

Chapter IV

LANGUAGE OF DISSENT

*To mirror the profound disharmony of such a world, collages
would have to take form, languages would have to knock against
each other, genres would have to dissolve.* (Claire Harris)

The Caribbean is a group of islands spread out on an area of some 2000 miles from Florida through the Atlantic to the South American coast. The Caribbean islands were originally inhabited by Amerindians. Edward Brathwaite identifies four ethnic groups who inhabited the Caribbean islands: Taino, Siboney, Carib and Arawak. The intrusion of European powers into these islands began with the discovery of these islands by Columbus in ¹⁴⁹²~~1942~~. Within a short period of time the aboriginal Amerindian population in the Caribbean was exterminated. Dutch, English, French and Spanish forces that were racing for land and labour imported Africans to work in the fertile fields there. Africans brought there as slaves spoke different languages like Ashanti, Congo and Yoruba of Western Africa. However European powers did not want the slaves to speak in their native languages. They wanted the slaves to communicate in European languages so that the slaves might not plot against their masters. Edward Brathwaite writes, "They did not

wish to hear people speaking Ashanti or any of the Congolese languages. So there was submergence of this imported language. Its status became that of inferiority . . . its speakers were conceived of as inferiors – non-human...” (Ashcroft et al. 309). But the slaves spoke in their indigenous languages secretly: “talking was left for night and hush was idiom” (*No Language is Neutral* 23). Brathwaite calls the kind of language the terrified slaves spoke secretly ‘nation language’ He writes that “nation language is a strategy: the slave is forced to use certain kind of language in order to disguise himself, to disguise his personality and to retain his culture” (qtd. in Juneja 162).

When these islands came under the British Empire, the slaves were forced to speak English. But the submerged native language of the slaves was active. Slaves spoke the English language of Elizabethan, Romantic and Victorian ages. However their English was influenced by their native language that was submerged and spoken secretly. Along with English, the African language was transforming from being purely African to “a form which was adapted to the cultural imperative of the European languages. And it was influencing the way in which the English, French, Dutch, and Spaniards spoke their own language. So there was a very complex process taking place, which is now beginning to surface in our literature” (Brathwaite in Ashcroft et al. 310). The influence of African languages on English is evident in the Caribbean literature. The language that originated from the amalgamation of African languages and English is termed ‘nation language’ by Brathwaite. ‘Nation language’ is influenced by the African model, the African aspect of the New World/Caribbean heritage. While discussing

the characteristics of nation language, Brathwaite points out that it may be English ⁱⁿ its terms of some of its lexical features, "but in 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". He concludes saying that *it is not English that is the agent. It is not language, but people, who make revolution*" (Ashcroft et al. 311). Juneja writes that the interaction between English and African languages produced many forms of the underground languages in the slave camps. These languages had to represent the culture environment of the colonizer's language. Colonizers did not recognize the underground languages. As a result there arose creolization in which the cultures of two languages are lived together at the same time (164).

Anglo Saxon writers consider the English language of Caribbean writers inferior and non- standard and identify their literary works as the literature of "Others". The notion that whatever is not western is inferior and uncivilized stems from European ignorance of cultures other than their own. Supporting Edward Said's thesis that the orient exists as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts and commerce, Mongia asserts that the 'division of races into advanced and backward, or European-Aryan and Oriental-African' (34) is a product of the European categorization of human beings. Thus the Caribbean writers who have migrated to Canada are naturally inferior to Europeans. They are therefore pushed to the margin. It is the marginalization that has made the Afro-Caribbean women writers struggle hard in order to succeed. Their struggle has now transformed them into successful writers whose voice is

heard all over the world. Writers who write from the margin feel that there is a linguistic alienation in addition to social, cultural and geographical alienation in Canada. A writer in Canada has to operate within the linguistic territory of the "metropolis" which is the seat of might and money. Minority writers in Canada cannot speak or write in their languages and expect to be heard or read by the literary world. Therefore the marginalized writers must find a linguistic medium, which would be capable of expressing their dissent, and also enable them to mould the medium in order to be understood.

With their writings, African Caribbean women writers Claire Harris, Marlene Nourbese Philip and Dionne Brand take their readers to new realms of language and literature. They use the English language with a difference to create new spaces in English literature and introduce new meanings to their expressions and experiences. They question the Standard English and substitute new usages in the Caribbean demotic for old ones. As Brathwaite writes that Caribbean writers write in "an English which is not the standard, imported educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there and which is now increasingly coming to the surface and influencing the perception of contemporary Caribbean people" (Ashcroft et al. 311).

With their eloquent writings Harris, Philip and Brand are able to persuade their readers to agree with them and also make them accept their point of view and convince the readers of their (writers') convictions of the contradictions in society and language. They have proved to the world that their writing originates from a different kind of experience and expresses inconsistencies and inequalities in

society and language and hence needs a language other than that of the colonizer. By speaking in the "the most secret and cowardly language of normalcy and affirmation" (*Bread out of Stone* 23), colonizers created an impression that they spoke for everyone. However to make writing significant one has to work hard. Brand compares such work to "making bread out of stone" for which stone has to become "pliant": "There is only writing that is significant, honest, necessary - making bread out of stone- so that stone becomes pliant under the hands" (*Bread Out of Stone* 23). The syntax and combination of words in the above sentence create a Caribbean rhythm and cadence. In their hands English becomes 'pliant' and 'absorbent' and they make it "the most resilient language" (Juneja 140) and hence it is able to carry the burden of their race, and social and political marginalization in Canada. Caribbean women writers like Harris, Philip and Brand have been drawn into writing in a language of dissent because they are convinced that this is the only way to survive in this world of disharmony and discrimination.

Language is a force that joins together the speakers of any society. Different languages may be at work in a colonized society. Sylvia Söderlind presents Henri Gobard's concept of "linguistic alienation" according to which there are four languages in any society. The first one is the *vernacular* that is mainly spoken by a speech community and is the mother tongue. Its function is to establish 'communion' between speakers. Generally oral literature in the colonies is communicated in the *vernacular*. The second, according to Gobard is the *mythic* or the *sacred* language in which members of a community share their beliefs. This

is the language of religious rituals and rites. The third is the *referential* language in which history, culture, canons of art and literature are written. Söderlind calls it the language of the nation. The fourth language the *vehicular* language or *lingua franca* is non-territorial. It is the language of necessity and information and it belongs to the city and bureaucracy. It does not belong to any territory. The *vehicular* language becomes popular at the expense of the *vernacular*. The language of the colony, the *vernacular* language (*Gemeinschaft*) gives place to the language of the colonizer, the *vehicular* language, (*Gesellschaft*) is non-territorial language and it belongs to those who use it anywhere in the world.

The existence of two forms of the same language in a linguistic region is a linguistic phenomenon known as 'diglosia'. In such cases one of the forms will be the literary language or the dialect of prestige and the other will be a common dialect. Classical Greek is the literary language and the dialect of prestige and literature in Greece and the demotic is the language of the common people. 'Diglosia' is not necessarily alienating in itself, but that alienation takes place when the 'high language' encroaches on the 'low language' so as to deterritorialize it. In the context of the Caribbean and Canada, the 'high language' is the language of the colonizer and the 'low language' is the language of the colonized. The high language belongs to the 'metropolis'; it is the language of power; and it is non-territorial. Therefore it is used across territories, and it is pan territorial. But the 'low language', the language of the colonized is the *vernacular* of the colony, which is the language of communion among the colonized. The 'high language' is the *vehicular* language and so it becomes the

vehicle that transports one's views, ideas, protests and dissent across the globe and as it is non-territorial, it is understood by many across the world.

In multilingual countries like India, which were colonized, it is the language of the colonizer that developed at the cost of native languages. Colonizers helped the development of the English language in India before and quite for some time even after Independence. The English language in India gained importance for reasons of national unity and integrity, and the multilingual nature of India. English is the *vehicular* language of India at national level; English in India has become the language of administration, higher education, the language of the media and also the *lingua franca*. It is also the language of many Indians who write about their country and colonization. English is the language of international and also intra-national communication in India. Intra-national communication (communication within India) is not possible in Hindi or any another Indian languages because of different languages in different regions in India. The same is also true about the central government; when it has to communicate with other linguistic regions in India Hindi alone is not sufficient. Communication between the State and the Centre as well as among the States in India is carried out through Hindi and English. When a writer wants to communicate with the world outside India, s/he has to write or speak in the English language.

The Empire controlled the colonies through the colonial language and imperial power. It is through the colonial language that the "hierarchical structure of power" is established in colonies. Whatever is proclaimed in the imperial

language becomes the order, rule and reality and it becomes mandatory for those in the colonies to follow. In this imperialistic imposition the natives were forbidden to use their own language. In her "Poets in Limbo" Harris writes "English, like other hierarchical languages, is inimical to the dispossessed, as it is to women" (*A Mazing Space* 121). African Caribbean Women like Harris, Philip and Brand are dispossessed people in Canada, as mainstream Canadians do not accept the people of colour, although they have been there for a long time. Harris makes this very clear in the following words in her "Poets in Limbo": "a blatant ethnocentricity condemns people of colour to the sidelines: eternal immigrants forever poised on the verge of not belonging" (*A Mazing Space* 115).

Marlene Nourbese Philip feels that she is marginalized as a writer in Canada both linguistically and geographically. She writes in her "Discourse on the Logic of Language" (*She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*) that the English language is not her mother tongue because it is not her native language. In order to express her dissent of an alien language and assert that the foreign language is not her mother tongue, Philip uses a fractured syntax, one word lines, broken words and bids farewell to conventional poetic features as is evident from the lines of her poem *She Tries Her Tongue...*

English

is my mother tongue.

A mother tongue is not

not a foreign lan lan lang

language

l/anguish

anguish

-a foreign anguish,

I have no mother

Tongue (56)

She is in anguish and feels distressed that she is compelled to write in the language of the colonizer who was also her oppressor. It is with profound grief that she accepts English as the medium in which she can communicate with the world outside. According to Söderlind a “literature that emanates from a situation of linguistic colonization is often preoccupied with vindicating a forgotten or devalued vernacular and its association with oral tradition and story telling ...” (8) Therefore it becomes possible for them to use the language of the colonizer and initiate literary debates on the colonizer’s attitude towards racism, ethnicity, colour and gender.

Philip is painfully aware of the fact that the English language was of the colonizers who were also men. Hence she bursts out that the English language is her “father tongue” because it was brought to the Caribbean by colonizers. Therefore it cannot be her “mother tongue”. In the “Introduction” to *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*, Philip resolves the linguistic issue by saying “It is our only language, and while it is our mother tongue, ours is also a father tongue” (19).

In the Caribbean, it is the mother who breathes in the language in to the mouth of the newborn infant. The mother definitely breathes in the language of the mother that would also be the infant's mother tongue. In her case, Philip's mother did not breathe into her the English language. English is the language and the Colonizers were men. Philip in "writing a memory of losing that place" talks to Janice Williamson about her *She Tries Her Tongue*. . . She explains how an African child gets its mother tongue. She is sure that without the historical context the poem will have no meaning:

What I was particularly engaged with in *She Tries Her Tongue*... was subverting in a very conscious way all the traditions of poetry. Poetry came to us in the Caribbean as another form of colonization and oppression. So, for instance, in the poem 'Discourse on the Logic of Language' I set out to subvert the poem itself. Usually a poem is centred on the page with the margins at both sides clearly demarcated. Also there is the prescription of certain traditions like Elliot's objective correlative: you remove the poem from its morass of history, so to speak, clean it of its personal clutter, and anyone anywhere ought to be able to identify with and understand it. I deliberately set out to put the poem, that particular poem, back in its historical context, which is what poetry is not supposed to do. The center-piece of this poem is an unbroken refrain on the ambivalence of English being both a mother and father tongue; I surrounded that with a short story of a mother blowing words into the mouth of her newborn daughter – this I ran along the left-hand margin of

the page; in the right margin I placed historical edicts about African slaves being prohibited from speaking their mother tongues and having their tongues removed for breach of this edict. On the pages facing the poem . . . I have a physiological description of how speech takes place.. What I was concerned with in 'Discourse ...' was the colonizing experience – how what we call a mother tongue, in this instance English, was, when you traced its lineage, really a father tongue, in that it was the White male colonizer bringing us language. (Williamson 227- 228)

She made her intentions clear in her notes, which she wrote when she was working on her *She Tries Her Tongue ...* About "Discourse on the Logic of Language" Philip writes in "Managing the Unmanageable":

In *Discourse*, by cramping the space traditionally given the poem itself, by forcing it to share its space with something else-an extended image about women, words, language and silence; with edicts that established the parameters of silence for the African in the New World, by giving more space to descriptions of the physiology of speech, the scientific legacy of racism we have inherited, and by questioning the tongue as organ and concept, poetry is put in its place-both in terms of it taking a less elevated position-moving from centre stage and page and putting it back where it belongs-and locating it in a particular historical sequence of events (each reading of such a poem could become a mini drama). The canon of objectivity and universality is shifted-I hope permanently disturbed. (Cudjoe 297)

Morrell writes about Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue*.. that it is a poem that brings together her concerns with the West Indian loss of language and culture through slavery with submerged power of women and the science which can be the racist discourse of the Western World (19).

In their writings Harris, Philip and Brand attempt to capture the torture of slavery and suffering of Africans in the hands of Europeans. It is difficult for these writers to forget the past of their ancestors. They also want to remind the world of the conditions in which Africans were made to suffer by the slave traders of Europe. Brand's poem "Slave Ship" in her *Earth Magic: Poetry for young people* has a picture of slaves in chains around their hands and necks. Each poem in *Earth Magic* has a picture (Drawings are by Veronica Sullivan).

an iron ship
a long cruel ship
a ship riveted
to an evil course,
a merciless crew,
human cargo
lashed to benches,
screams, curses,
whips, coffles,
no sight of sun
or bird or home,
a ship's dank hold,

a song to die
a mute unanswerable
question,
why? (40)

Brand uses simple but harsh words of mutilated lines with the imagery of death and distress to reveal the torture in each ring of the heavy iron chain worn by slaves.

These writers had to deconstruct the language of the colonizers and also empower it with the inner rhythm of the African heritage languages that they brought with them. They use indigenous words, phrases, expressions and structures to translate the past experiences of their race and their present predicament. Philip writes in her "Introduction" to *She Tries Her Tongue ...*

In the vortex of New World slavery, the African forged new and different words, developed strategies to impress her experience on the language. The formal standard language was subverted, turned upside down, inside out, and even sometimes erased. Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; tonal accentuation took the place of several words at a time: rhythms held sway. (17)

Philip asserts that many of these techniques are from African languages. When African writers use such techniques their English is discarded as "unrecognizable, bad, broken, Patois and dialect" (17). But according to Philip that language is the product of their native language and the mirror i-mage of their experience in

Thus the language of these women writers is significantly different from that of the mainstream writers and it makes a difference in literature and life. They have created an idiom that is authentic in experience and rich in meaning. They have incorporated in their writings not only their Caribbean experience but also their oral tradition that needs to be expressed in the Caribbean demotic, the language that enabled the slaves to share their sorrows. They have wrested the language of the colonizer and have made it their own. They have made the imperial language their *vehicular* language and are now writing back to the Empire. These women have been compelled to engage in this kind of writing because they have taken the responsibility of telling the world about the cruelty of the 'servitude and oppression' (Juneja 158) which their ancestors underwent as slaves and the repression and discrimination they face in their reterritorialized land.

Caught between two cultures and often languages, Harris, Philip and Brand negotiate a new literary space and a new idiom to express their dissent of the dual Canadian policy by which Africans, Asians and the Native Indians are discriminated. Though they have lived in Canada for over three decades, they have not been accepted as Canadian writers. However, the immigrant writing bears the fruit of double heritage. According to Henry Louis Gates Jr. (4) every black writer operates in two traditions and a double heritage. Harris, Philip and Brand write in Caribbean and Canadian traditions and languages. They write in a western language with a double heritage: visual - white and black and aural - standard and vernacular.

Mainstream critics do not approve of the language of minority writers. They discard it as substandard. Though they write in their colonizer's language, they include their native idioms and expressions. They also disregard syntactic and semantic features of the imperial language. The English language, they feel is not sufficiently equipped to represent the feelings and expressions of their heart and soul as well as mind and body. It cannot embody their Caribbean experiences and colonial humiliation as well as the racial discriminations in Canada. Therefore they question Standard English; they substitute new usages, often in the Caribbean demotic for old ones. "Black writers too talk about detoxifying the English language, but their situation is rendered more complicated since, besides being the language of their colonizers, English is also their mother tongue" (Vevaina and Godard 26). For example in her "Discourse on the Logic of Language" Philip asserts: "and english is/ my mother tongue/ is/ my father tongue" (*She Tries Her Tongue* 58). Vevaina and Godard write that during a conversation with Barbara Carey, Philip says that working in English is like coming to terms with an abusive parent (26). In *Drawing Down A Daughter*, Harris also makes clear that English is her mother tongue and she would not like to address it as English, but she would prefer to call it 'english': "child all I have to give / is english...." Vevaina and Godard conclude, "it is necessary to see the manner in which these writers divest the English language of both racism and sexism and make it their own" (26).

It is interesting to note that some of the English words have different meanings in the Black community. One such word is 'signify' which means 'acknowledge'.

Harris uses the word 'signify' in "Policeman cleared in Jaywalking Case" in *Fables From the Women's Quarters*, Harris: "look you child, I signify" (37). The word 'signify' here means that the writer acknowledges the sufferings of the girl and understands the hardships and also shares her pain and affliction. Harris explains the meaning of the word in the following manner: "In the black community to signify indicates an act of acknowledgement of sharing, of identifying with" (*Fables From the Women's Quarters*, 37)

In her *Frontiers*, Nourbese Philip uses "be" in the African American Vernacular sense: "The only peoples who be(truly)long here- who be long here (I use "be" in the African American vernacular sense), are the native peoples" (22).

In her *No Burden To Carry*, Brand uses a Black saying to emphasize the point she is making. Brand writes about the arrest of Viola Desmond, a Black woman in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia in 1946. She had to spend a night in jail and was fined for sitting in the white section of a movie theatre. Brand wants to focus the plight of Black women by using the Black saying: "But as an old Black saying goes, ' You cut your dress to suit your cloth,' so despite the endemic racism in work and social structures, Black women in Canada latched on to the industrial wage and hung for dear life" (26).

Harris, Philip and Brand also create new language usages, extraordinary modes of "signifying" realities obliterated by Standard English" (Morrell 15). They register their dissatisfaction with the existing system by engaging "the reader in a variety of consciousness raising experiences through linguistic innovation (Morrell

15). One of the ways to mark their difference is to write against the dominant language because it records the cultural and political dominance and exclusion. Harris writes that the English language is inimical to black people and women ("Poets Limbo", *A Mazing Space* 121), and thus in her poetry she works to reverse customary connotations and meanings. Leslie Sanders believes that most of the black women writers write to create a language which illuminates the complexity, richness, and variety of people and worlds which the English language customarily negates or marginalizes (12).

Harris shows her dissent by writing her poetry in different styles. She has short lyrics like "This Was The Child I Dreamt" (*Fables From the Women's Quarters*) long sequences like *Drawing Down A Daughter*, Prose narratives like "August" (*Translation Into Fiction*). There are prose-poetry narratives like "Policeman Cleared In Jay Walking Case" (*Fables From the Women's Quarters*). "This Was The Child I Dreamt" is a poem that begins in the middle of the page and is 'right justified'. Extra spaces between words are deliberately used to express the silence and suffering of the people of African origin:

soft as the dark and strong strong
as her forefather's will fused in nightmare
and she was bright
as the splash of wings in the forest
yet she was delicate as spray
from mountain falls and muted

as their distant water roar

(*Fables* 35)

“By Thy Senses Sent Forth” consists of two poems in the right and left margins of the same page. The poem in the left margin is in italics. Each line consists of one to four words. The poem in the right margin has longer lines and is left justified. The poems have a very complex structure that dissolves language to collapse and collate. The word *swiftly* of the poem in the left margin does not start at the beginning of the margin. As it is the only word in a line, there is some space before the word. By placing it towards the end of the margin, the poet creates an impression of ‘flight’. Long gaps/ spaces in the poems are also deliberate. These poems reveal the perfection with which Harris is able to introduce new techniques and innovations in her poetry:

eventually

Through the kitchen window

color faded

she saw that the tropical sun

darkness

had begun to fade

seeped from

the children’s hour was over

the wester sky

“think” she said

And she ran

transfigured on the braided rug

swiftly

in that hot wooden room

cautiously

the Bible closed in her hand

through the corn

“think of the cool benediction of snow”

<i>home to hide</i>	and seeing bright inquiry on their faces
<i>a spatter of rain</i>	"a down a sort of icy down
<i>dodging</i>	billions of feathers"
<i>her footsteps</i>	and felt a fleeting pity
	(Translation Into Fiction 13)

In her "To Dissipate Grief" (*The Conception of Winter* 34) quoted in the previous chapter, Harris follows the reverse of the above poem. She has two poems in both the margins. It is the poem in the right margin that is in italics. In her article "Celebration of Black Being in Claire Harris's *The Conception of Winter* and *Drawing Down A Daughter*" Sunanda Pal observes that Harris uses the typographical device in the poem "To Dissipate Grief" for a specific purpose: "The two poems printed adjacent to each other graphically exhibit the duality of the narrator's consciousness. The mechanical actions of the conscious mind hide the inner preoccupation with the inevitability of death. The two poems complete the personality of the narrator" (Vevaina and Godard 134). What happens in the unconscious mind (grief over the death of an acquaintance) is hidden under the external feeling of conscious mind that enables the narrator to go about with the routine shopping. "Of Iron, Bars and Cages" (*The Conception of Winter* 43) consists of three poems on the same page. Poems in the margins are in italics and have from one to three words whereas the centre poem is in longer lines with six to nine words. By juxtaposing two poems the poet attempts to bridge two landscapes: the physical Canadian and the psychological Caribbean. By adopting this kind of typography, the poet attempts to balance the inherent tension of her

predicament. These examples reveal how dexterously Harris handles several levels of language, mind and experience in her poems.

Harris employs this kind of writing to depict the disharmony that exists in the world. There is disharmony in class and colour, culture and gender as well as in language and literature. Harris makes her point clear in her essay "Why do I Write?": "To mirror the disharmony, collages would have to take form, languages would have to knock against each other, genres would have to dissolve" (Morrell 29).

Drawing Down a Daughter is an example of collages of languages, genres and the disharmony, which Harris talks about, in her essay. The expression of dissent is very clear and loud. Harris creates a "dream-collage" that cuts across the traditional boundaries of prose and poetry. The first part "Gathering" starts like a prose piece, but the three slashes in the first three lines betray the convention of a prose piece; there is a double space between the first line and the second line. There are also large gaps between words within the same line which, serve as short sentences without any indication that they are sentences:

dream hurrying home finds the garden a web of paths
crowded Jadevine grown ruthless Ixoras too thick Aripo (7)

The first section of *Drawing Down a Daughter* is a collage of prose and poetry; there are ten pages (7 to 16); on the 16th page there is a word picture of a semicircular torso, which is drawn on the front cover page of the book. The next section that runs from page 17 to 21 also has some word pictures in the

beginning itself. The section that covers pages 22- 27 has the word 'dancing' printed (25) with letters of 'dance/ dancing/ dances'. There are long lines, which fill the pages, and short expressions, which fill a quarter or a half page:

some are born to murder some have murder thrust upon them

tyranny

greed our game

(Drawing Down a Daughter 23)

Words, spaces and lines as well as the meanings of phrases and expressions in the above lines reveal the poet's impatience with the learnt language of the erstwhile masters, though domesticated now by her. Harris also uses the Trinidadian dialect that is native to her. The 'dialect' in fact, is her language, which expresses her emotionally and completely. There is a pun on the word drawing. One meaning is creating a word picture and the other meaning is creating a human being - giving birth to a child. There is another inherent meaning - the art of writing poetry – it is like creating a child. Both are creative activities. There are no punctuation marks and *Drawing Down a Daughter* ends without a full stop. However the poet uses punctuation marks in the folklore (50 – 66):

It is a matter of fact that the girl waits till the man from the capital begins to dress before she asks diffidently, "Where you leave your car?" (50)

Then he said, "Nobody knows exactly what happen there that night. But is the kind of thing you think is story ... You have to think is story." (66)

According to Cáliz – Montoro *Drawing Down a Daughter* is a merger of the black adult self with the waiting-to-be-born black child as well as an exercise in creative writing and the magic of story-telling by older members of the family which is reminiscent of the African folkloric tradition (81). The poet seems to draw a parallel between creating a human being with that of fiction that requires not only flesh in the figurative sense but also mind, feelings, emotions, dreams and aspirations. Thoughts of the poet in the past and the present are in the structure of a conversation between the mother and the unborn child, which is different from the conventional literary form. In this way Harris expresses her dissent of the English language. The structure of these conversations take the literary form of journal entries, letters, dreams, and stories both directly told by the poet and or passed on to her by the people in her native Trinidad. Cáliz – Montoro adds that the fluctuation from the past to the present is "also mirrored in the use of Standard English and Trinidadian language full of colour, warmth, smells, as those of a song sung by the children at intervals" (82).

Drawing Down a Daughter can be read as a novella with two main plots overlapping on each other or as a long poem with the story of La Diabliesse. The story is written in Trinidadian language:

"What you saying . . . You ain't get . . . Look girl, what you trying on me? . . . Is you I want.

But ann't you say you love me? What you think my mother go
say? Where I go go?" (51)

Harris is aware of the rhythm and music of Trinidadian language that is not possible in the Standard English. It is interesting to observe how Harris uses a strange structure that defies semantics and makes her words dance and sing in the Caribbean sunlight as in the word picture

d
a c
n e
s
i g

to sunlight of the Caribbean (25)

Brand's *No Language is Neutral* emphasizes the fact that every language is not given the same status. Europeans considered African languages inferior. Anglo-Saxons do not approve the manner and style of 'others' who write in the English language. But Brand constructs English as a double-edged sword that can destroy the biased Euro- centric attitudes. She is aware that "language manipulates, creates class, ethnic, gender and sexual identities" (Cáliz – Montoro 92). She also makes the language constructive in the sense that she is able to use it for creative purposes of not only writing but also racing her voice against the atrocities of Europeans on Africans. She uses symbols and metaphors to express her dissent of the English language. It is the bond she developed with the English language that makes her belong to the land of her exile. This is the reason Brand claims

that *No Language is Neutral* is written in the language she grew up in: “in the language that I grew up in - not only in terms of its cadences but in terms of its syntax” (Makeda 366). In the section “On Poetry” in *Bread Out of Stone* Brand reiterates this claim: “Poetry is here, just here. Something wrestling with how we live, something dangerous, something honest” (183).

The disharmony in the writings of Harris, Philip and Brand are indicators of the dissonance in Canadian society and culture. The first and the last poems of *No Language is Neutral* are entitled “hard against the soul”. All six stanzas of the first poem begin with “this is you girl”. This poem reveals the poet’s Caribbean identity. Though the life was harsh and hard, the innocence and peace as well as the beauty and serenity of the Caribbean surroundings kept one going. There are other complex and hard hitting poems like “Return” and “No Language is Neutral” which are printed between these two happy poems. Like Harris in her *Drawing Down a Daughter* Brand uses her poems to create human body and also poetry. Brand creates the past and present with the language of the oppressor and colonizer:

No

Language is neutral seared in the spine’s unraveling.

Here is history too. A backbone bending and

Unbending without a word, heat, bellowing these

(*No Language is Neutral* 23)

Brand compares history with the backbone. As the backbone of slaves bent down when they were subjected to hard work, Brand makes history to bend backward

and forward: "history, like a backbone, constitutes the centre where all memories flow back and forth"(Cáliz – Montoro 97).

The poet's dissent of the English language is evident in "how to balance basket and prose for/ murder" (*No Language is Neutral* 23). She is conscious of the past of her race. Slaves had to learn to 'balance basket' of burden on their heads and if they did not work according to the slave master's plans, the slave master would torture and even murder them. Similarly the poet has to work hard to 'balance prose' because the mainstream critics lie in wait to brand the language of 'others' as nonstandard. For Brand language is a tool of resistance. With their powerful language Caribbean women writers resist the majority community's designs to marginalize them. The Anglo-Saxon authorities are capable of dumping the writings of the 'others' as substandard and not Canadian and causing the minority writers humiliation and mental tormentation. However, Brand wants to show that writers like her can 'kill' the language of the colonizer and resurrect it with new metaphors, strange words, and a syntax and semantics of a different kind. Brand makes English behave like African languages by using verbs as nouns with "do"(Cáliz – Montoro 98): "silence done curse god", "people does hear things" (*No Language is Neutral* 23). Though 'curse' and 'hear' are verbs, Brand uses them as nouns. Brand also uses the word 'rudiment' as a verb in "falsettos of whip and air/ rudiment this grammar" (23). Philip emphasizes this point when in her Introduction to *She Tries Her Tongue...*"Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; ..." (17)

The line "a morphology of rolling chain and copper gong" (*No Language is Neutral* 23) has metaphorical overtones. As 'morphology' - study of the morphemes of a language and of how they are combined to make words- consists of morphemes. In the same way a chain is made up of several links. She compares a morpheme - smallest meaningful part into which a word can be divided- with the link of a chain. Every morpheme of the English language is a tool of torture in the hands of Europeans because they claimed superiority over the 'others' with their language and power. When they enslaved Africans, oppression was the order of the day. Every ring of the chain that fastened the slave was a tool of tormentation. Brand catches the pain of rolling chain, the crack of the whip and the slave's heart throbs in the rhythm of poetry: "a morphology of rolling chain and copper gong/ now shape this twang, falsettos of whip and air" (23). The grammar of life as that of language is not easy for Brand. Life, like the language the slaves were forced to speak, was difficult for them and it is in this imperial language that writers like Brand have to express their dissent of the same language. As the slave owner did not respect the life of the slave, mainstream critics do not recognize the language Brand's grammar creates. This language is like stone and poets like Brand have to make it as malleable as verse. The poet has to create poetry out of the painful experience of life past and present. The hostile, egocentric and masculine language has to be made pliable by poets like Brand to bear their burden. The repetition of words and the use of negation with the repeated word are the characteristics of African languages:

What I say in any language is told in faultless
knowledge of skin, in drunkenness and weeping,
told as a woman without matches and tinder, not in
words and in words learned by heart,
told in secret and not in secret, and listen, does not
burn out or waste and is plenty and pitiless and loves.

(*No Language is Neutral* 22)

There are longer lines and long sequences in *No Language is Neutral* contrary to the conventional English poetry. Brand uses such a technique in order to express her dissent of the English language:

No wilderness self, is shards, shards, shards
shards of raw glass, a debris of people you pick your way
through returning to your worse self, you the thin
mixture of just come and don't exist. (29)

The four lines above are an example of longer sequences and longer lines. The second line has fourteen syllables whereas the other lines have nine syllables each. This disharmony in the writings of Harris, Philip and Brand are indicators of the disharmony in Canadian society and culture.

Long lines and sequences are examples of sufferings of longer duration in the colony and cruelty meted out to the blacks by slave masters. As the sequence runs uninterrupted and lines are often very long, the suffering of the enslaved and colonized was long and without any interruption. The language of the colonists

was spun of the syllables of cruelty. Sounds of the slave trader's language become bubbles of blood in the lips of the slaves. Even the weapons of torture are interwoven in the components of language. As words are formed to give new expressions to language, new methods of torture to silence the slaves and the colonized were devised by colonial powers. The gravity and cruelty of the situation is expressed in words like "syllable", "sound", "morphology", "grammar", "idiom" and "prose" which go into the making up of the language. In the following sequence, Brand registers her dissent in the very language of the colonists:

When

these barracks held slaves between their stone
halters, talking was left for night and hush was idiom and hot core.
(*No Language is Neutral* 23)

The last line is ironically symbolic. It reveals that the suffering of the slaves was long and painful. There was no peace even at night. Night was the only time slaves could commune with each other in the language of their heart that is their vernacular. Slaves were frightened of being caught speaking in their languages by their owners because of the brutal sentence of severing the tongue.

Brand's poems use repetition, direct address, slang and street idiom, and a vocabulary drawn from her political reading and involvement. The following lines from *No Language is Neutral* are examples

I walk Bathurst Street until it come like home
Pearl was near Dupont, upstairs a store one
christmas where we pretend as if nothing change we,
make rum punch and sing but only hear when
we was children. (30)

The underlined expressions are examples of Brand's use of slang and street idiom to lend authenticity of the experience of living in the Caribbean islands. Her vocabulary is drawn from her political activism and involvement in anti racial activities. Brand shows her dissent of the language by using sentences of different lengths. Part of a sentence ends in a line and a third sentence begins with a sentence of two words in between:

I return to that once
grammar struck in disbelief. Twenty years. Ignoring
my own money thrown on the counter, the race
conscious landlords and their jim crow flats, o yes!
here! The work nobody else wants to do ... it's good
work I'm not complaining! But they make it taste bad,
bitter like peas
(*No Language is Neutral* 31)

The following lines from Brand's *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun* are examples of repetition, which is an influence of African languages. Here Brand's device is to emphasize her dissent: the word 'dead' is repeated nine times. In their attempt to conquer and occupy, colonizers annihilated the aborigines on the islands

because the conquerors could not understand the tongue and traditions of the natives and therefore they thought that the aboriginals were a threat to them:

This poem cannot find words

this poem repeats itself

Maurice is dead

Uni is dead

Vincent is dead

dream dead

lesser and greater

dream is dead in these antilles

windward, leeward

Maurice is dead, Jackie is dead

Uni is dead, Vincent is dead

dream id dead

i deny this poem. (40)

Brand uses the language of the colonizer against imperialism and its culture: "I see orian like an imperialist / straddle the half sky (7). Brand selects words 'orian', 'imperialis', 'straddle' to reveal the aggressive nature of the colonizer and the imposition of the aggressor's will and cruelty.

In the lines "like a shot past the ear / the salivary foam on the teeth of the sand (8) the suffering of the people is compared to the foam of the sea. The foam in the sea is formed by the breaking of waves when the sea is rough and violent.

This is what happens when a mighty nation conquers a tiny island whose defenseless occupants could only froth in foam that escaped through their teeth due to the fear of the conqueror.

The following lines indicate American symbol of aggression. In October 1983 the U. S invaded Grenada, an island of 110 square miles and population of 150,000 because of “the threat to American imperialism that it posed on an international ideological level”(Cáliz – Montoro 92). Lines that have no ending and no beginning and without punctuation marks indicate the suffering of the affected people; pain has no beginning and no end and whether the pain is short or long, its effect is there. If the suffering is short lived, it is likely to happen again.

This night
with its shamed faced helicopters
may make it to a poem
this contra of a night
spilled criminals and machismo
on our mountains
fouling the air again
eagle insignaed somocistas
bared talons on the mountains of Matagalpa
(*Chronicles Of The Hostile Sun* 9)

In *Looking For Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* Philip is concerned about the loss of silence of the African people and the continent. In very powerful words she expresses her dissent:

bruised by tongue
under tooth
lips caress
before
the cruel between of teeth
crush
grind
the hard kernels
of silence (8)

Words like 'bruised', 'crush' and 'grind' are scary and spiteful just like 'cruel' and 'hard'. These words indicate that the people of Africa were bruised, crushed and ground cruelly because they kept their silence. There is a reference to the slave traders' practice examining the teeth of the slaves to ascertain their strength and health. Their silence was taken for their consent and the historian could speak and write anything about Africa and her people because they were silent and did not object to whatever the explorers and travellers wrote and talked about.

In the following lines, Philip uses disruptive syntax; a lone verb in a line indicates how the African suffered alone sans anybody's pity; each verb also serves as a sentence. The terse, physical presence of the African is reflected in the syntax:

swallowed
touch prod kick
shove
push

Philip uses expressions like the following to register her dissent of the English language. The repetition and the peculiar use of prepositions reveal the influence of the Caribbean demotic on English:

‘with within’
‘raw with inside and on’
from the between of
- a giant birthing – (8)

In the following lines Philip employs fractured lexis to create an unusual effect that reminds one of the human body fractured by the torture of the slave master:

I re
cognize
in its belonging
know it again (9)

The fragment of the word ‘recognize’ is used in the sense of ‘recover’. It is a “recovery” that leads to the reclaiming of the history of the geographical space, it (Africa) belongs to her and the ‘tongue’ of others that was thrust upon her becomes a weapon to fight back: the final irony is that the oppressed write back to the oppressor in the oppressor’s ‘tongue’.

In the section where Philip discusses the creation, she says that God created silence first and thereafter man, woman and other creatures; they all lived happily because there was silence and there was no spoken word (11). Similarly Philip wants to emphasize that the state of silence, which Africa experienced, is equivalent to the sinless state of the world in the beginning of creation. In the absence of language, there were no quarrels among human beings and the life was peaceful and happy.

ECNELIS is the land of word- believers; colonizers believed in the power of words by speaking and writing whatever they felt and thought; they ignored the reality and truth of the people and place they encountered. They wielded magic powers with their language and exercised authority over life and death with the words and they were able to convince their own people of their designs and doings. Ironically Philip tells “God rewarded them with an even greater hunger for words to drown out the silence they still sensed in unguarded moments” (12).

Philip makes her words and phrases speak for themselves. She creates pictures of concentration camps, prisons and slave markets in words; she wants to reiterate that such places on the earth were created by Europeans to silence the Orientals and Africans and to deprive them of their language. Nature gazed at the atrocities and stood in silence at the mayhem:

gulag and bantustan
.....
of silence
tongue-tied rests

in the 'is like' of simile

defies the is

in silence of

star

planet

galaxy

red dwarf

red shift

black hole (22)

Philip writes all words on pages 25 & 26 of *Looking For Livingstone* in capital letters to condemn European's claim of superiority. This is again another device to use the English language to bring out her dissent. Language is creator and destroyer. Slave masters and colonizers used the language as a destroyer and the African Caribbean women writers use it as a creator – creator of poetry. As a destroyer Anglo Saxons used the English language to 'rape' the African continent and Africans. Philip makes Livingstone realize that he is impotent: "MY WORD, MY WORD IS IMPOTENT-" (25), laments Livingstone. He explored and discovered and raped the continent finally harming its body and mind. Then he imposed his Queen's tongue on others and he used the same tongue to identify and classify what he saw there; he wrote in his language to let his people know that what he did was what they wanted.

Philip concludes that the Europeans contrived a conspiracy to distort the reality and true nature of the continent with their language. Ironically she writes 'Seldom

have savage nations met with representative of English Civilization in such a shape'. Europeans considered Africa a savage land and hence they came there with their theory of civilizing Africans. However she considers Europeans savages because they marauded the African continent and their approach to the people and land lacked basic human principles.

The western world does not want to accept the idea that ^{the} human race has come from an African woman. This is being parodied in the string that Mama Ohnce gave to the female traveller. When the string was cut into two pieces, the piece given to the traveller turns into a snake first and when it is being restored to the original state it becomes "a wet, slimy birth cord, at the end of it a placenta" (37). Philip wants to reiterate that Africa is not only the centre of western civilization, but also the African woman is the mother of the entire human race.

The protagonist of *Looking for Livingstone: Odyssey of Silence* travels through seven lands where she meets seven tribes of people whose names are the anagrams of the word *silence*. "The names I've given them are all anagrams of the word *silence*," Philip tells Janice Williamson (240): ECNELIS, SINCEEL, LENSECI, SCENILE, CESLIENS, CLEENIS, and NEECLIS. "In her book *Writing from the Borderlands* Carmen Cáliz – Montoro writes, "the choice of number seven is also related to the readable anagrams that can be formed with the jumbled silence" (115). Philip has managed the seven letters of the word 'silence' in different orders to express her dissent of the English language that enables her to play with its letters and allows her to create different words to mean the same. Seven is a Biblical number. The first reference to seven is in the book of Genesis

(2: 3) and the last reference is in the book of Revelation (17:10). There are over 70 references to the number seven in the Bible. There are seven sayings from the cross (Luke 23: 34,43,46; John 19: 26,28,30; Matthew 27: 46). Number seven is also an ecclesiastical number. There are seven sacraments and seven stages in the soul's path to spiritual elevation. Seventh commandment 'You shall not steal' (Deuteronomy 5: 19) is also significant here. One of the accusations leveled against Europeans is that they plundered Africa, stole her wealth and kidnapped Africans into slavery. Arnold Harichand Itwaru and Natasha Ksonzek argue that Europeans have always justified "the violation and robbery of hundreds of millions of people in their own lands" (*Closed Entrances* 6).

The journey of the female traveller in *Looking For Livingstone* through various lands of silences is like the journey of Odysseus in the epic poem of Homer's *Odyssey* which relates ten years of wanderings of the epic hero on his way home after the fall of Troy. Odysseus during his adventurous journey visits different kinds of creatures on the earth like the Lotus-Eaters, Sirens etc. Similarly the traveller in *Looking For Livingston* visits different people and finds in all of them except the ECNELIS, one quality - SILENCE. The only common bond among them is SILENCE. Philip reiterates that 'SILENCE' belongs to the people of the African continent and language belongs to the colonizers and oppressors. This is evident from the fact that Africa always had oral communication, which is flexible enough to accommodate the nuances of language, which are not so well expressed in a written language. But the traveller is obsessed with the fact that the explorers, adventurers and visitors have deprived the continent of its sole

possession and now therefore the traveller wants the people to get back their SILENCE. Explaining the notion of 'SILENCE' further, she stresses the fixity of the written word when she remarks, "we should own our silence. ...upon it their speech, their language, and their talk was built - solid as the punning Petros upon which the early church, harbinger of silence, had been erected" (58).

In a parody of silence Philip writes 20 times the word "SILENCE" in brackets and once without brackets in a paragraph of 70 words. SILENCE is everywhere; in Livingstone, in meeting, in the forest, in man, in medicine," 'foe of darkness' Shaman, Witchdoctor, Holy Man, Prophet, Charlatan, He (silence) and I (silence) and my silence (silence) - his discovery (silence)"(61). Philip boldly refutes the view of Livingstone that he was named the 'foe of darkness'. So she would give him the title 'thin edge of the wedge' (66). She reiterates that the darkness Livingstone talks about is his own darkness, the darkness of his own people, the darkness of his own country and his own continent, "You and your kind carried their own dark continents within them" (66).

Europeans silenced the Africans with the imperial language and colonial power. Africans lived in their silence and innocence. The state of innocence of Africa was due to the absence of words, utterances and language. The silence of Africa was exploited and lies about the African continent were told outside and the Europeans were silent about their lies. The world was not told about what the Europeans wrote, spoke and spread were lies, not facts; they did not tell the world that they betrayed the African sun. Finally Philip concludes her narration with the following:

Something I could not see in the SILENCE reaching out
through the SILENCE of space the SILENCE of time through the
silence of SILENCE I touched it his hand held it his
hand and the SILENCE

I surrendered to the SILENCE within (75)

The line quoted above is the last line of *Looking For Livingstone* that ends without a full stop as if the 'SILENCE within' is to be explored continuously. Therefore Philip wants to register her protest; the exploitation of the people, the race, the country, the continent still goes on and it is the silence of the people of Africa that was misinterpreted by the world outside. Their silence was taken as their consent to be exploited, discriminated and discarded.

Claire Harris, Nourbese Marlene Philip and Dionne Brand use various techniques to disclose their dissent of the English language. In her "Ole Talk: A sketch" in Cudjoe's *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays From The First International Conference*, Harris makes one of her characters speak in the Caribbean demotic. The context is that the writer reads a story written in an African dialect to Black Trinidadian visitors to Canada who are her readers:

Look, de gurl aready prove she cud write. De question now is wa she go
do wit dat skill. If wa ah read bout de reaction to de man, Rushtom, is
true, dey got real serious problem here. Why she doth write bout dat?
(132)

What Zulma speaks in Philip's *Harriet's Daughter* is also Caribbean demotic:

'Me think you better off being a movie star, because me read where a lot of dose queen get dry head chop off, and dat must be real painful – having some big chopper come chopping down on your neck. What if de blade dull, like when me gran was trying to chop off de neck of dis chicken – it was an old cock. Lord, you never see so much sawing back and forth to chop off dat poor old fowl neck. If you can't stand pain, me say a movie star make a lot more sense, Ti-Cush.' (29)

Philip talks to Janice Williamson about her *Harriet's Daughter*. She says that the entire book is in a 'metalanguage'. She says, "writers coming from the Caribbean inhabit a spectrum of language – Caribbean English. It's neither dialect nor standard English". Philip further states that different character in *Harriet's Daughter* speak in various registers and styles ranging from the very stiff, staid kind of English that I learnt when I grew up back there to 'dialect', what I now call demotic language" (*Sounding Differences* 227).

In "The Battle with Language" in Cudjoe's *Caribbean Women Writers* Grace Nicholas (283) acknowledges that she fuses English with Creole because some "Creole expressions are very vivid and concise and have no equivalent in English" (284). However, the colonial powers consider Creole inferior. It is true that today English is not considered the sole property of Americans or the British, but it is considered to belong to those who use it for various purposes. In her "Introduction" to *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* Philip makes

it clear that the amalgamation of English and African languages has created great rhythms in poetry:

The linguistic rape and subsequent forced marriage between African and English tongues has resulted in a language capable of great rhythms and musicality; one that is and is not English, and one which is among the most vital in the English-speaking world today. The continuing challenge for me as a writer/poet is to find some deeper patterning –a deep structure, as Chomsky puts it- of my language and, the Caribbean demotic. The challenge is to find the literary form of the demotic language. As James Baldwin has written, “Negro speech is not a question of dropping s’s or n’s or g’s but a question of the beat.” ... To keep the deep structure, the movement, the kinetic energy, the tone and pitch, the slides and glissandos of the demotic within a tradition that is primarily page-bound – that is the challenge. (23)

When the number of users of English as a second language is more than those who claim it to be their mother tongue, it is possible to find the influence of other languages on English. The presence of indigenous expressions especially those which can not be translated into English, in the writings of Asian, African or other writers only make the English language more colourful and beautiful. In the article “Entering Our Own Ignorance: Subject-Object Relations in Commonwealth literature”, Fleming Brahms quotes Jaffers who writes about the readership of Commonwealth literature that

It is perhaps because of the existence of an outside and overseas audience that the different kinds of English writers today in India, in Africa, or in the West Indies, are not likely to become too local in interest, too diminished in community, too immediately appealing, and therefore, in the long run, too unacceptable through out the world. (Ashcroft et al. 67)

Further he writes why people read Commonwealth literature: "one reads them because they enrich our pleasure in the English language . . . because they bring us new ideas, new interpretations of life to us. One reads them because they are good writers" (68).

Harris, Philip, Brand and other Caribbean women writers find the English language insufficient to express their dissent of the racial discriminations in Canada. They reveal their dissent in so many ways. The gaps and spaces they leave signify their silence and the silence of the aboriginals and slaves who suffered. For them silence is music and melody as well as spirituality and suffering. It reveals the innocence and integrity as well as the rhythm and rhyme and also the pain of their life too. Their irreverence for punctuation marks and their significant departure from the conventional prosodic features and the varying length of sentences as well as their use of metaphors and morphology reveal the disharmony and disparity of the Canadian life. The presence of prose and poetry under the same title in their writings also prove their dexterity to use both equally successfully.

Federal policies and the racial discrimination make the simple life of Blacks as complex as the grammar of life that enables the Caribbean women writers to render their writings into a "language of dissent". European (British and American) writers have used the best of the English language and have left only 'stone' for 'others'. If the 'others' have to make a living out of their writing, they have to chisel the 'stone' and mould it to make their writing relevant and effective. These African Caribbean women writers take up the challenge and like sculptors they mould the English language to model their own sculpture of literature. Philip writes about her "Discourse on the Logic of Language" (*She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*) that "the poem is sculpted out of the colonial experience - exploitation of peoples, destruction of mother tongues - to become "a work of art" - objective and, according to the canon of Literature, universal" (Cudjoe, 297).

In her "The Battle with language" (*Caribbean Women Writers*), Grace Nichols feels that she has to continue her battle with the English language and she has to create a new language out of her native Creole and English:

When writing poetry, it is the challenge of trying to create or chisel out a new language that I like. I like working in both standard English and Creole. I tend to want to fuse the two tongues. . . . Some Creole expressions are very vivid and concise and have no equivalent in English.
(Cudjoe 284)

In her "How I Became a Writer", Lorna Goodison also writes about the influence of her native language and the English language on her writings: "The double language, which is part of my heritage, is one of the main influences on my work as a poet and sometime short-story writer" (Cudjoe 290). Similarly, Philip also writes that the language in which she operates is "traditionally a tool of oppression, a language that has at best omitted the reality and experience of the managed- the African in the New World- and at worst discoursed on her nonbeing" (Cudjoe 296). About her encounter with language and her struggle to bend language in such a way to enable her to speak about her colonial experience, she writes, "The challenge for me was to use that language, albeit the language of oppression (Cudjoe 296).

In her "Poets in limbo", Claire Harris emphasizes the challenge of poets like her: "Our challenge as poets is to restore the sense, the ability to perceive, of the real self, to use language, image and form in original ways in the service of this goal" (Neuman and Kamboureli 178). She is also of the conviction that one should acknowledge the formative experience of many years of one's life that has made him/her to remain deeply rooted in the English tradition. Therefore she writes, "When we turn away, that is what we turn from. When we turn to we have essentially to make ourselves. And we have to make this, as we make our lives in Canada" (118). According to Cáliz – Montoro, Harris's metaphor 'limbo' for the borderland offers poets like her a threshold from which to shape her experience into language: "Language here necessarily involves the construction of different

boundaries and frameworks to accommodate the oral quality and psychological structures of Caribbean English and past history” (56).

Africans are unmanageable people for Europeans and hence they set out to manage Africans in their own territory and now also they try hard to manage them in their new colony, Canada. Europeans wanted to civilize Africans and make them manageable by enslaving them also in the New World. But the unmanageable women from the Caribbean have become a force to reckon with. They have made a difference in the post- colonial literature. People, who have been rejected as unmanageable and uncivilized, won prized positions in New Literatures just like the stone rejected by builders becomes the cornerstone of a building.

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