance and survival, and how its psyche is recuperated through ancestral forces. Brathwaite uses time in an associative manner by moving between different periods, between "herod," "canon tennyson," "venice," "king arthur's nights," "hammurabi dracon," "mohammet," "Toussaint L'Overture" (5-9). By playing with time in this manner, "eye-corner ghosts of historical memory and meaning, become possible… as you become increasingly aware of its world, so do the word/name: images: begin to disclose the history of them/selves [*sic*]" (Brathwaite, "Metaphors" 243).

In "Julia," Brathwaite juxtaposes at least three historical periods in which the empire is in social unrest: Rome is declining from power; America deals with the demands of African-Americans in the late 1960s; and again America at the time the poem is being composed, "the mid-1980s when the culture industry 'produced' the simulated presidency of Reagan/ Headrest" (Naylor 170). The figure of Julia stands between the interstices of all cultures and time periods represented:

> i see where caesars young mulatto sister will parade her
> formidable chic
> …
> but Claudius her husband never is at home
> at grapetime tv supper time or when she takes her pills
> …
> would you have married ali when he was mohammet of the blow
> by blow? Would you have made it on the late late
> cosby show? (12)

Julia is Caesar's "mulatto sister" and Claudius's wife during the Roman Empire. As Brathwaite explains in his notes, Julia also appears in the 1960s having the title role in the first African-American prime time TV show, "Julia," "starring Diahann Carroll in an 'uptown' role" (115). The last one is in the 1985-6, Julia as the potential guest on the "black 'prime time' (not/ no longer 'late late') US TV show [of] Billy Cosby's" (115). As Paul Naylor discusses this montage "'arrests' the narrative of progress" in several ways:

> First, it suggests the role of women as window-dressing…their identity is still determined by their relations with men. Julia is left with little to do but look good while

> she worries about her husband. Second, it suggests that people of mixed race are simultaneously marginalized and exploited by the dominant culture in half-hearted attempts to redress the problems that cause events like the 'montgomery bus boycott.' Third, it suggests that the products of contemporary consumer culture are merely pacifiers—ice from an 'electric gourd' and advertising slogans promoting a capitalist version of multicultural consumption in which 'we are the world.' (170)

Brathwaite also criticizes his own banal rhythms in "Julia" that turns it into a commodity of popular culture. Brathwaite has also constant references to other black figures like Tina Turner, *posse comitatus* from Westerns, which is now "used by West Atlantic blacks to mean a social/community group;" and other figures from Western tradition such as "john the Baptist," "atlas," "chimera," the fire-breathing female monster in Greek mythology (*X/Self* 115). Naylor argues that by magical montage in "Julia", Brathwaite delivers "a stunning shock" to the capitalist system by "making wholes in history visible" (Naylor 169).

Likewise, in "Phalos," Brathwaite shows the plight of women in Third World cities, Addis, Actium, and Kumas, which are Ethiopia, Egypt and Ashanti. The common feature of these cities is that they are "overrun by Caesar," namely, by European powers (Brathwaite, "Notes" 116). Brathwaite represents pre- and post-colonial state of women by magical montage technique. The poem exemplifies the long-term distortion of sensibilities that has resulted from European commercialism. In the first few stanzas, the poet describes how women struggle to resemble their white masters not to be othered by them:

> And since that day at addis at actium at kumas
> our women have forshook their herbs forshorn their naked saviours
> …
> they have straightened their nostrils
> o julia o baby g
>
> painted their eyelids blue like helen o like the prow/ess
> of greek ships
> like on the darkened dardanelles of v-strike bombers
>
> fire of their breasts in their brassaries
> …
> their steatopygia from cabalash and yabba into designer jeans

they have stiletto tipped & toed on gucci heels from accompong (16)

The first line, starting with "And," suggests that "Phalos" is linked to the previous poem "Nix" that refers to the expeditions of Caesar. "[S]ince that day at at addis at actium at kumas" alludes to time when these three counties are occupied and colonized. The persona goes on to record a number of surgical operation women of these cities undergo in order to look like Helen of Troy. They try to hide their African features to be accepted and recognized by the colonizer. Local standards of beauty are displaced by the global promotion of beauty as a West-oriented commodity. Another destruction of capitalism is, thus, on the perception of the selves, and trying to adopt what popular culture imposes upon them. These women with "straightened nostrils," "painted eyelids," "designer jeans" and high-heeled guccis try to reduce "the gaze of otherness" by "producing a partial vision of colonizer's presence" (Bhabha 126). Brathwaite juxtaposes these images of women who become "wise foolish virgins credit card viragoes" with the pre-colonial women who would live in "the ragged dirt yards…sister to sister wife/ by wife" and "pestel down a thunder of yam at babalawo's command;" their mothers who "buttock down to hearth or cooking pot/ to tuntum achar eddoes" (16). The magical montage technique enables Brathwaite to critique capitalist consumer culture and its effect on women of formerly colonized countries.

In "Nuum," Brathwaite describes the effects of rising capitalism, which turns into an uncontrollable machine. With montage technique, he connects pre-colonial life in Africa with images of the destructive forces of European expansionism. In these images Ashanti towns, Benin, Samarkand, Nagazaki, Auschwitz and "Viet Nam" share the same fate. The poet first depicts the pre-colonial state of African towns:

they live beyond the mountain in green pastures
where they not yet bitten the neutron

they still worship gods that make them smile
that allow them to welcome the stranger
that will render them heavily prisoner (34)

When the strangers enter their world system, they destroy everything "ceaselessly":

They burn

They eat land

They vomit it up
They leave lakes of desolation

Ochre choler water

That returns benediction
Plantations of dead plankton (34-5)

The destructive nature of imperialism turns Ashanti into "*ash*anty towns" that "rust within their oxides" (35). The ecological damage surmounts with the rise of capitalism. Benin city, which is famous for its bronze, turns into "bronze catafalques" (35).

panting triumphant locomotive izukkis
mad explosions of gas of carbide of bhopal blitzkriegs
of mein kampf mein feuhrrherrherr. satellites like discoteques
(36)

The persona refers to the Central Indian city, "Bhopal," where one of the worst industrial accidents of the world history took place in 1984 and thousands were maimed and destroyed. In his notes, Brathwaite describes this event as the explosion of "Mont Blanc," the West, represented in "US Union Carbide" (120). Tons of toxic gas that escaped in Bhopal is linked to Nazi gas chambers in the last line where the speaker mimics German words. As Rohlehr puts forward, "[l]inking the Bhopal disaster with Nazi gas chambers, Nagazaki with Viet Nam and Auschwitz, *X/Self* is a passionate outcry against the miners, militia and bankers of Imperialism" (182).

Brathwaite has a profound sense of emotional and intellectual connection with his ancestral memories. He knows that "resistance lies in renaming the gods, reclaiming the bodies, repeating but also redefining history" (Dayan 726). Stuart Hall asserts in "New Ethnicities" that "there can …be no simple 'return' or 'recovery' of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present" and "no base of creative enunciation is a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and identities of the present" (448). The speaker of "The Visibility Trigger" describes this idea at the end of the poem: "our great odoum/ triggered at last by ancestors into visibility/ crashed/ into history" (50). In *X/Self*, ancestral memories are closely related to the present realities as underlined in the discussion of magical montage. Towards the end of the

book, Brathwaite populates the text with African gods, figures of maroonage and revolution, and psychic healing that comes with the return of "shango." Until the fifth section of *X/Self*, destructive forces of slavery and capitalism have been largely discussed showing its effects on the maiming of the X Self. Recourse into ancestral memories, thus, offers the flowering of X Self.

The coming of thunder god Shango[14] at the end of the book signifies the end of old world and the creation of a new one. As Rohlehr discusses, it brings "a spirit of fire, energy and iron resolve, in the breasts of the subjugated" ("Rehumanization" 175). The theme of revival and finding a source of benediction are underlined in "Xango." This figure from Afro-Caribbean cosmology also represents a source of "affirmation and resistance, of vision and revision" (Naylor 172).

Hail

there is new breath here

huh

there is victory of sparrows
erzulie with green wings
feathers sheen of sperm

hah
…
i take you love at last my love
my night my dream my horse my gold/en horn my Africa
(107, emphasis original)

The italicized sighs signify the welcoming of renewed Spirit. Xango becomes the muse of the poet and of Africa; "The Muse of Africa here is a combination of desire, dream, imagination and music. Joyful possession of this Muse creates vision, language and 'riddim'" (Rohlehr, "Rehumanization" 199): "we word with salt this moisture vision/ we make from vision/ black and bone and riddim" (108).

In spite of the forces of capitalism and colonialism, Xango manages to survive the symbolic Middle Passage journey from Africa to contemporary sites of neo-colonialism, America and England. Xango makes a subversive gesture when he

[14] As Brathwaite defines in his notes, Shango or Xango is "Pan African god of thunder, lightening, electricity and its energy, sound systems, the locomotive engine and its music; a great horseman" (130).

asserts that “he will shatter outwards to your light and calm and history” (111). He further displaces the forces of capitalism:

un
hooking the wagons john

ford and his fearsless cow
boy crews j

p morgan is dead
coca cola is drowned

the statue of liberty’s never been born
manhattan is an island where cows cruise on flowers (109)

As Gordon Rohlehr asserts that “the Statue of liberty is as much a reality as the genocide of Native Americans.” The historical relations like this provides of the most important arguments of *X/Self*, “the elevation of the former is intimately related to the extermination of the latter” (203). He also refers to Michelangelo’s painting of the Creation of the World:

for there is green at the root of his bullet
Michelangelo working away at the roof of his murderous rocket (110)

For Brathwaite, Michelangelo bears the paradox of History. The Renaissance, known as the period of creativity, is also characterized by witch-hunting, the Inquisition, the crusades. The creativity “growing out of equally phenomenal destructiveness, grace juxtaposed to or issuing from the heart of atrocity” and Xango, who looks for new world order, embodies the same paradox (Rohlehr 204).

In “Xango”, the flowering of selfhood is inspired by ancestral voices offering healing and benediction:

touch
him
he will heal

you

word
and balm
and water

flow
embrace
him

he will shatter outwards to your light and calm and history

your thunder has come home (107)

Xango turns into a "resurrection symbol; man's retrieval and recreation of his senses of the sacred and humane, if even at the price of violence" (Rohlehr, "Rehumanization" 206). Brathwaite achieves this effect through complex images that describe the New World experience. These images restore hope and power as a gift of for the refreshed self. The complexity of images, however, is the result of "the liminal nature" of this experience, "which is by force of History, transcultural and many-veined" (ibid., 202).

To conclude, Brathwaite subverts conventional views of culture and history by magical montage technique and recalling ancestral memories. By magical realism, Brathwaite juxtaposes "overlapping worlds or realities that take place in a liminal space and time, neither here nor there, past nor present, yet in a territory where the possibility of magically transforming reality exists" (R. Smith 111). The power of imagination and memory unites in the fragmented histories of peoples and empires in *X/Self*. He replaces old world sensibilities with an apocalyptical vision employing new world images that heal and produce a medium of agency. As Gordon Rohlehr states, *X/Self*, among all other things, is "a journey into a mind that has been formed through a wide experience of literature and history" (182). The mind tries to achieve equilibrium in understanding various worlds. Out of the vision of ruin and destruction, a new self emerges with hope and determination.

4.2. Reinscribing Slave Women's Identity in Grace Nichols' *i is a long memoried woman*

This part aims to analyze the role of memory in constructing identity and negotiating the notions of home and belonging in Grace Nichols' *i is a long memoried woman (1983).* Through a sequence of narrative poems, Grace Nichols re-inscribes the history of slavery and the brutal Middle Passage journey through the memories of a group of African women who are captured in Africa and brought to the Caribbean by slave ships. Nichols' protagonist, the long memoried woman, announces in the prologue that she has a long list of memories to recount. Each

poem represents a memory "written/ in each crumpled fold" (*i is* 62). These fragments of memories enable the poet to reproduce the tremendous psychological and physical traumas the slave women undergo and to chronicle women's struggle to sustain a "deep man pride" (*i is* 7). Having similar concerns with some of Brathwaite's works such as *the Arrivants* and *Mother Poem*, Nichols tries to discover "African cultural legacies in the Caribbean, the role of Caribbean woman in relation to male histories, the geography or 'geo-psyche' of the Caribbean" (Donnell and Welsh 369). The Middle Passage history is revitalized through constant shifts between acts of remembering, forgetting and re-memory, to come to terms with it. Borrowing Homi Bhabha's analysis of *Beloved* in *The Location of Culture*, one can argue that Nichols's sequence "revives the past of slavery and its murderous rituals of possession and self-possession, in order to project a contemporary fable of woman's history that is at the same time the narrative of an affective, historic memory of an emergent public sphere" (8).

The use of memory in Nichols's volume is closely linked with three major thematic functions: its community-binding role, connecting the old and the new world with representations of place and experiences of the Middle Passage, and enabling women to "enter into"[15] male-dominant histories with their own strategies of history writing. Nichols owes her inspiration to a dream of a young African girl swimming from Africa to the Caribbean with a garland of flowers around her waist, an attempt to purge the ocean of misery her ancestors have experienced. Grace Nichols reports it in an interview, "when I woke up I interpreted the dream to mean that she was trying to cleanse the ocean of the pain and suffering that her ancestors had gone through in that crossing from Africa to the New World" (qtd. in Wisker 291). Crossing the cultural borders, the female slave who has long been silenced by male-dominated history recounts her painful story of slavery and New World experience. Marlene Nourbese Philip emphasizes the special necessity of such projects for the black female, "it is imperative that our writing begin to recreate our histories and our myths, as well as integrate that most painful of experiences—loss of our history and our world" (qtd. in Scanlon 59).

[15] The reference is to Grace Nichols poem "I Will Enter" (61-2).

In *I is*, memory informs the very structure of poems and lines of thought. Attempting to account for and understand a specific historical moment, such as the transatlantic voyage of slaves, these poems are haunted by the pasts which are erased and banished from signification. In this respect, memory holds a political significance by challenging the hegemony of official histories and colonial impositions. Oyèrònké Oyewůmi states, in "Colonizing Bodies and Minds," that histories of colonization have mostly been written from the male viewpoint, "women are peripheral if they appear at all." The (post)colonial system is sex-differentiated and its policies are determined by gender identity. Therefore, it is necessary that "any discussion of hierarchy in the colonial situation, in addition to employing race as the basis of distinctions, should take into account its strong gender component" (256).

In her representations of slave women who are torn asunder by rape and physical exploitation, Nichols tries to avoid a victim mentality and to find alternative ways to empower women. She expresses her manner towards her story as follows: "I can't subscribe to the 'victim-mentality'…which seems so like wallowing in 'Look what they've done to us'…I reject the stereotype of the 'long-suffering black woman'…There is a danger of reducing the black woman's condition to that of 'sufferer'" (Nichols qtd in Griffin 31-32). Even at the height of despair and utmost displacement, slave women try to come to terms with the situation they are in. Thus, the poems appear to say, "I am a Black woman. I have been used and exploited, as a labouring force and as a sex object, *by black and white men*. But I come from a line of strong women whose collective strength will support me in my moves towards self-determination" (Griffin 32, emphasis mine).

To begin with, slave women show a collective effort to formulate identities that weave together traditions and versions of histories that are instrumental to their survival. Grace Nichols firstly turns to Africa to discover a community of strong and powerful women in her ancestral past, where blackness and femaleness are not marginalised (Innes 323). Turning to her roots, she finds cultural loss and suffering. Nevertheless, the shared experience of oppression becomes a positive drive for survival in the New World. The long memoried woman eulogizes "a gendered celebration of a borderless black nation, a postcolonial 'country of strong women'"

(Papaleonida 200). She acquires strength from the community of African women of her memories and the community of women enslaved with her in the Caribbean.

In "Web of Kin," Nichols's long memoried woman recalls her African homeland and nostalgically identifies herself in relation to the African waters. She tells her listeners that she comes "from the sea that washes the Ivory Coast/ from muddy rivers/ from long and twisting Niger-rivers" (8). She recalls the strength which her former community provided her with:

> I come from web of kin
> from sacred new yam reapings
> I come from a country of strong women
> black Oak women who bleed slowly at
> the altars of their children (9).

By scattering flowers on top of the Middle Passage waters, she memorialises African people who have been forced to make the transatlantic journey, "strewing it with sweet smelling/ flowers/ one for everyone who made the journey" (Nichols 9).

> and at evenings I will recline
> hair full of sun
> hands full of earth
> I will recline on my bed of leaves
> bid the young ones enter sit them
> all around me
>
> feed them sweet tales of Dahomey (9)

She becomes the leader of the community of "strong woman." She takes the responsibility to revive the memories of their African homeland through "sweet tales of Dahomey." Dahomey is the old name of Benin, a country in Western Africa, where slaves were captured and stuffed into slave cargoes. The slave woman articulates new identities by blending memories of her "displaced" home with shared experience of slavery in the New World. It is the strength of the African female community which the long memoried woman invokes for support. Only practising rituals and traditions she has brought from Africa, does she retain a sense of belonging to her lost homeland.

In *I is*, female bonding operates on a diachronic and synchronic level (Griffin 30). The persona connects an African female community and women of the indigenous tribes of the islands such as Awarakan and Caribbean with slave women

who inhabit the island at present. The persona of the volume "look[s] for the join" for physical and psychic survival.

> To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction… is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity: "I am looking for the join…I want to join…I want to join" (Bhabha 26-7)

For Bhabha, when historical visibility withers through conscious or unconscious amnesia, the displacements of memory and the "house of fiction" suggest the image of "psychic survival."

Moreover, as Papaleonida suggests, "women's experiences of colonisation find them powerful in their disempowerment, vocal in their silent endurance, creative despite the 'hardness' to which they and their children are brutally sacrificed" (201). In "We the Women," the use of first-person plural "we" shows a strong female community on the islands and a common destiny that awaits them. The main clause is not completed until the end of the poem, which incites self-determination and power to go on. Although their "praises go unsung," "voices go unheard" and their "deaths [are] swept away/ aside," slave women are determined to make "something from this/ ache-and-pain-a-me/ back-o-hardness" (12). The final stanza's first line, 'Yet we the women', denotes a spirit of resistance. Although the stanza begins in a defiant manner, it is not completed with a concrete act of resistance. Women are still voiceless ("we the women/ whose praises go unsung/ whose voices go unheard") and swept aside "as easy as dead leaves." However, in "Days that Fell," the long memoried woman stresses the necessity of holding fast to dreams, for "all revolutions are rooted in dreams" (10).

In "I Will Enter," the poet pays tribute to the original female inhabitants of the island, to an Amerindian woman. The persona believes that the Amerindian woman caresses her with love and affection, and gives her what she needs on the island like "cassava bread or casirri" or "a blanket woven by/ [her] hands" (*i is* 61). The Afro-Caribbean slave woman blends her history with the history of the Amerindian woman when she says,

> But wait
> like a broken flute
> your tongue is silent
> your eyes speak of an
> *ancient weariness*

I too have known
memory is written
in each crumpled fold
you can still remember
how they pitted gun against
arrow
steel against stillness
….
And so you'll talk no more
of *Amalivaca*
….
No more of Kaie
brave old chief who took
to sacrifice on behalf
of his tribe
rushing the falls before
the great *Mokonima*'s eye (62) (my emphasis)

Nichols draws similarity between the two stories of oppression to emphasize the spiritual connection between women. The Amerindian woman's "tongue is silent" like the long memoried woman, who says "I have lost my tongue" in "Epilogue" (87). In the last stanza, Nichols resides in Amerindian myths of rebellion. As the Amerindian woman's tongue is silenced, she can no more talk about these myths "of *Amalivaca*" or "of *Kaie*." This point of common suffering and struggle allows the long memoried woman to read the Amerindian women's memories "written/ in each crumpled fold." It becomes the poet's task to record these cultural memories of the island's native tribes together with African cosmology. In "Battle with Language", Nichols acknowledges her interest in indigenous heritages of the Caribbean, "[t]he presence and influence of the indigenous people are evident in the region... I feel a kinship with the Amerindian people of Guyana, for example, with their myths and legends" (283). Memories of African homeland, a shared experience of exploitation, and the ritualistic practices form up a female community.

In "Memory, Narrative and the Discourses of Identity," Smith sorts out two qualities of narrative memory. First of all, narrative remembering "functions as a medium of symbolic interaction. It is an occasion of exchange and an effect of social exchange". As these memories are shareable, they "thus serve a social solidarity function". Secondly, "remembering is emplaced". Narrative memories "are attached to places; and places become personally and communally meaningful through memories and the social context of remembering" (42). As the long memoried

woman's memory unfolds fragmentarily, a "liminal space" is discovered for the collective history of people who are captured in Africa and enslaved in the Caribbean. In Nichols's volume, the physical environment is "tainted" in two ways. Firstly, it is contaminated with a colonizing mission that seeks to get the highest profit from the land and women's bodies. Secondly, the landscape is infected with a reigning "ideological dominance" which erases cultural traditions and histories of people (Cilano 119). People and the souls of the dead inhabit the in-between space, as they swing in the limbo of the Middle Passage. For instance, in "Eulogy" the slave women mourn for those who have killed themselves by drowning or choking, "souls caught in the Middle Passage/ limbo", and "the saddest/ of all" are the ones who linger half-alive after the Middle Passage journey:

cadances like the living
parables of the dead

Yes the souls
Yes the souls
Yes the souls
caught in the Middle Passage
limbo

the dead ones
who are not dead
the sleeping ones
who are not sleeping(16)

Pain and anguish suffered during Middle Passage journey and the life in colonial plantations elevate the sense of displacement. In "Taint", she ironically remembers her own people's treacherous connection with the slave trade. Her identity is erased by being "traded" and/or sold like an animal or worthless chattel:

But I was stolen by men
the colour of my own skin
borne away by men […]
[…]
But I was traded by men
the colour of my skin
traded like a fowl like a goat
like a sack of kernels I was
traded
    for beads   for pans
for trinkets?

No it isn't easy to forget

what we refuse to remember (18, emphasis mine)

She emphasizes that slavery is not only the work of the white man, but that her tribesmen also profited from this male-dominated, capitalist system. In all conditions, women's body is sexually and physically abused by white and black men. The central idea of the volume is summarized in the italicized lines above. The slave woman is, in a way, cursed by the memories of her own people's betrayal. Although she tries hard to forget, she keeps re-membering these treacherous acts, and this causes her to keep a wary eye on her tribesmen in subsequent years. In "Love Act", Nichols sardonically lists the roles of slave women in the master's house. Every member of the family sucks the life out of her body:

She enter into his Great House
her see-far looking eyes
unassuming
…
Soon she is the fuel
that keep them all going

He/his mistresswife/ and his
children who take to her breast
like leeches (48)

Her body becomes a public commodity and/or a machine that keeps the plantation economy running. The poem further exemplifies the master's hypocrisy by illustrating just how he contains the threat he feels she represents:

he want to tower above her
want her to raise her ebony
haunches and when she does
he thinks she can be trusted
and drinks her in
and his mistresswife
…
is glad to be rid of
loveact (48)

The master possesses her sexually and the mistress connives at the master's offences. On a larger scale, the colonial order not only exploits her body but also tries to denigrate the slave woman in sexually immoral terms. The slave woman answers back to this devious plan by sorcery conveyed through her memories: "Her sorcery cut them/ like a whip/ She hide her triumph/ and slowly stir the hate/ of poison in" (49).

Through an attack on the 'senses', in severing "the physical and cultural boundaries of the human body through violence, torture and incest, both the individual and the social body are 'dis-membered'" (Boeck 49). This gives way to a trauma which incapacitates the subject to forget or to re-member. Philip de Boeck analyses 'trauma' as "the inability, on an individual level, to re-member oneself as an integrated, healthy human being"; second, "it means the destruction of a habitus, a deeply embodied social identity." The trauma may thus also be seen as a "memory hole," as the incapacity to "'re-member' or reconstruct a social body, through which memory obtains its discursive and performative power" (49). Undergoing perpetual traumatic experiences, the long memoried woman feels the need to forget as a condition for the possibility of remembering. She desires "to forget the terrors of slavery" and realizes "the simultaneous impossibility of forgetting" (Gilroy 222) as it described in the lines "No it isn't easy to forget/ what we refuse to remember (18). In "One Continent/To Another," the slave woman reclaims the difficulty of forgetting:

After fifty years
she hasn't forgotten
hasn't forgotten
how she had lain there
in her own blood
lain there in her own shit
bleeding memories in the darkness
how she stumbled onto the shore
how the metals dragged her down
how she thirsted…..(5)

In "Without Song", she again contemplates on the need to forget in order to survive the New World conditions:

maybe the thing is to forget
to forget and be blind
on this little sugar island

to forget the Kingdom of Ancestors
….
to not see that woman, female flesh
feast coated in molasses (25-6).

She questions whether forgetting offers a relief from the inhuman struggles that women and children must bear. Although temporary forgetting gives her relief, her memories become a source of empowerment. Only when she faces up to her life and

memories "strung out before her like beads," can she rewrites her story and accumulates the power to go on.

Finally, Nichols's poem is a journey toward empowerment and reconciliation through memory. It is "an enactment of politicised cultural memory," Rijk van Dijk argues, which "create[s] a specific route of empowerment" (156). To authenticate their freshly constructed histories, the slave women ground histories in their own bodies. By this way, women can remodel what their bodies signify; in other words, as Cara Cilano explains, "a physically embodied history allows the slave women's scars, welts, and pain to counteract the negative and negating circumstances, that is, their life in bondage, that inflict these physical marks as a means of control" (167). When the body recovers, the identity also recovers, as Bryan Turner explains, "the body is an important surface on which the marks of social status, family position, tribal affiliation, age, gender, and religious condition can easily and publicly be displayed" (qtd. in Scanlon 61). The slave woman appropriates the discourse of colonization to reinscribe her representations of the land through her body.

Remembering as an act of reclaiming their bodies makes the slave women "the embodiment of the past" (Smith 55). For Smith, the recovery of memory largely depends on embodiedness,

> since embodiment[16], memory, and subjectivity join in an autobiographical system. There must be a body in the memory. That is, there must be a subject who knows and owns the images coming from the external world and the memories invoked in interaction with the world; there must be memories through which the subject continually reconstructs notions of identity produced in symbolic exchange with the world." (42-3)

Embodying memory proves to have a healing function for the Caribbean women; as Raynaud states, "genuine survival is achieved at the cost of revisiting the horror of the Middle Passage" (82). In "Ala," the story of a rebel woman is narrated. Uzo, who emancipates her little child by killing it, is severely tortured as a punishment.

[16] "[There is] a common concern with how the bodily bases of people's actions and interactions are socially structured in different ways.... human embodiment requires an appreciation of how our fleshly physicality is moulded by social as well as natural processes. In this context, the human body is important not only because it provides us with the basic ability to live, but because it shapes our identity and structures our interventions in, and classifications of, the world" (Campbell 65).

Her legs and arms chained to the ground, her body is covered with molasses and left in the sun for "red and pitiless" ants. Other slave women are called to look at Uzo's body as a warning. They will share the same fate if they rebel ("they call us to see/ the fate for all rebel/ women") (23). As their bodies are controlled by the colonial system, bodily death becomes a way of escape from lifetime bondage. In this context, the escape from enslavement takes the form of death, allowing the spirit to fly free:

> O Ala
> Uzo is due to join you
> to return to the pocket
> of your womb
>
> Permit her remains to be
> laid to rest—for she has
> died a painful dead (24)

Being called to witness "the slow and painful/ picking away of the flesh/ by red and pitiless ants" as they feed on the rebel woman's body, the other slave women collectively "sing and weep/ as [they] work" (23) A community of women beseechingly pray to the Earth Goddess, "Ala," "the most loved and most celebrated Ibo God", in order to bear the tragedy together rather than alone (Knappert 80). Ala represents the ancestral memory which provides slave women with a sense of community and a site of resistance. Their shared experience "institutes a collective memory that binds the women communally" (Cilano 145).

In "Return," the last part of the sequence, the speaker shows her ability to take more extreme physical action in order to forge a new home for herself. With this purpose, in "Nanny", she remembers a rebel group of former slaves in Jamaica, called the Maroons:

> Maroonic woman
> of courage
> and blue mountain rises
>
> Standing over the valleys
> dressed in purple robes
> bracelets of the enemy's teeth
> curled around your ankles
> in rings of ivory bone (72)
> …
> as you watch the hissing
> foaming cauldron

spelling strategies
for the red oppressors' blood
willing them to come
mouthing a new beginning song

Is that you Nanny- Is that you Nanny? (72-3)

Nanny comes to have a mythological presence and origin for "Black Beginning[17]." She is an "Ashanti Priestess/ and giver of charms/ earth substance." She refuses the colonization of her body through her "black fire magic" (72). As Mara Scanlon analyzes, the colonized woman's body is viewed as "a new world to be penetrated and harvested for sexual satisfaction and for the economic gain of children born into slavery." For this reason, Nanny's running away is more than a political rebellion but "a flight to personal safety and control of her own body" (60). The slave woman recollects memories of her African ancestry and cosmology by asking for benediction from the African gods Ogun and Mambu ("Time of Ogun/Mambu" 80). Their lost homelands, Dahomey, Yoruba and Ashanti, "lurk in [their] shadows…for guidance" ("Omen" 81). Like Brathwaite, Nichols recalls the rebellion of Toussaint L'Overture, the leader of the revolt on the French island of Dominique in 1791("…..Toussaint" 83). The final part of the sequence, thus, proves that any gesture by the slave women to retrieve their bodies results in reclamation of a sense of place and belonging. Therefore, the slave woman comes up with a new tongue, a new identity in the epilogue of the volume. She embodies all debasement of captivity and displacement, and tries to confront the New World realities.

In conclusion, experimenting with time and space, Grace Nichols leads the reader to a multidimensional confrontation with the transatlantic passages and the horror of the slave trade from Afro-Caribbean women's perspective. In this volume, memory is presented "as moral knowledge…or as a strategy to cope with the traumatic experiences of the past." Moreover, memories of the past are "viewed as providing 'a crucial discursive terrain for reconsolidating selfhood and identity'" (De Boeck 39). This sequence of poems underscores the necessity of memory, or what Toni Morrison has termed "re-memory," to unveil the history of slavery from

[17] But being a woman
she moved again
knew it was the Black Beginning
though everything said it was
the end ("One Continent/ To Another" 6)

female point of view. Slave women portrayed in the volume create a sense of community around their memories. Besides, memory is placed in the Middle Passage limbo, signifying the slave woman's displacement. Only through recovering memories of the lost homeland and ancestral memory can they inscribe and claim their submerged histories. By rewriting the history of exploitation, they realize that the colonial system has systematically deformed their individual and collective self-images. The long memoried woman realizes how her body has been a site of oppression and degradation; therefore, she creates instances in which women can reclaim rights over their bodies.

4.3 "It is not mistri, we mekkin histri": Rewriting the History of Black Britain

Unlike the volumes of Grace Nichols and Brathwaite's studied in this thesis, Johnson's *Tings an' Times* mainly deals with recent historical events and their place in the memories of Black people living in England. John McLeod, thus, calls him "Brixton's foremost poet and chronicler of the neighbourhood's fortunes" (*Postcolonial London*, 127). Johnson has constant references to immigration and to the kind of a life black people in England lead. A large number of people began to flock England in June 1948, which is known as *Empire Windrush*. As Chris Weedon notes in *Identity and Culture*, overt racial discrimination in all areas of life- from housing to labour, from leisure to education and the health services and so on- was common in the post-war era (63):

> This history of migration and life in a hostile, racist 'Mother Country' remains largely unknown to those who were not directly involved in it, yet it is a history that is crucial to the development of contemporary Britain. One place where it is articulated is in fiction and poetry […] helping to reclaim the history of Black people in the West and, in the process, challenging and transforming exclusively white discourses of Britishness, and related conceptions of race and ethnicity. (Weedon 68)

The second generation writers that followed the Windrush, to which Linton Kwesi Johnson belongs, question the (post)colonial history that continues to produce derogatory stereotypes in the New World. They aim to decolonize Black identities by offering new meanings of Britishness and of being Black in Britain. Johnson

develops the kind of performance poetry called “dub poetry”, as described earlier, to “articulate silenced voices, to explore inter-cultural and cross-generational conflicts, and to produce new hybrid identities and cultural forms.” In his articulation of black people’s New World experience in England, he challenges the “ideas of history and nation that allow racism and ethnocentrism” and underlines the “white complicity in and responsibility for the position in which Black people find themselves in today” (Weedon 72).

For Johnson, poetry is "a way of grieving, a way of remembering. . . . And that's when the personal and the particular become universal” (qtd. in DiNovella 34). Re-membering turns into a conscious act of resistance and politics in Johnson’s poems such as “Mekkin Histri,” “New Cross Massahkah,” and “Di Great Insohreckshan.” His poetry is strongly committed to his Caribbean and African roots, especially in his adoption of oraliterary features of Afro-Caribbean languages and musical traditions. He chooses to re-member what official history forces the diasporic subject to forget, that is, the traumatic political events Afro-Caribbean people underwent when they first arrived in “Inglan” and the on-going racial discrimination ever since. In his interview with Elizabeth DiNovella, Johnson remarks that “self-activity is the only activity. If you want to change your situation you have to build independent institutions, social, cultural, political institutions—in order to advance your struggles” (35). Therefore, he undertakes the role of rewriting official history to ‘win victri’.

For Johnson, memory represents a “hurting black story” rooted in times of slavery and connected with the contemporary predicament of Black people. He captures a moment of crisis in the lives of Black people and reproduces it from his liminal perspective. Bhabha describes this as the act of living on the borderlines, “afterlife of translation,” which is an empowering form of hybridity, “an emergence that turns ‘return’ into reinscription and redescription; an iteration that is not belated, but ironic and insurgent.” The migrant’s survival, for Bhabha, depends on making connections between the “unstable elements of literature and life” (324). The rearticulation of specific historical events supplies new subject positions for individual and communal identities. So the recovery of the past is part of the process of constructing identity that takes place in the hybridized moment of past and present.

Ferdinand Dennis, the Jamaican-born novelist, pays several visits to Brixton, and in one of his visits he comes across a mural. The mural, as he depicts, links the long history of slavery and migration with the events of London's recent past:

> It was painted by two artists, South African born Gavin Jantes and Dominican Tom Joseph…The mural tells a story. It starts with the pictures of people migrating, followed by pictures of children caught in a terrible fire. It ends with the poet reading his works under a spotlight…It is based on an incident which became known as the New Cross Massacre. In January '81, thirteen young Afro-Britons died in a fire in New Cross, an area not far from Brixton. The cause of the fire remains mystery. (qtd. in McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 126-7)

This mural becomes the public memory of the New Cross Massacre for Black people living in Brixton. Dennis implies that the poet painted in the mural is Linton Kwesi Johnson who wrote a poem about this event, "New Craas Massahkah" and who repeatedly claims that "it is noh mistri/ wi mekkin histri" ("Mekkin Histri" 45). McLeod depicts the New Cross Massacre as "the terrible fire," and says of it that probably "one of the most shameful events in postwar British history, occurred on 18 January 1981" (127).

With bass and quick drum beats, Johnson animates the party atmosphere at the beginning of "New Craas Massahkah." The performance quality of his poem blurs the distinction between the time when the event took place and the time in which it is narrated. Memories of that night loom in the form of constant flashbacks. As Peter Hitchcock argues, "the point of crisis is also the point of memory" in Johnson's poetry ("It Dread Inna Inglan" 17). The poet assures his reader/listener that he will report "di cole facks/ bout dat brutal attack" (Johnson 38). Through these "cole facks," Johnson not only commemorates dead people but also shows that it could have happened to any member of the diaspora communities:

> wid di love wans of di inju an di ded
> far disya Massahkah mek mi come fi realise
> it coulda be mi
> it coulda be yu
> ar wan a fi wi pickney dem
> who fell victim to di terrah by nite (39)

Johnson tries to mobilize resistance by making his audience question the underlying facts. The first instance of resistance is against the hypocritical answers from the

white public— the press, the police or government officials. The persona stresses that the white public remain indifferent to black Britain's grief:

look ow di police an di press
try dem despahret bes
fi put a stap to wi ques fi di trute
yu membah?
…
dem imply white
dem imply it coulda black
who rispance fi di attack
genes doze innocent young blacks(40-1)

He states that plenty of newspapers either rendered this event as unimportant or printed pure lies "fi bline joe public eye" (41).The poet's second resistance is towards "official history" which lacks the details of the night and justifies the event by claiming that these are all the results of black criminality. The poet warns the public not to believe in this propaganda:

in spite a dem wicked parapahghanda
wi refuse fi surrendah
to dem ugly inuendoh
far up till now (41)

The persona underlines the fact that those who have committed this crime are protected by state authorities. Thus, police officials cover up the truth, "nat wan a dem can tell wi why/ nat wan a dem can tell wi who/ who tun dat nite af joy into a mawnin of sarrow" (41). The poet takes the task of revealing the truth about this event and rallying his audience to resist against racist attacks in the following poems. In this sense, "the dub poet does not describe the crisis but articulates it as a function of contemporary community relations" (Hitchcock 17).

In "Wat about di Workin Claas?" Johnson brings forth the memory of social movements "fram di east to di wes." By keeping the memories of events like "tanks in Gdansk" or poor conditions of working class and peasants under capitalist systems, he tries to set up a borderless nation for disenfranchised groups elsewhere to share and heal their predicament. Seanna Oakley refers to the presence of a creole ghost in the poem which "recalls a specific memory as a socio-historical touchstone to provide a lens through which current events are interpreted" (275). Johnson again tries to initiate resistance against all oppressive systems. He emphasizes the fact that people everywhere look for change: "evrywhey insohreckshan is di aadah af di day/

is a lat a people cryin out fi change nowaday" (37). The poet finally promises that he will keep the memory of the New Cross Massacre alive: "wi suffah di laas/ an wi haw goh figet New Craas/ nat a raas/ wi naw goh figet new Crass" (Johnson 37).

The black community was dissatisfied with the reply of the police and government officials about the New Cross Massacre. This led to "a day of action on 2 March which featured a march through Central London, culminating in Hyde Park, while in the following month riots exploded in Brixton." The summer that follows these events is depicted as "an unforgettable summer of crowd violence" (McLeod 127). "Di Great Insohreckshan" records the events in the aftermath of the New Cross Massacre, called the Brixton race riots of 1981. Brixton's youth joined with other oppressed groups to organize a common insurrection against the policies of the police and government:

> it woz in april nineteen eighty wan
> doun inna di ghetto af Brixtan
> dat di Babylan dem cauz such a frickshan
> dat it bring about a great insohreckshan
> an it spread all over di naeshan
> it woz truly an histarical occayshan (43)

Through this historical occasion, Johnson tries to raise political consciousness and build communal bonds in the black community. Johnson's tactic against the forces of official history is to create an "imagined community" that unites in moments of crises and gains autonomy in the inscription of history.

> Every rebel jussa revel in dem story
> Dem a taak bout di powah an glory
> Dem a taak bout di burnin an di lootin
> Dem a taak bout di smashin an di grabbin
> Dem a tell mi bout di vanquish an di victri (43)

The persona further recalls the details of the riots: they burn cars and the George Public House, which is known as a racist locale, "mash-up plenty police van…[and] di swamp eighty van." The police counter-act with plastic bullets and water cannon: "well now dem run gaan goh plan countah-ackshan/ but di plastic bullit an di waatah cannan" (44). The atmosphere can be described with the lines from "Five Nights of Bleeding": "it is war among the rebels/ madness…madness…war." Johnson's depiction of the scene "conveys with terrible insight and feeling the pressures of physical and psychological disintegration." He vividly conveys "dread and terror to

describe the human personality in torment and self-destruction" (Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe 152).

In "Mekkin Histri," Johnson proclaims the emergence of a new kind of "histri-mekkin," a new method of history-writing. Johnson imagines a cross-cultural community and the need for a new history that includes the black community's experiences.

> The double-displacement of an African-Caribbean Black living in England, diaspora upon diaspora, comes with a double-indemnity--*making* and *history*. What cultural logic obtains in the construction/reconstruction of subjectivity as subaltern, the articulation of the margin, the trace, the veve, that still allows a trenchant sense of history, of the need to make history? (Hitchcock, par. 1)

In "Mekkin Histri," Johnson explains the reasons for making history. The new history is not the history of defeat and exploitation, but of resistance and victory. It is a way to fight "racist pallyticks." Johnson also assures his reader of the healing power of history-making, for he has a chance to restore the long-abused psyche of the diasporic subject. The type of history writing Johnson offers opens up "a new period for Britain's marginalized communities, the constitution of a historical record without specific heroes, martyrs or leaders" (Oakley 278).

In most of his poems, Johnson presents a constant clash between Black youth and British authorities, especially the police. According to Michael Keith, in order to understand the occurrence of this clash, "we have to understand how histories are written and geographies imagined on both sides of the divide" (qtd. in McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 127). For instance, while streets like Railton Road in Brixton and All Saints Road in Nothing Hill were the places of resistance for black youth in the 1970s and 1980s, they were "centres of black criminality and lawlessness" from the authority's perspective. Many official texts record all these events with scornful representations of "crazed and spontaneous actions of an unruly mob running out of control" and the rioter is seen as "a delinquent, destructive and mindless criminal." McLeod provides some examples from official records, such as Lord Scarman's, which notes that nothing could "justify or excuse the disorders or the terrifying lawlessness of crowds." Scarman's Report further states that anger and resentment cannot justify the attacks on the police. Moreover, a police officer on duty during the riots expresses that,

> Thatcher let it be known to us, the police, that we could do anything to keep control of the *enemy within*…I know that when I was on duty in Notting Hill Gate, I would go for the blacks *more than I should have done*…like you are in the army and the enemy is the enemy. (McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 128, emphasis mine)

Johnson's poetry questions these assumptions and pejorative representations of the black community after the 1981 riots. Thus, he feels it necessary to produce alter/native narratives to defend the rights of the black community. There were three major riots in Britain in the time Johnson was writing; in Southall (1979), in Bristol (1980), and in Brixton (1981). Recalling these events, Johnson combines all minority communities as having the same experience:

> well doun in Southall
> di Asians dem faam-up a human wall
> genes di fashist an dem police sheil
> an dem show dat di Asians gat plenty zeal (45)
> …
> well dere woz Toxteth
> an dere woz Moss Side
> an a lat a addah places
> whey di police ad to hide
> well dare woz Brixtan
> an dere woz Chapeltoun
> an a lat a addah place dat woz burnt to di groun (46)

Johnson emphasizes the necessity for collective action of diasporic communities in creating sites of resistance and changing social conditions. The speaker asks the authorities the facts behind their "crooked deal." Although official records inscribe these events as acts of insurgence and black criminality, the speaker is sure the police are using a "bag a tricks":

> how lang yu really tink
> wi woulna tek yu batn lick
> yu jackboot kick
> yu dutty bag a tricks
> an yu racist pallyticks
> yu racist pallyticks (Johnson 45)

Marcus Howe states that the press called these events "the Brixton riots", "giving the impression that it was the work of an uneducated and hysterical mob" (26). However, in the history Johnson makes, it is "Di Great Insohreckshan." The speaker in "Mekkin Histri" also repeats many times that these are the consequences of

"racist pallyticks." An underlying chorus of the black community interrupts the speaker's fiery narration and claims that the New Cross Massacre or other racist attacks are not a mystery:

> it is noh mistri
> wi mekkin histri
> it is noh mistri
> wi winnin victri (45)

The new history wins victory through communal solidarity and conscious resistance. Johnson binds all racially-degraded groups together in his poem by discovering the "revalueshanary" potential in them for a culturally and ethnically diverse community ("Mi Revalueshanary Fren" 57). These acts of resistance "reflect the cross-cultural, collaborative investment of diasporic communities in improving social conditions; they mark a milestone along the history of resistance against racism in Britain" (Oakley 277).

In Johnson's poetry, although memory is mostly related with the rage and hurt of black people, it "remains a constituting radical desire for the realization of happiness" combining history, present reality and envisioned futures (Maysles 99). Johnson conveys the memories of inner-city tension with acuteness and strategic disavowal. He offers a vision of black Britain which is racked by police brutality, racial discrimination and unjust treatment from the government. By rewriting the events of Britain's recent past, Johnson makes an alter/native history that transforms the representations of the black community, provides means of resistance and restores the black community's self-image.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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This thesis aimed to analyze Afro-Caribbean poets' struggle over language and their use of memory as a revisionary tool in order to produce hybrid cultural texts and identities. This proposition has been analyzed in three Afro-Caribbean poets' work, namely, Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *X/Self*, Grace Nichols' *i is a long memoried woman*, and Linton Kwesi Johnson's *Tings an' Times*. Each collection analyzed handles the issue of language and memory with different techniques and thematic concerns. The common ground of discussion is how they negotiate different languages and poetic practices and how they develop hybrid identities and literary creations. Their work becomes a site of cross-cultural poetics, crossing over languages, poetic traditions and geographies. In accordance with Jahan Ramazani's description of the postcolonial poet as the "hybrid muse," individual chapters tried to discover their practice of hybridity and its subversive potential both in the form and in the content of their poems. Analyses of their poetry also make a comparative investigation of Anglophone Afro-Caribbean poetry possible.

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial terminology provides the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. His concepts like ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity draw attention to certain moments of resistance in colonial discourse where any idea of resistance is supposed to be completely erased. Although he does not offer concrete reading strategies, he gives a general outline of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Recent approaches to hybridity are cynical about its status as a critical strategy; however, this work makes use of its subversive

and transgressive power in destabilizing essentialist understandings of race, culture and identity in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Hybridity also offers a counter-narrative that critiques the politics of canon and dominant modes of history writing. The poets have an integrative style locating their texts in translocal sites where cultural differences are negotiated. Their work represents a mutual borrowing between cultures, histories, linguistic and poetic practices.

Reflecting on Homi Bhabha's notions of stereotype and mimicry, one can find a way to "decolonize the mind" through the subversion of stereotypical representations and by taking mimicry as a reciprocal process that produces a creative interaction between the colonizer and the colonized. Brathwaite, Nichols and Johnson's poems discover the stereotypical representations of the colonized and distort these representations by holding the power of image-making. In this way, the dominant discourse has been rendered impotent, which gives way to the penetration of "denied" knowledges and to the reinscription of history from the perspective of the "disenfranchised minorities." Homi Bhabha's notion of third space is also employed to discover the sites where construction and reconstruction of identities take place. Homi Bhabha argues that identity and agency are a constant process of negotiation. The identities of the colonizer and the colonized depend on each other; therefore, it is impossible to offer originary identities on both parts. Their identities derive from the constant articulation of cultural differences; thus, they are always incomplete and subject to cultural translation.

As the third chapter discusses, language has long been an issue of struggle for the Afro-Caribbean writer, as they try to find a way to express their (post)colonial experience or to 'write back' to their colonizers, all the while using a language which is the remnant of colonial heritage. Linguistic dislocation is a way of discovering in-between spaces in their poetry. They find in linguistic dislocations a new site of struggle for the articulation of new linguistic registers. The poets analyzed in this study try to hold the power of image-making to "dismantle the master's house" with their own tools and create a new world order through images of hybrid experience. Visual elements in their poetry open new and unstable meanings that lead to constant ambivalence. The poet is celebrated as a namer who creates a new world with his/her images. Moreover, poets integrate native musical

forms into the rhythm of poems and try to create a distinct voice through any sign or typographical tool on the page.

As Cynthia James analyzes, Brathwaite's linguistic experimentation resides in "condensations and word-splits and coinages" to "create a process for a new ordering of language" (James 764). His notion of nation language explores the experimental uses of English in Afro-Caribbean poetry. Brathwaite shows how various poets are inflecting the English language with different kinds of rhythms, sounds, syntax, and forms of expression which can be traced back to African speech patterns. In his text, the "creolization" of English is obvious both to eye and ear. He consciously splits words, misuses punctuation marks and creates new images that subvert the authority of dominant discourse. His rewriting of the Caliban and Prospero story becomes a metaphor that shows the Afro-Caribbean subject's relation to the English language.

Nichols' collection becomes a journey setting off from linguistic displacement, to the appropriation of the colonizer's language, and finally reaching out to a hybrid language by mixing the New World experience with "the root of the old one." Nichols records slave women's New World experiences by depicting the landscape with metaphors of the body. Her text is characterized by a multiplicity of voices that undermine colonizer's presence and by ritualistic practices like sorcery that seek to render the colonizer impotent. Nichols forms a "borderless" nation for her slave women by connecting the history of "one continent/to another."

Johnson has been the tenor of resistance in "decolonizing English" with his use of Jamaican patois, dub rhythms and reggae music. His linguistic experimentation is in harmony with his major thematic concerns, such as urban violence, everyday lives of Black British youth, unemployment, and racial and ethnic discrimination. As a dub poet, he constructs an aesthetic space "through a process of removal, alteration, and layering", where he and his imagined community return to imaginary African roots and ascend beyond the pressures of Brixton's ghetto life (Maysles 91). The visual and oral qualities of his poems are in creative tension, through which meaning is communicated. The performative aspects of his poetry imply the presence of both black and white audience in his text, and the

performance tries to trigger change, action and understanding towards the conditions of black people in Britain.

The Fourth Chapter deals with memory as an act of resistance encoded in the practices of remembering. Through the politics of re-membering, the poets achieve an alter/native notions of the past, instead of using the one promoted by the colonial legacy. Memory provides the poet with freedom to refashion selves and rewrite official history from their perspective. As memory transgresses boundaries, it becomes a means to distort the linearity of history. In the poems analysed, memory collaborates with the "sorcery" of imagination. It comes to have a moral and political voice that discovers historical and contemporary injustices in the formerly colonized societies. The use of memory is also central to the idea of belonging and the construction of identity. Identity is (re)forged through various processes of remembering and forgetting.

Although Brathwaite's poetry depends on private symbolism or hard-to-grasp linguistic records, it is accessible to the psyches of postcolonial subjects and his intellectual neo-colonial readership. His individual perception of history is shaped by cross-cultural, multilingual and interstitial memories that have a liberating function against the dominant historical narratives of slavery, colonization and capitalism. By turning to ancestral memories and belief systems, the poet wishes to find a source to exorcise the evils inflicted upon his society. *X/Self* deploys disparate mythical, historical and cultural images in a magical montage style. In this way, he produces a self called X that occupies changing identity positions determined by the historical and cultural context in a given poem.

Grace Nichols' poetry reflects the mechanisms by which women can formulate alter/native identities with the interaction of past and present and by reclaiming their bodies. Nichols' long memoried woman seeks to purge the past experiences of Middle Passage of her memories and tries to heal the present with the paradoxical acts of forgetting and re-membering. She remembers the physical realities of the plantation life, such as the policies of separating tribes and banishing them from their mother tongue in order to eradicate the discursive components of their identity. Recalling pre-colonial life in Africa becomes a source of healing for slave women. Memory becomes a ritualistic practice that creates a space for the long memoried woman to visit and re-visit the past in the present. Then, she employs re-

memory to recall the sexual assaults and degradations experienced by the African women and their descendants enslaved in the Caribbean. “Nichols’s evocation of the West Indian woman’s evolution from slave to person is a celebration of the woman’s struggles, fears, weaknesses and triumphs (Dabydeen 45).

Linton Kwesi Johnson discovers the “hurting black story” through drum and bass rhythms. Unlike Nichols and Brathwaite, he largely deals with the diaspora experience in the ghettos of Britain. He commits himself to rewriting the recent political and social upheavals in Britain, such as the 1981 race riots, the New Cross Massacre, and so on. In his memories of these events, he laments the treatment of the Black man throughout the ages. The political stance of his poetry offers a universal condemnation of instances of oppression and imperialism.

The thesis establishes that Anglophone Caribbean poets bring the conventional definitions of gender, race and culture into question, which enables them to reinscribe individual and collective Caribbean identities. The strategies and models discussed necessitate a rethinking of the ways in which Afro-Caribbean literature and postcolonial theory are read. While this study tries to highlight major struggles of Afro-Caribbean and postcolonial poetries, a detailed study of some of its aspects are left for future studies, which might consider following topics: questioning the applicability of postcolonial theory to diverse postcolonial regions; the use of magical realism in Afro-Caribbean poetry; the relationship between the body and the landscape in the works of Afro-Caribbean women writers.

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