Sufism as Lorna Goodison's Alternative Poetic Path to Hope and Healing

Sufism as Lorna Goodison's Alternative Poetic Path to Hope and Healing

By

Brenda Domínguez-Rosado

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Sufism as Lorna Goodison's Alternative Poetic Path to Hope and Healing

By Brenda Domínguez-Rosado

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1811-6
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1811-7

I dedicate this book to my husband, Thomas Colón Olivares; children Roberto and Armando Rivera Domínguez; daughter-in-law Carolina Chaur López; grandchildren Adrián Rivera Chaur and Diego Gómez Chaur; mother Vilma Rosado Colón, and sisters Debra Domínguez-Varas and Ivette Domínguez-Lovell. You are all an essential part of my life, and I am extremely grateful for your love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my friend and mentor, Dr. Loretta Collins Klobah, for her guidance in my graduate studies at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras and for suggesting that the use of Sufi ideology, symbols, and customs in the poetry of Jamaican Poet Laureate Lorna Goodison was an understudied area and deserved special and greater attention. I hope that this book contributes to filling this void in Caribbean Poetry Studies.

I would also like to thank the amazing Lorna Goodison for leading by example, providing a voice to those still traumatized by the historical events in our region, and offering strength, hope, and healing through her poetic art.

INTRODUCTION

Lorna Goodison was born on August 1, 1947 in Kingston, Jamaica—coincidentally Emancipation Day on her island—a fact that has certainly influenced and shaped her life philosophy and interests as a writer, painter, and educator. She has received many important awards over the last thirty-five years for her fourteen published collections of poetry (some of which will be mentioned and analyzed in this book), three collections of short stories, and a mesmerizing memoir[1], but her crowning achievements in the literary world have been to be proclaimed the first non-British Poet Laureate at the Durham Book Festival in England in 2012, second Poet Laureate of Jamaica (first female) in 2017, and to have received the Winston-Campbell Prize for poetry in 2018[2] (Cummings 2018; "Lorna Goodison: Meet" 2012; "Goodison, Lorna CD" 2017). Although she has become part of the Jamaican diaspora in Canada and the United States, she acknowledges her permanent link to her island:

> I am a poet of place. Even when I am not writing about Jamaica, it is always on my heart. ("Goodison, Lorna" 2005)

She has been described as healer, priestess, and prophet of hope by some critics and book reviewers because of the message that she transmits

---

[1] Goodison's poetry collections are *Tamarind Season* (1980), *I Am Becoming My Mother* (1986), *Heartease* (1988), *Poems* (1989), *Selected Poems* (1992), *To Us, All Flowers Are Roses* (1995), *Turn Thanks* (1999), *Guinea Woman* (2000), *Travelling Mercies* (2001), *Controlling the Silver* (2005), *Goldengrove: New and Selected Poems* (2006), *Oracabessa* (2013), *Supplying Salt and Light* (2013), and *Collected Poems* (2017). Her short story collections are *Baby Mother and the King of Swords* (1990), *Fool-Fool Rose Is Leaving Labour-in-Vain Savannah* (2005), and *By Love Possessed* (2012). The title of her memoir is *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island* (2009). A first-ever collection of Goodison's essays *Redemption Ground: Essays and Adventures* (Myriad: August 2018) is her most recent publication.

[2] Some of her other awards are the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Americas (1986), Jamaican Musgrave Gold Medal (1999) and National Order of Distinction in the rank of Commander—CD (2013), University of Michigan's Henry Russel Award (2004), British Colombia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction (2007), and OCM Bocas Prize for Poetry (2014) ("Lorna Goodison; About" 2018).

through her poetry to the suffering souls of the world, especially the African Caribbean people, who have undergone great psychological trauma because of the experience of slavery (Webhofer 1996, Everson 2001, and Hodges 2005).

The Jamaican people, Goodison's particular focus, have undergone many traumatic events that have their genesis in the infamous transatlantic Middle Passage, and Goodison feels that the memory "of the uprooting and dispossession of a whole people" will be with her until she dies—burned onto her psyche despite not having physically lived it herself (Calderaro 2006, 104). She proclaims the following:

> I see part of my charge as a writer as laying claim to the humanity of my ancestors, […] and putting a face and giving names to the faceless and nameless bands of men and women who did not just survive, but to some extent prevailed. I […] must attempt to write about the unspeakable horrors of the middle passage and the Atlantic Slave trade, I must also praise the strength and nobility of spirit which enabled Africans to survive it, not just survive it as brute beasts, but as artists, musicians and storytellers, healers, scientists, spiritual leaders and empire builders; that is what I do, I celebrate the fact that the so called 'master' culture was not able to completely annihilate the culture of the Native Indians and enslaved Africans. I also celebrate the thinking that has gained greater currency in recent years: that several cultures encountered each other, a great struggle took place and something new was created as a result. (Calderaro 2006, 104)

In her statement, Goodison expresses that she has been able to transform the negative past into a more positive present, but it is important for us to briefly revisit that horrendous time to understand just how much was overcome in Jamaica.

In the retelling of the story of the island and its people, Sherlock and Bennett state that the history of the Jamaicans begins in Africa, not in Europe. They reject the concept that African Jamaican history begins with the arrival of Columbus to the West Indies in the 1490's, or with the brutal enslavement of Africans in the sixteenth century (1998, 30). The reality is, however, that under British slavery, imperialism, and colonialism, the African history of Jamaicans was not sufficiently promoted (32-33). In *Culture and Customs of Jamaica (*2001), Martin and Pamela Mordecai acknowledge that the brutal experience of the Middle Passage affected every aspect of the transported and enslaved Africans' lives (11). They were from many parts of west and central Africa and were predominantly Kromanti, Mandigo, and Ibo peoples with their own cultural identity, which was consequently denied and stripped from them (11-12). Once in

Jamaica, the slaves were the main labor force at the sugarcane plantations, created to supply the European market (9). The dismal living conditions, loss of identity, restriction of freedom, and denial of basic human rights led to numerous rebellions (10). The first large-scale rebellion occurred in 1760, and the last one, led by Deacon Sam Sharpe, occurred from 1831 to 1832 (xvi). Slavery was abolished, and the system of apprenticeship was established in 1834, but full emancipation from slavery did not materialize until 1838 (xvi). Of course, the freed slaves' troubles did not end there. The resulting psychological damage from the experience of slavery continued to be exacerbated by the continuing direct rule of Britain, which established in 1866 that Jamaica would have a "Crown Colony" government [the lowest category of the colonial system of governance] (16). In subsequent periods of Jamaica's political progression, three critical divisions can be identified: 1866-1944, 1944-1962, and 1962 to the present (17).

From 1866 to1944, considerations of race still dictated that the whites should hold the positions of power, although the eventual establishment of universal adult suffrage in 1944, one not based on wealth, property, or education, started to change this structure (17). Little else changed during this period as

> [a]ll men were free, now, but all men were not equal, except within the narrow technicalities of the law. (18)

Marcus Garvey, a native Jamaican, struggled against this encapsulation by founding the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) in 1914. He desired to

> promote a spirit of race, pride, and love; to reclaim the fallen of the race; to administer and assist the needy, and to assist in civilizing the backward tribes of Africa. (quoted in Mordecai and Mordecai 2001, 21)

He visualized a return to Africa, and his battle cry became: "Africa for the Africans, both at home and abroad" (22). He formed the first modern political party (People's Political Party) in Jamaica in 1929 but was mainly unsuccessful in his bids for office (23). His legacy was "Garveyism," but while he was alive, he was not able to achieve his dreams for a major change (23). Two white men who were indignant about the treatment of the former slaves were cousins Alexander Bustamante, a trade union leader, and Norman Manley, a lawyer. They criticized British imperialism, helped form worker's unions, and became involved in politics, in order to improve the black Jamaican's lot in life (24-26). Their efforts were seen by

W. Arthur Lewis as contributing to a sort of "revolution," and as he further noted, the advantages were that the

> working classes ha[d] become organized politically, and their interests ha[d] been forced into the foreground. (quoted in Mordecai and Mordecai 2001, 26)

The period from 1944 to 1962 saw an increase of "brown" (mulatto) Jamaicans in civil service, but they were viewed suspiciously by both whites and blacks (18). Prejudice and racism were thus still being promulgated, even by the freed slaves themselves. New opportunities for land ownership and education were being provided, but they were mostly for the more affluent (19). The "Crown Colony" government was abolished in 1944, and a new constitution and two new legislative chambers were created: the elected House of Representatives and a nominated Legislative Council (26). The People's National Party won office for the first time in 1955, and an internal self-government was established in 1957 (xvii). Full political independence from Britain was achieved in 1962 under the leadership of Alexander Bustamante (xvii).

The post-independence era, from 1962 to the present, has seen many instances of both political and social upheaval. As stated by Martin and Pamela Mordecai, Jamaican history is

> the story of the journey of ex-slaves through the thickets of prejudice and inequality to the present reality of a complex, anxious independence. (2001, 17)

This hard earned "anxious independence" still reverberates with the strain and trauma of past experience and reflects Jamaicans' newly established identity free from the colonizer.

The Jamaicans' traumatic path clearly started with slavery and continues to this day. Healing from this trauma is essential, and this trauma needs to be vocalized as expressed by Elaine Scarry, in *Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985). She suggests that "[p]hysical pain has no voice, but when it at last finds a voice, it begins to tell a story" (3). Psychological pain, which can last much longer than physical pain, also needs to tell its "story." This expression of pain is necessary and is an important step towards diminishing pain (9). This "story" in a Caribbean context is analyzed by Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in his books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). In these texts, he describes the feelings of a black man living in a society created by the white man and all of the

associated psychological consequences that result from this experience. His own encounters with "color prejudice" lead him to conclude that he is part of a "bitter brotherhood" who faces the "unreasoned" thoughts and actions of a white society that bases its treatment of blacks on the color of their skin (*Black Skin* 1967*,* 118, 124). He admits that because of this "[t]he black man wants to be like the white man" (228) and proposes that a "collective catharsis" is needed (145). He feels that African Caribbean people should not be "prisoner[s] of history" (229): they are "not the slave[s] of the Slavery that dehumanized [their] ancestors" (230). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he concludes that they have "no more to fear" from [Europe], so they should "stop envying her" (1963, 314). He proposes that a change in attitude needs to be forthcoming; higher self-esteem and a positive mindset are needed for this "catharsis" or healing process to be successful. Fanon, however, does not present an actual plan of action. He points his audience towards a direction but leaves them to figure out how to individually find their own way through a labyrinth of emotion. Lorna Goodison, on the other hand, does have a concrete plan.

As a healer, Goodison wishes to provide her "medicine" through her poetry. In her works, she promotes spiritual alternatives as a viable means of achieving psychological healing. These, she feels, are a concrete solution to her and other African Caribbean people's trauma. The elements of Sufism, the mystical denomination of Islam and main focus of this monograph, help Goodison convey a poetic message that encourages the reader to go beyond the conventional idea of post-death compensation for suffering by focusing on introspection and spiritual rewards in life and not in death.

The Sufis by Idries Shah (1971), and *Islam: Beliefs and Observances* by Caesar Farah (2000), among others, provide valuable information about Sufi beliefs, way of life, and use of symbols in their writings. Sufism has been in existence since the early centuries of the beginnings of Islam (700 A.D.) (Farah, 1; Shah, xxv). Its underlying philosophy is that every person has his or her own path towards the God that is present in their physical body or "heart" (Farah 2000, 211). Although they believe that there are certain stages (seven) that must be experienced before union with their inner God is possible, they do not prescribe a rigid course towards their goal (210). Their beliefs or "secrets" are expressed many times through symbolism or camouflaged language in poetry or short stories (221).
Idries Shah states that:

> [t]he Sufi is an individual who believes that by practicing alternate detachment and identification with life, he becomes free. He is a mystic because he believes that he can become attuned to the purpose of all

> life. He is a practical man because he believes that this process must take place within normal society. And he must serve humanity because he is a part of it [....] The Sufi life can be lived at any time, in any place. It does not require withdrawal from the world, or organized movements, or dogma [....] Sufism is believed by its followers to be the inner, "secret" teaching that is concealed within every religion; and because its bases are in every human mind already, Sufic development must inevitably find its expression everywhere. (1971, 27)

Rumi, one of the best-known Sufis from the thirteenth century, has also described a Sufi as being:

> [d]runk without wine; sated without food; distraught; foodless and sleepless; a king beneath a humble cloak; a treasure within a ruin; not of air and earth; not of fire and water; a sea without bounds. He has a hundred moons and skies and suns. He is wise through universal truth--not a scholar from a book. (Shah 1971, 17)

Anyone can aspire to be a Sufi, according to these observations; there is no need for material things, traditional education, or even religion. One should believe in what is inside oneself and find the way to Love (God), which is the only way to find peace and consolation.

Goodison has deemed these ideas plausible for the African Caribbean person in search of healing. As was stated, Sufis believe Sufism is at the "heart" of all religions, which may be why she has found their beliefs similar to ones from her own African Caribbean spiritual heritage. Jamaican Revivalism and Rastafarianism are two religions that she also borrows from in her poetry, and she even manages to intertwine them with Sufism in her writings.

In *Jamaican Folk Medicine: A Source of Healing* by Arvilla Payne-Jackson and Mervyn C. Alleyne (2004), Revivalism is described as beginning in Jamaica in the middle of the nineteenth century (63). It is a combination of African and Christian beliefs, and its underlying concept is that the spiritual and physical worlds are united, and so the living can be possessed by the spirits of the dead, who then can use them to "advise" others (64). The Sufis also believe in the union of both spiritual and physical, although not in the exact sense.

Rastafarianism is described by Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert in *Creole Religions of the Caribbean* (2003) as the twentieth century blending of the

> Revivalist nature of Jamaican folk Christianity with the Pan-Africanist perspective promulgated by Marcus Garvey, and Ethiopianist readings of the Old Testament. (154)

They believe that salvation happens on Earth and that Heaven is Africa (Ethiopia) (157). They are against the social and political structures of the white "Euro-American" society and see it as the new "Babylon" (157). However, even though centered on Africa, they are essentially Christian-based (157). Sufis also believe that salvation is not reserved for the afterlife, but is possible while living.

Distinct symbols and concepts such as birds, hearts, roses, celestial spheres, circles, light, love, hope, and knowledge, which have been interpreted in a myriad of ways by other people or organized groups, are found in Sufism but are uniquely used to transmit their philosophical messages. The Jamaican Revivalists and the Rastafarians are two such groups who also use many of these concepts and symbols in their teachings, and I theorize that poet Goodison is attracted to Sufism because of these similarities and thus feels comfortable about subsequently appropriating its symbolic parlance for use in her own messages of assurance. In her poetry, she definitely uses both literal and figurative (Sufi “camouflaged”) language as a powerful medium for healing injured psyches.

The concepts of Sufism have existed for over a thousand years and are still seen as a viable option for transmitting a message of hope to traumatized people. However, Goodison is not the first writer from the "Western" world to have utilized its symbols and concepts in literary creations. Writers such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Walt Whitman, Thomas Merton, and Doris Lessing all predate Goodison and have elected to include Sufism in varying degrees in their writings. Goodison's inclusion of it, however, brings a new dimension to Caribbean writing, and makes Sufi thought contemporary and relevant, using it as a balm for the traumatized soul. Her free verse poems make use of varying metrical patterns, line and stanza lengths, similar to translated Sufi poems such as those presented in Coleman Barks' book *Rumi: The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing* (2003) and James Fadiman and Robert Frager's edition, *Essential Sufism* (1997). Goodison's use of symbols, metaphors, and allusions resembles the Sufi way of transmitting messages in a powerful albeit camouflaged way. Sufism then, plays a very important role in her later works, although some traces may be found in her earlier works. By employing Sufi symbols, she has found a way to reach her intended audience, the African Caribbean people. She selects this mode of poetic expression in her desire to help African descendants see that their

historical and personal anger can be vented and their trauma alleviated. As a consequence, they can believe that there is hope for a more peaceful life on the islands of the Caribbean.

My monograph is divided into three chapters. In Chapter One, "The Genesis and Aftermath of Trauma," I present a brief history of slavery in the Caribbean region with a focus on Jamaica. I take into account written reports that have described the brutal transatlantic slave trade experience which forced the African peoples to be separated from their mother nations, families, customs, traditions, and languages, among other things. As is commonly known, they were treated like animals and were brutalized not only physically, but also spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally. This trauma, anger, and pain needed to be vented and alleviated in constructive ways as suggested by Fanon in his books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) where his message of recognition and acceptance of trauma is presented, and where his suggestions to exorcise it through the elimination of a defeatist attitude, the raising of self-esteem, and the establishment of a new positive mindset are given. Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* (1985), although not directly addressing the African Caribbean trauma, also describes the need to diagnose traumas of mind and body by reading how societal illnesses are inscribed on the body in pain. Music, art, and literature have, as a consequence, become constructive outlets or tools of expression of outrage and even resistance on behalf of the wounded African Caribbean psyche. The use of literature for this purpose is my particular focus in this chapter as I examine the creation of songs, essays, plays, and poetry by authors chosen explicitly because of their writings in different decades of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and because they are from diverse countries of the Caribbean region (Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Lucia). Those selected: Una Marson, Martin Carter, Jimmy Cliff, Bob Marley, John Agard, Derek Walcott, Earl Lovelace, and even Lorna Goodison herself, show an outpouring of feeling which has helped African Caribbean descendants to express, protest against, and let go of some of their bitterness. This literary production has also let the rest of the world perceive the after-effects of their traumatic experience, an experience that still reverberates in African Caribbean societies one hundred and eighty-six years after emancipation. I conclude that there is a difference between Goodison and the others because the other writers offer no solutions or at best, halfhearted ones for achieving healing, while she is optimistic and fervently shows that she aspires to be a catalyst and bring the healing to fruition through her own poetic efforts by using among other alternatives, the elements of Sufism.

In Chapter Two, "Lorna Goodison: Poet, Healer," I present Lorna Goodison as the special focus of my monograph as she has not only made use of the written word to reveal her feelings about her ancestors' (and her own) traumatic past, but she has also offered some avenue to relief from the trauma. She knows that the African Caribbean people need comfort and soothing in order to heal, and she offers her own remedies through her writing. She sees herself as a prophet and healer who can help her fellow human beings overcome their pain by looking for strength and God's love inside themselves. Goodison includes references to Revivalism and Rastafarianism in her writings, and because some aspects of these two religions are similar to Sufism, I feel that this is where she has made an emotional connection with her Jamaican cultural roots. This chapter also focuses on defining Sufism, studying some examples of translated Sufi poems, showing what aspects of Sufism resonate with Jamaican Revivalism and Rastafarianism, and illustrating how the elements of these three religions come together in Goodison's poetry such as in "The Revival Song of the Wild Woman," and "Aye Spring."

In Chapter Three, "Lorna Goodison's Use of Sufism," I refer to how Sufi elements have been used by other writers such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Walt Whitman, Thomas Merton, and Doris Lessing. I find that their use of the elements of Sufism is not as focused on symbols as is Goodison's application although they are similar in their use of Sufi themes. Thomas Merton is certainly the only one who lived a Christian mystical lifestyle and was not using the Sufi elements as an "exotic" way to present his poetic thoughts. The study of these other writers, who deploy Sufi references, has helped me assign a place to Goodison in a creative continuum present in both British and American literary canons. Contrary to the others, however, Goodison is the only one to apply the Sufi ideals to a Caribbean context, thus falling into her own creative category, that of a new Caribbean literary canon. This chapter continues with my exploration of the presence of Sufism in selected poems from Goodison's earlier poetry collections *Heartease* (1988), *To Us, All Flowers are Roses* (1995), later collections *Turn Thanks* (1999), *Travelling Mercies* (2001), and to a lesser extent *Controlling the Silver* (2005), *Golden Grove: New and Selected Poems* (2006), and *Oracabessa* (2013). Here, I demonstrate and comment upon the presence of Sufi teachings and symbolism, and how she uses them to transmit her message of hope and healing to the post-traumatic African Caribbean descendants. I conclude that her use of Sufi elements reaches its peak in her books *Turn Thanks* and *Travelling Mercies*, but that her message of hope continues unabated in her more recent work.

Lorna Goodison is searching for answers for herself and for others by examining and presenting different spiritualities in hopes of providing alternatives to the psyche in need of healing. Her inclusion of Sufism in her poetry seems to have a dual purpose: a "new" creative angle and a sincere belief in its power to provide relief from personal anguish. The fact that Sufism is similar to Jamaican based religions works in its favor. Can Jamaicans, who are Goodison's primary subject, really relate to its message? Goodison seems earnest in her desire to see if it is so. She does not underestimate her audience's capacity for change or their willingness to accept the "foreign" albeit familiar ideas of Sufism. Her role as facilitator is not a secret; she is openly promoting her ideas and her belief that healing is possible. There is no one perfect answer, but various good ones are possible. She has accomplished her mission by fore-fronting these ideas through her poetry. Because of this, I uphold as both accurate and deserved, her proclaimed status as prophet and healer.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GENESIS AND AFTERMATH OF TRAUMA

In *The Story of the Jamaican People*, Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett write that

> Europe brought Africa to the Caribbean early in the sixteenth century. Europe came as victor, dispossessor, exploiter. Africa came as victim, dispossessed, exploited. (1998, 2)

In the period of 1518 to 1874, about ten million Africans were brought as slaves to plantation America, and just under two million of them were brought to Jamaica (14). According to Bonham C. Richardson, the enslavement of millions of Africans was the product of the European colonial need to replenish the decimated aboriginal workforce used on Caribbean plantations that produced sugar, cotton, and cocoa for Europe (1989, 205). This evil period saw Africans being transported with brutal force thousands of miles from their home to remote islands in the middle of a strange sea. This journey, reiterates Edward Chamberlin, is known as the Middle Passage and separated them from their family and friends and from others who spoke their language (1993, 1). The men, women, and children in captivity were treated inhumanely and were haunted by overwork, exhaustion, and disease (Richardson 1989, 205). William Dickson, writing during the slavery era, has stated that

> [...] the great body of slaves, the field people on sugar plantations, are generally treated more like beast of burden than like human creatures. (quoted in Beckles 2002, 186)

Orlando Patterson has also expressed that the "social death" of slaves was achieved through such strategies as stripping them of their own religion, giving them new and often ridiculous names, and denying them formally recognized social structures such as marriage (cited in Bush 1990, 24). The renaming of slaves made previous connections in Africa untraceable and the development of a personal lineage impossible. As a consequence, argues David Lichenstein, rootlessness rather than lineage and traditions

formed the predominant historical mindset of the African Caribbean people (2003, 1). The slaves were made invisible because they were deemed property, and even when acknowledged as humans, they were often denied personalities in plantation records and official histories. This invisibility has long been a powerful image of the dispossession and loss that were part of their history in the new world (Chamberlin 1993, 20-21). The attitude of white slave owners was that slavery was justified because Europe, as benefactor and civilizer, rescued the African from savagery. As the infamous J. A. Froude wrote during his travels in the West Indies in the nineteenth century, blacks did not demonstrate any capacity for civilization except "under European laws, European education, and European authority" (quoted in Sherlock and Bennett 1998, 12). As a consequence, Jamaica and the other Caribbean islands' economies ran on the forced labor of people whose basic humanity was denied according to Martin and Pamela Mordecai (2001, 10).

The enslavement of Africans in the Americas was based on race (Lovejoy and Trotman 2002, 72). The European fixation on race, with the notion of whiteness signifying the top of the ethnic-racial hierarchy and African or Amerindian physical features signifying the bottom, has been the lasting legacy of colonialism and slavery (Baranov and Yelvington 2003, 213-15). The visibility of racial difference has helped to perpetuate the prejudice against people of African descent, as George Frederickson has argued. Consequently, the problem of race is more difficult to solve than the problem of slavery (cited in Williams 2000, 100). Claudette Williams feels that there has thus been a long-lasting and detrimental psychological consequence for the Caribbean people whose origins can be traced to the black slaves (2000, 100).

“Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever” writes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (2003, 1236) in reference to the black civil rights struggle in the United States, but these words are applicable to African Caribbean people also, whose ancestors were enslaved in the Caribbean by the Europeans. The African slaves in Jamaica chafed under the mistreatment of the colonizers and were not afraid to show it. Their rebellions were numerous and took place throughout the years ranging from 1650 to 1832 (Sherlock and Bennett 1998, 134-37). The earlier rebellions were perpetrated by gangs of runaway slaves known as "maroons" ("Nanny" being one of the most famous leaders), and the later ones were supported by nonconformist clergymen abolitionists from Britain and the United States, some of them former slaves themselves, who established churches off the estates, and taught those slaves who were prepared to take the risk, to learn to read and

write (Sherlock and Bennett 1998, 134-37; Mordecai and Mordecai 2001, 13). The slaves who had learned how to read and write kept up with the news about a possible emancipation from slavery and thought that the British parliament had already granted their liberty, but that it was being willfully withheld by the Jamaican assembly. This started a new rebellion led by a Native Baptist deacon, Samuel Sharpe, at the end of a Christmas break in 1831. The rebellion lasted four months, and the retaliation by whites was brutal, resulting in the hanging of Sharpe and 579 other slaves. The institution of slavery had received a fatal blow however, which culminated in partial emancipation (a still unhappy situation for the slaves) and finally a full emancipation on August 1, 1838 (Mordecai and Mordecai 2001, 14).

Pain and Trauma as Consequence

Emancipation, while widely celebrated by the Jamaicans, did not erase all of the trauma lived by the African Caribbean ex-slaves and their descendants. Even more than 180 years after the fact, there is still pain in Jamaica and the other Caribbean islands, which is reflected in African Caribbean art, music, and literature. Their self-esteem and self-image have been affected forever, and Claudette Williams points out the fact that Frantz Fanon has effectively acknowledged this trauma by using the white mask as

> […] a metaphor for the mental colonization from which people of African descent have suffered historically, the persistent self-doubt, self-hate and feelings of inferiority resulting from their complete dependence on others for their self-image. (2000, 100)

Further statements by Fanon are enlightening because he focused on the experiences of black people in the white world of the Caribbean. He says that a black man in the Antilles must not only be black, but he must be black in relation to the white man, and that the black man's customs were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that was imposed on him (*Black Skin, White Masks* 1967, 110). The black man is made to feel that

> [t]he Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly [....] (113)

Fanon argues that the black man is not defeated by this, however, who in spite of "tons of chains, storms of blows and rivers of expectoration"

flowing down his shoulders, does not have the right to allow himself "to be mixed in what the past has determined" (230). The black man must get beyond this; there must be a reconciliation between himself and the oppressor, a healing, and he hopes

> […t]hat the enslavement of man by man cease forever. That is, one by another. That it be possible for [him] to discover and to love man, wherever he may be. (231)

Fanon is optimistic when he concludes that

> […] man is a *yes* .... *Yes* to life. *Yes* to love. *Yes* to generosity. But man is also a *no*. *No* to scorn of man. *No* to degradation of man. *No* to exploitation of man. *No* to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom. (222)

In the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean Paul Sartre acknowledges Fanon as being the

> first since Engels to bring the processes of history into the clear light of day [...] he acts as the interpreter of the situation, that's all [...] Read Fanon: you will learn how, in the period of their helplessness, their mad impulse to murder is the expression of the native's collective unconsciousness. If this suppressed fury fails to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves. (1963, 14-18)

In his writings, Fanon attempts to do just that, provide an outlet for the anger he is observing all around him. He voices his observations and tries to give suggestions about how this "new" world should function. He feels that Europe's institutions and societies should not be imitated:

> Humanity is waiting for something from us other than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature [...] if we want to bring it (humanity) up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries [....] For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity [...] we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man. (1963, 315-316)

Thus, in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985), Elaine Scarry's ideas support Fanon's ideas about trauma and the need for renewal. She addresses the necessary, albeit difficult, process of expressing and exorcising pain. According to Scarry, there is a distinction between physical pain and psychological pain. Physical pain is very often

inexpressible in structured language and she quotes Virginia Woolf as writing:

> English [...] which can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear has no words for the shiver or the headache [....] (4)

Scarry herself writes that

> Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned. (4)

Because of this tendency, she feels that it is not surprising that the language for pain is not expressed by the people who are actually feeling the pain but by those who wish to speak on their behalf (6). Hence, individual artists have been able to translate the passage of pain into speech through poetry and narratives. Furthermore, while the representation of physical pain in literature is rare, the presentation of psychological pain in literature is not. Psychological suffering does have referential content and can be expressed verbally, and so is habitually represented in the arts (11). Thomas Mann has stated that there is virtually no piece of literature that is not about the portrayal of suffering (cited in Scarry 1985, 11), which leads Scarry to conclude that because of this, there is an assumption that the act of expressing pain is a necessary prelude to the collective task of diminishing pain (9). Pain has to first be expressed in order to then be exorcised.

The Venting of Pain through Literary Art

This quest to exorcise psychological pain is precisely why writers from the Caribbean offer us a variety of literature that embodies both Frantz Fanon and Elaine Scarry's theories and which show a process of either venting anger and/or searching for healing from psychological trauma caused by a history of exploitation and prejudice. The process of creating a plausible expression of pain has not been easy in the face of critics such as native Trinidadian V.S. Naipaul who has stated that

> History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies. (quoted in Chamberlin 1993, 32)

Even Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey criticized Jamaican cultural and intellectual expressions in 1930 by saying

> From my observations I am forced to conclude that Jamaica is [...] limited in intelligence, narrow in its intellectual concepts, almost to the point where one can honestly say that the country is ridiculous. (quoted in Breiner 1998, 14)

Fortunately for us, many Caribbean writers have managed to struggle through all of this criticism and cynicism and create sensitive works of literary art worthy of much praise.

For example, Una Marson, a Jamaican feminist, journalist, playwright, and poet (Burnett 1986, 405), expressed the pain of a rejection based on racial prejudice in her poem "Politeness" written in 1930:

> They tell us
> That our skin is black
> But our hearts are white
> We tell them
> That their skin is white
> But their hearts are black (Burnett 1986, 160)

An interesting contrast of the races is expressed here as someone "polite" tries to flatter the black person by telling him or her that his or her heart is white, but the black person being equally "polite" states the opposite. Hypocrisy seems to play a big role here. The word "black" in the last line can have an alternate meaning such as "evil" or "sinister," meanings that the white oppressor has created. This insinuation is a clever manipulation of words that points the finger right back at the ones who have mistreated the former slaves; they are the white people with "black" hearts.

Likewise, Martin Carter, a poet, politician, and historian from Guyana (Burnett 1986, 411) wrote about both anger and hope in his 1954 poem, "1 Come from the Nigger Yard":

> I come from the nigger yard of yesterday
> leaping from the oppressor's hate
> and the scorn of myself.
> I come to the world with scars upon my soul
> wounds on my body, fury in my hands
> I turn to the histories of men and the lives of the people.
> I examine the shower of sparks the wealth of dreams
> I am pleased with the glories and sad with the sorrows
> rich with the riches, poor with the loss
> From the nigger yard of yesterday I come with my burden

> To the world of to-morrow I turn with my strength.
> (Burnett 1986, 215-16)

The ex-slave who has come from the "nigger yard" and who has been wounded and scarred is now looking beyond this terrible experience, gaining hope from the way others from the past with the same "histories" have managed to survive. His "burden" is his past suffering and what he is as a consequence of it. He has not been diminished by this experience, however, as the strength he has acquired gives him hope that the "world of to-morrow," the world he makes for himself, will be a better place.

In a musical vein, Jimmy Cliff, a Jamaican reggae musician (Burnett 1986, 388), expressed his determination to be free from the oppressor in his 1971 song, "The Harder They Come":

> […] And I keep on fighting for the things I want
> Though I know that when you're dead you can't
> But I'd rather be a free man in my grave
> Than living as a puppet or a slave
> So as sure as the sun will shine
> I'm gonna get my share now, what's mine
> And then the harder they come, the harder they fall
> One and all […] (Burnett 63)

Freedom is the singer's most prized possession, and he states that he would rather be dead than a slave. The time has come for him to receive his fair share, and for the oppressors to receive retribution. Because just as "hard" as they have mistreated the black people is how "hard" their own treatment or "fall" will be. This song shows a spirit of revenge and the anger still latent among African Caribbean people.

The late Jamaican reggae king, Robert (Bob) Nestor Marley's 1970's song "Slave Driver," also expressed the feeling of rage over the experience of slavery:

> Slave driver the table is turned
> Catch a fire so you can get burned
> Slave driver the table is turned
> Catch a fire you're gonna get burned
>
> Ev'ry time I hear the crack of the whip
> My blood runs cold
> I remember on the slave ship
> How they brutalised our very souls
> Today they say that we are free
> Only to be chained in poverty

> Good god, I think it's all illiteracy
> It's only a machine that make money [...] (2005, 1)

The cruelties of the Middle Passage are remembered in this song, and the "brutality" exerted upon the slaves' souls is emphasized. Marley sings that the "table is turned" on the slave driver, but there is still a feeling of frustration about the aftermath of slavery and the fact that their new “masters" are poverty and illiteracy. They cannot be truly free until they confront both of these social issues, two new hurdles in the never-ending saga of the Jamaican African Caribbean descendant. These conditions are acknowledged as debilitating by Bob Marley, which give this song a depressing tone.

Similarly, John Agard, a poet, performer, and anthologist from Guyana (Agard "Biography" 2000, 2) expressed his anger over slavery in his poem "Pan Recipe" written at the beginning of the twenty-first century:

> First rape a people
> simmer for centuries
> bring memories to a boil
> foil voice of drum
> add pinch of pain
> to rain of rage
> stifle drum again
> then mix strains of blood
> over slow fire
> watch fever grow
> till energy burst
> with rhythm thirst
> cut bamboo and cure
> whip well like hell
> stir sound from dust bin
> pound handful biscuit tin
> cover down in shanty town
> and leave mixture alone
> when ready will explode (Agard *Weblines* 2000, 118)

This "recipe" has all the ingredients to create a frustrated, bitter, angry, and desperate people. It also realistically reflects what happened to the new African inhabitants of the Caribbean islands. The degree of anger that Agard injects into this poem is evident. Here we can detect no candy-coating of the brutal experience that the African Caribbean people were subjected to and continue to be subjected to in the "shanty towns." Agard lets his feelings out, which is therapeutic, but he does not offer any further insight to his thoughts about the future, or any hope that things will

improve. His vision of the future in the last three quoted lines echo Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem" by stressing the violent revolutionary potential unaddressed social inequalities harbor. So, his vision is revolutionary, not healing with spiritual balms. His is of a volcano waiting to erupt and consume all in its lava path.

In contrast, Derek Walcott's play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), Earl Lovelace's play *Jestina's Calypso* (1984), and selected poems of Lorna Goodison: "Guinea Woman" (1986), "Mother, the Great Stones Got to Move" (1993), and "What We Carried that Carried Us" (2001), all consider the pain and suffering of the African Caribbean people, but advocate the search for healing as a necessary resolution to their anguish. These various works of art are commented on more extensively in the following section.

Derek Walcott feels that the survivors of slavery should see their degraded arrival as the beginning and not the end of their history ("The Muse of History" 1974, 6). He acknowledges that people in the New World have a horror of the past, whether their ancestor was torturer or victim, and that there is a residual feeling in much of Caribbean literature of "the wailing by strange waters for a lost home" ("Muse" 1974, 4, 9).

Being considered sub-human or inferior, however, cannot be washed away so easily. It is a great part of the trauma of the transplanted African. They have been seen as animals (Fanon *Black Skin* 1967*,* 113), and this is emphasized in Walcott's play when the character Corporal Lestrade says:

> Animals, beasts, savages, cannibals, niggers, stop turning this place into a stinking zoo (2000, 216),

and when he says

> There were various tribes of the ape [....] For some of the apes had straighten their backbone [...] but there was one tribe unfortunately that lingered behind, and that was the nigger. (217)

The names of many of the characters themselves are animal names. "Makak" is a form of the French word "Macaque" which is the name of a species of monkey. "Moustique," "Tigre," and "Souris" also personify the mosquito, tiger, and rat (Uhrbach 1986, 579). They are "animals" taken out of their natural habitat (Africa) who are now aimlessly wandering, looking for a new identity, and looking to grow roots somewhere. They have nothing to celebrate as Walcott states,

> Slaves, the children of slaves, colonials, then pathetic, unpunctual nationalists, what have we to celebrate? [...]The migrating West Indian feels rootless on his own earth, chafing at its beaches. ("What the Twilight Says" 2000, 20-21)

The issue of psychological trauma is made worse when the black slaves mixed genetically with the white enslavers and thus created the mulatto. The mulattos are then stuck in the middle of both worlds--should they identify more with Europe or with Africa? Robert Hamner has stated that the character Makak is

> distracted by two of the most seductive illusions ingrained in the New World Negro's psyche: the illusions of identity either in European whiteness or African blackness. Paradoxically, these opposites come to Makak in the mysterious vision of a white goddess who reveals that he is descended from a family of lions and kings. (1977, 49)

This vision also seems to be based on what Sartre describes about the colonized:

> […] in certain psychoses the hallucinated person, tired of always being insulted by his demon, one fine day starts hearing the voice of an angel who pays him compliments. (1963, 19)

The black people are not only tired of "being insulted by [their] demon," but also *tired* of being mistreated and of feeling like non-entities, as we can see from these lines from the play: "You forget your name, your race is tired [....]" (Walcott “Dream” 1970, 220) and "This is a being without a mind, a will, a name, a tribe of its own" (222). Also, "They cannot be nothing, because they born slaves and they born tired" (261). The crux of the matter in the play is then how a people who feel tired and rootless and have an identity crisis can reach the point of spiritual healing.

Makak uses his imagination to "dream" of a better place: Africa as a "ground" of identity (Breiner 1998, 155). His dream includes a God-like white woman who appears to him and tells him he is a descendant of African kings, and when he listens to her, his "feet grow roots" (Walcott “Dream” 1970, 227). She leaves behind a white mask, and he feels he has been "planted" on Monkey Mountain, but his people haven't, so they are still rootless (248). The "white mask" left behind is an echo of Fanon's idea that the black man wants "[... t]o be acknowledged not as black but as white" (*Black Skin* 1967, 63). Makak's mission then is to help his people find what they are missing. He has become a sort of prophet and healer, and as he traverses Monkey Mountain, he espouses a message of faith to