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Université de Montréal

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

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Résumé

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

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

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

existe entre le patriarcat et l'impérialisme capitaliste. Le message suprême est que cette espace de marginalité est aussi un espace de résistance, où existent simultanément la résistance, la consolation et la transformation.

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

Abstract

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

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

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

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

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

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No Site is Immune from History

(Susan Stanford Friedman)

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For Madeleine and Ibou, and for our families and friends

For my mother for her strength and resilience

For all the daughters...

UPRISING

[Bob Marley]

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

(REDEMPTION SONG)

Introduction: Writing "In-Betweenness" Postmodern Deterritorializations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The two other writers discussed in this thesis, Makeda Silvera and Marlene Nourbese Philip, as women and black persons displaced by race, gender, sexuality, and

⁷ In her chapter “Routes/Roots”: Boundaries, Borderlands, and Geopolitical Narratives of Identity,” Susan Stanford opens her discussion by referring to the play between rooting and routing:

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

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

place, straddle two nations, two cultures, multiple 'languages,' and deeply express the transnational displacements so relevant in our times, as shown in the corpus on hand.⁹ But as Susan Stanford Friedman contends, this sense of dislocation that Brand, Silvera, and Philip express leads to a complex space that is at once desired and at the same time invites transgression:

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

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

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

¹⁰ Hans Mayer's comment is quoted from Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn's edited collection of essays, *Writing Women Across Borders and Categories* in which Ghosh-Schellhorn did a 'free translation' of Hans Mayer's original quotation:

"Wer die Grenze überschreitet, steht draußen.... Wie aber, wenn der Übertritt ins Abseits und Außen durch Geburt auferlegt war: durch et das Geschlecht, die Abkunft, die körperlich-seelische Eigenart? Dann wurde

“patriarchal, racist, and homophobic society” (25) as Makeda Silvera contends. In their writing, Brand, Philip, and Silvera seek to expose factors such as patriarchy, racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and ethnocentrism that collide with black women’s lives, often negatively defining who they are and their place in society. If belonging is impossible in the Caribbean because of the persistence of the legacy of slavery, the capitalist exploitation of the cane field, or because of their gender and sexuality, in Canada, to be black and be at home is both to belong and not to belong, as Rinaldo Walcott maintains.

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

die Existenz selbst zur Grenzüberschreitung.” Hans Mayer. *Außenseiter*. (1975. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1983: 18).

¹¹ In *Demonic Ground*, Katherine McKittrick analyzes how Linda Brent’s retreat in the garret becomes a strategic use of space, which allows her to escape from enslavement:

If the geographies of slavery are primarily about racial captivities and boundaries, and the garret is both a site of self-captivity and a loophole of retreat, it becomes increasingly clear that it is Brent’s different sense of place that allows her to explore the possibilities in the existing landscape. This is especially relevant given the lack of authority black women’s geographic knowledge and experiences are given during (and after) transatlantic slavery. The space Brent discloses both in the landscape of slavery and through her sense of place, demonstrates an unresolved, but workable, opposition to geographic domination. (40)

becomes for them a limited place, as well as an enabling departing point from which to assert their entitlement to a better space and place.

Background to Thesis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Search of an Encompassing Theoretical Discourse

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Toward a Transnational Postmodern Narrative

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

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

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

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

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

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

On my way back to Addis
hundreds of very young girls ->
being shipped to
slave labor

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

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

Slavery
Globali-
zat
auct-
Sale
->
migrant labor

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

↳ boldly argue that
auct sale -> slave labor equals
migrantcy -> female migrant labor

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

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

A) Historicized
 of the social
 context of B.W. motherhood

views of motherhood
 → white women reject motherhood
 → B.W. are made to be
 enjoin it

*Politics of location
gender & class territories:
gender & class
(see seminar
syllabus)*

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

Theory

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

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

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

Conversely, if I read Brand's female characters only through the lens of gender, my methodological approach will result in a fraught reading in the ways in which I have been unwilling to consider the other constituents of their identities. However, if I engage Friedman's rhetoric of multiple positionalities which posit identity as "an historically embedded site, a positionality, a standpoint, a terrain, an intersection, a web, a network, a crossroads of multiple situated knowledge" (19), I will be able to see how gender colludes with imperialism in the lives of Brand's protagonists. Indeed, whereas gynocriticism and gynesesis only concentrate on gender, Friedman's new geography of identity "looks for traces of all the circulating discourses of subjectivity and alterity" (29). As a result, where a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Two, *Postmodern Subjectivities*, investigates other forms of feminist practices more suitable to the eclectic nature of the Caribbean Canadian women writers discussed in this thesis. Since these Caribbean women writers are positioned within a network of competing hegemonic discourse that seeks to erase their specificities, as the first chapter of this study introduces, by looking at either gendered *or* racial oppression, these writers are engaged in looking for other kinds of feminist practices that can "engender theories that resist or question modernity" (Grewal and Kaplan 3). In so doing, they articulate "migratory subjectivities," whose fluidity¹⁴ allows them to resist being co-opted by these limited paradigms that fail to encompass the interlocking nature of Caribbean Canadian women's oppressions. The first part of this chapter traces the history of Caribbean women's writing by historicizing the issue of voice through the uncovering and unearthing of erased and forgotten female foremothers who were never silent. This chapter also presents eclectic and diverse theoretical positions as encompassed by transnational feminist studies, as a way to map the heterogeneous and multiple positionalities of these writers. By insisting on a fluid and multiply positioned self, these writers enact a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion: Postmodern Reterritorialization, Creating Elsewhere Homes:

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

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

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

Throughout this thesis, my aim was to answer questions such as: how do these Caribbean Canadian women approach the failures of the male-biased discourses of nationalism and Diaspora, and the gender-focused discourse of western feminist hegemonic discourses, which both eclipse and elude their specificity in mutually excluding and competing agendas? How do these Caribbean Canadian women handle the legacy of colonialism and imperialism as it still plays out in the context of female labour, both in the cane plantation fields in the Caribbean as well as the Canadian experience of female immigration and domestic work? And how do they recuperate their sexuality from both

illicit colonial stereotypes and from the restrictions of male nationalist discourses? In answering these questions, this thesis defined transnational identities and feminist postmodern concepts of subjectivity that are presented as corrective to reified prescriptive identities, and considered the complexities of colonial and postcolonial subjectivities.

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

capitalism and other scattered hegemonies. Nonetheless, the biggest gap that I have identified through this incursion into Caribbean Canadian women's writing is that almost all the theses, books, or articles written about this field tend to study these writers by always pairing them with one or more other writers; conversely, the male Caribbean writers benefit from single coverage.

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

a space for resistance. It (is) this marginality that... (is) a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse.... As such, (it is) not... marginality one wishes to lose –to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center– but rather (it is) a site one stays in, clings to even... It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternative, new worlds. (149-50)

Similarly, for Karen Caplan, by identifying marginal space as a site of repression and resistance, "location becomes historicized and theoretically viable—a space of future possibilities as well as the nuanced articulation of the past" (*Scattered Hegemonies* 144). Indeed as our exploration of Brand, Philip and Silvera reveal, despite the restrictiveness

they face, their liminal subject position becomes the heart of their work; for it not only allows them to create a “discursive space” through which to expose and reject the feminist, colonial, and patriarchal myths that hold them hostage to a contained identity, but also to create alternative and more positive rendering of their own experiences. As Marlene Nourbese Philip writes in *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*:

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

Erotics of Resistance: “Scars” as Sites of Desire

If my project suggests that Brand, Philip and Silvera focus on the burden of the slave tropes, which still translates into the contemporary experience of black women, it further indicates they do not also fail to outline how the body unbends itself, by using that body as the very locale through which resistance and agency are sought out. Farah Jasmine Griffin’s concept of “textual healing” in “Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women’s Bodies,” provides and facilitates a framework in the ways in which the black female body, which was previously the site and repository of all the oppression and suffering, becomes also the site of multiple possibilities, including that of healing and transformation. As Farah Jasmine Griffin states, even though colonialist and patriarchal discourses have constructed the black female body as “abnormal, diseased, and ugly” (519), many black women writers have engaged in a project of re-imagining the bodies of black women as sites of healing, pleasure and resistance. Indeed, at various stages in their work, Caribbean Canadian women writers have documented the pain and suffering that expatriate women face in their daily lives. Yet in the past decades, these writers have begun to replace the dominant discourses on women’s bodies by their own versions, a more accurate rendering of what it entails to be black and female in diasporic locations. This is what Silvera, Brand, and Philip set out to

do. By refusing their hegemonic and limited representations, they thus rewrite these gendered and racialized discourses, and reposition themselves as subjects in these traditional paradigms. As a result, they engage in a project of re-imagining the black female body within a perspective of resistance and transformation. In doing so, they trouble the categorization of black women's voices, appropriated by mainstream feminist research and their bodies captured by male's discourse of nationalism and citizenship. What is very instructive from my reading of these writers' work is that, from transgression and challenge to oppressive paradigms, the writing of black women begins to move toward more healing perspectives. The black female body, which was previously the site and repository of all the oppression and suffering, also becomes the site of multiple possibilities, including that of healing and transformation.

Even though my reading of Brand ends with the failed revolution and with Verlia's death, there is nonetheless, the power of resistance as inscribed between the lines of her story. For, though it is true Brand's writing about Diaspora is about "displacement, loss, exile," as Johanna Garvey has suggested, it is nonetheless worth noting that her work also enacts the "the power of memory and the urgency of resistance, especially through the mapping of space to locate diaspor(ic) identification" (486). It is the search for identity and a place to call home that serves as the inspiration for Brand's style of writing and the resistance to oppression inscribed in her message. In "Mapping the Door of No Return: Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand," Marlene Goldman has proposed that the notion of "drifting" functions as an alternative to the oppressiveness of home and the nation-state in Brand's writing, because by privileging this notion of drifting, Brand underscores "the inadequacies of the nation-state, particularly in its response to demands for social justice in a global era and in its long-standing practices of exclusion" (2). More than a mere alternative to the boundedness of home and nation states, this fluid notion also serves as a "legitimate resistance practice," which signals Brand's refusal to be tied to a singular origin and history, but rather, her recognition "of multiple histories based on shared experiences of class, race, gender, and sexuality":

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

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

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

Similarly, foregrounding how corporeal resistance can work to undermine those very oppressions the body itself is submitted to, Silvera inscribes herself along the same line of resistance as Brand. In *The Heart Does Not Bend*, even though Molly does not pursue her relationship with Rose, just by *allowing* lesbian love and female centered spaces into which a woman can find other women sexually gratifying, Silvera challenges society’s homophobia. Elizabeth A. Meese observes in *(Sem)erotics: Theorizing Lesbian Writing* that “The lesbian writer seeks to intervene in language, reinvent, or better, re-work its texture, to produce an exploratory language through which we can find ourselves as subject and (of) desire” (14). By “queering” the racist heteronormative hegemony of the nation, Molly and Rose fracture discourses of national, racial and sexual belongings as Silvera rewrites the tale of nation with these two characters. By inscribing lesbian presence within the predominantly heterosexual, white, patriarchal and masculinist landscape, they chart a new terrain, an alterable, albeit uncomfortable, in-between place, “the last place they

thought of," in the crevices of power (K. McKittrick 37) . Silvera also uses the lesbian body as a barrier against the walls of the homophobic society. By further rescuing their bodies from ascribed sexuality and the resultant economy of childbearing, the very condition for the sustainability of the nation-state, Brand and Silvera rewrite the nation with their lesbian presence, while simultaneously rescuing their citizenship rights from the homogenizing and limiting paradigms offered by Canadian state multicultural policy.

Sexual/Textual Healing

Once our polyvocal discourse has broken free from the strangleholds of polarization, so that those born into dominator status can stop fighting to silence the voices of the Other and those in the borderlands can stop fighting to be heard, then we can look around us and see what is to be seen, in all its disconcerting and empowering multiplicity. We can, together, get on with the business of envisioning and weaving a world conducive to human life. (Lashgari 12)

Analysis of the three Caribbean Canadian writers illustrates that while Brand and Silvera engage Audre Lorde's empowering notion of the erotics, to reclaim the lesbian body out of the confines of prescriptive and normative sexualities, Philip stages the body, even though not lesbian, as the means through which to recover her voice: the "bodytext" that carries the resistant possibility of the black woman's bodymemory. For a woman like Philip, whose work may clash with these assumptions of her designated place in society, and for whom an acceptance by the literary mainstream "too often means silencing a part of what she sees and knows," to write honestly may thus mean transgressing, violating the literary boundaries of the expected and accepted" (Deirdre 2). Indeed, by showing how the raced and sexed body is the site of multiple displacements engendered by colonial, imperial, and even postcolonial abuses, Philip subsequently rewrites these master discourses. By entering into a dialogically-centered struggle that does not only aim at "unsaying" the labels others have put on herself, but also directed to her inner self, as Henderson has argued, Philip has been able to simultaneously reclaim her voice, by representing her wounded self anew. Determined to make the black "hole" "whole," Philip writes the body into her text; the bodymemory, which like Philomena's body, allows her to reclaim her own version of history. No longer the raped hole of colonialism, Philip traded

her role to become the castrator of the rapist, as seen in her later work: *Looking For Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence*. In "Craving Stories," Friedman advances that to counter the discourses of their marginality, people made peripheral by the dominant society such as Philip, are driven by the need to tell not only "another story," but also a "better story" in order to "chart their exclusions, affirm their agency (however complicit and circumscribed), and continually (re)construct their identities" (17). It therefore seems to me in this thesis that that is what Philip has done throughout her intervention. In her interview with Barbara Carey, Philip expresses her need to search for "a language to understand what is beyond the margin" (18), before sending a call to people excluded by the tradition of Euro-centric discourse to redefine the margins as frontiers.

From Homeland to Homepage: Creating Textual Homes through Art

The project of this thesis believes that, in the fight for finding a home outside the confines of nationalism, in addition to the possibility of creating elsewhere homes in the self, and through the body, Brand, Silvera, and Philip have all shown with their art that there also exists the possibility of dwelling in textual homes. For Joanne Saul, even as if for Brand, "the past continues to shape the present," and that Brand's novel seems to offer little hope for the diasporic woman caught between "another place" and "here," in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand begins to chart, more positively, a potentially new way of envisioning citizenry, both national and global, within a world order dominated by the expansion of global capital. Indeed, as Saul further observes, Elizete does attempt to reclaim the island from its "nowhere-ness" by naming it. As she analyses, "Elizete's act of naming shows how the rupture with the past--being cut off from history--might in theory have the potential to open up a space of creativity, by however small an act" (63). In fact, it is this vision of mapping, of beginning to explore different ways of belonging in the face of the burden of the past that is taken up and given a much fuller articulation in *A Map to the Door of No Return*.

And even though Elizete does not want Verlia to kiss her scars, they must nonetheless be read as sites of "healing, pleasure, and resistance" and as *Dessa Rose* has learned to do, Elizete will have to redefine her "scars" as "sites of desire" (Griffin 520). By reclaiming the social constructions of their bodies, as "narrative of love and care," writings by black women like Brand, Silvera and Philip will begin to perform a textual healing for all readers". As Brand writes, even if she cannot "unhappen history" (*A Map to the Door of No Return* 203), she yearns "to draw new maps," and learn how to live "without historical pain" (157), and feel "as if history was not destiny" (168): "This dreary door which I've been thinking about," Brand writes, "though its effects are unremitting, does not claim the human being unremittingly" (42), because there is the possibility of transforming the door of no return from a "site of pain" (23) into a "site of pleasure" (93).

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Appendix A

This discursive diversity, or simultaneity of discourse, I call "speaking in tongues." Significantly, glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, is a practice associated with black women in the Pentecostal Holiness church, the church of my childhood and the church of my mother. In the Holiness church (or as we called it, the Sanctified church), speaking unknown tongues (tongues known only to God) is in fact a sign of election, or holiness. As a trope it is also intended to remind us of Alice Walker's characterization of black women as artists, as "Creators," intensely rich in that spirituality which Walker sees as "the basis of Art." 18

Glossolalia is perhaps the meaning most frequently associated with speaking in tongues. It is this connotation which emphasizes the particular, private, closed, and privileged communication between the congregant and the divinity. Inaccessible to the general congregation, this mode of communication is outside the realm of public discourse and foreign to the known tongues of humankind.

But there is a second connotation to the notion of speaking in tongues—one that suggests not glossolalia, but heteroglossia, the ability to speak in diverse known languages. While glossolalia refers to the ability to "utter the mysteries of the spirit," heteroglossia describes the ability to speak in the multiple languages of public discourse. If glossolalia suggests private, nonmediated, nondifferentiated univocality, heteroglossia connotes public, differentiated, social, mediated, dialogic discourse. Returning from the trope to the act of reading, perhaps we can say that speaking in tongues connotes both the semiotic, presymbolic babble (baby talk), as between mother and child—which Julia Kristeva postulates as the "mother tongue"—as well as the diversity of voices, discourses, and languages described by Mikhail Bakhtin.

Speaking in tongues, my trope for both glossolalia and heteroglossia, has a precise genealogical evolution in the Scriptures. In Genesis II, God confounded the world's language when the city of Babel built a tower in an attempt to reach the heavens. Speaking in many and different tongues, the dwellers of Babel, unable to understand each

other, fell into confusion, discord, and strife, and had to abandon the project. Etymologically, the name of the city Babel sounds much like the Hebrew word for "babble"—meaning confused, as in baby talk. Babel, then, suggests the two related, but distinctly different, meanings of speaking in tongues, meanings borne out in other parts of the Scriptures. The most common is that implied in Corinthians 14—the ability to speak in unknown tongues. According to this interpretation, speaking in tongues suggests the ability to speak in and through the spirit. Associated with glossolalia—speech in unknown tongues—is ecstatic, rapturous, inspired speech, based on a relation of intimacy and identification between the individual and God. If Genesis tells of the disempowerment of a people by the introduction of different tongues, then Acts 2 suggests the empowerment of the disciples who, assembled on the day of Pentecost in the upper room of the temple in Jerusalem, "were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues." Although the people thought the disciples had "imbibed a strange and unknown wine," it was the Holy Spirit which had driven them, filled with ecstasy, from the upper room to speak among the five thousand Jews surrounding the temple. The Scriptures tell us that the tribes of Israel all understood them, each in his own tongue. The Old Testament then, suggests the dialogics of difference in its diversity of discourse, while the New Testament, in its unifying language of the spirit, suggests the dialectics of identity. If the Bakhtinian model suggests the multiplicity of speech as suggested in the dialogics of difference, then Gadamer's model moves toward a unity of understanding in its dialectics of identity.