

Representations of Strong Black Women in Calypso Lyrics of Calypso Rose, Singing
Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee; and in Zora Neale
Hurston's Work: Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Work:
Breath, Eyes, Memory

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Abstract

This thesis presents representations of strong black women in Calypso lyrics of Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee; and in Zora Neale Hurston's work: Their Eyes Were Watching God, and Edwidge Danticat's work: Breath, Eyes, Memory, as texts that can potentially provide for classroom use strategies for resisting hegemonic oppression, female subordination, and gender conflicts in Caribbean society. It also examines issues of gender, race, and class involving black women. In addition, it examines feminist and postcolonial analyses of gender, race, class, and Freirian Pedagogy, which should help to further understandings of black women's struggle and oppression in Caribbean society. Finally, the pedagogical implications should be able to shed new light for teachers to empower their students the future leaders, how to resist hegemonic oppression, female subordination, and gender conflicts which impact their lives.

Resumen

Esta tesis presenta representaciones fuertes de mujeres negras en líricas de Calypso, de Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee; y la obra de Zora Neale Hurston: Their Eyes Were Watching God y la obra de Edwidge Danticat: Breath, Eyes, Memory como textos que potencialmente pueden proveer estrategias para resistir opresión de la hegemonidad, subordinación de las mujeres, y conflictos de género en la sociedad del Caribe en el salón de clase.

También examinar problemas de género, raza, y clase envolviendo las mujeres negras. En adición, la tesis examina análisis feministas y post colonial de género, raza, y clase, y la pedagogía de Paulo Freire, que debería ayudar a entendimientos futuros de las mujeres negras y su opresión y lucha en la sociedad del Caribe.

Finalmente, las implicaciones pedagógicas pueden dar nueva luz a los maestros a que den poder a sus estudiantes los futuros líderes a como resistir la opresión de la hegemonidad, subordinación femenina, y conflictos de género que afectan sus vidas.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my dear mother Mrs. Viola Richardson, my children Jiva Alexia Niles, and Justin Amari Niles, and other precious members of my family. Thanks for your love, support and dedication always.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Historically, the Caribbean has been a highly competitive social and cultural mecca for various world powers and inhabitants of this region. Geographically speaking, the Caribbean region spans the island archipelago, which includes the English, French, Spanish and Dutch speaking islands and Mainland territories to include Guyana and Brazil, which are washed by the Caribbean Sea. Politically speaking, and due in great part, to mass migration patterns, the region goes on to include some areas of the United States such as New Orleans, Atlanta, and Florida. Within these contexts, Many Caribbean women of African ancestry languish for equality, freedom, and identity as they struggle with extenuating political, racial and gender issues. Historically, more black women are discriminated based on race than any other group. However, despite these discriminatory acts there is a solid history of Black women's ability to resist society's norms regardless of the consequences.

Sadly, Black women's contributions to society and their acts of resistance have been neglected by many past writers and performers whose work primarily reflected European lifestyles. As a case in point, Linda Rodriguez Guglielmoni indicates that: "During the 19th century, when the historical novel began to be written in the Caribbean, this area had no glorious history to be remembered, as in Spain and Italy. The native inhabitants and their past had been obliterated or severely traumatized" (Guglielmoni 28). Thus, one realizes that Afro-Caribbean women and their acts of resistance to society's restrictive standards have long been ignored and regarded as trite and inconsequential. Clearly, this is an injustice to Caribbean women, men, and their offspring, the majority of whom are of the African race. In light of this, young Caribbean

women need to be aware of the resistant potentialities of women of the past so that they too, can devise similar strategies for resistance to hegemonic rule. Thus, more contemporary writers, musicians, composers, and artists should begin to see the need to dispute black women's issues considering their valuable contributions to the shaping of Caribbean society and their brave acts of resistance, in the face of historic trauma.

Beginning with black liberationist women folk like Queen Mary of the Virgin Islands, Daisy Richardson of Anguilla et al, black women have made their indelible marks on the Caribbean landscape. Coupled with the attempts of the revolutionary women aforementioned, that helped to shape our black history, Sophia Lamson notes that enslaved women known as "Queens" on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands met in the hills to sing, dance Bamboula, drum ... and incidentally plan rebellion against their slave masters" (Lamson 1957). Here Lamson points out an important example of enslaved black women's attempts to resist the hegemony of slave society. The fact that black women were able to resist the hardships of enslavement and participate in the planning of rebellions against the slave masters in ways described by Lamson, underscores their resistant abilities against imposed societal norms which subordinated them. Despite the consequences for their acts of resistance enslaved black women still continued to resist.

For instance, on the island of Trinidad during pre-emancipation (the years prior to the abolition of slavery) Black women continued to sing Cariso [Calypso] despite colonial ordinances. This tradition is still maintained in modern Trinidadian culture for reasons of resistance. I believe that attention should be given to their expressions and acts of resistance in defiance to oppressive social constructions through the medium of Cariso. In literature Caribbean influenced writers such as Floridian Zora Neale Hurston and Haitian Edwidge Danticat also

present stories of resistance. Therefore, I believe that Calypso texts, Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory can be used to teach resistance strategies against societal female subordination and hegemonic oppression.

To highlight the insidious nature of female subordination and hegemonic repression in our society, in Jamaica Kincaid's short fiction: "Girl" the speaker is told not to sing Benna [Calypso music] in Sunday School.

On Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday School; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street-flies will follow you; *but I don't sing Benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday School*; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a button hole for the button you have sewed on (Meyer 517-518)

It would seem that the female character and her gender role begins with the authoritative parents and teachers in our society. Here we notice that the speaker tells the girl child not to sing "Benna" or Calypso music in Sunday school and that she should try to walk like a lady on Sundays or else she will be a "slut." Of course, does singing "Benna" or Calypso make a girl a "slut?" Does a lady have a special way of walking? Does a "slut" have a special way of walking? Can't girls sing the kind of music they desire to? Can't girls walk the way they are pleased to do? What's more! What is wrong with a girl talking to the so-called "Wharf-rat boys?" Does talking to "Wharf -rat boys" make a girl a slut? Here we notice some classic examples of society's stereotyping and unrelenting role in shaping a girl's character. Thus, through the use of Calypso texts and literary texts we can make our students aware of gender issues which affect them in their communities so that they can become empowered by developing strategies for resistance

against female subordination.

Similarly, in literature and popular culture women are predominantly represented in a subordinate position as pointed out in Kincaid's "Girl" for example. Admittedly, countless black women in my own experience remain marginalized and complain on a day-to-day basis about the negative treatment they receive from the men in their lives and people of their society in general. Hence it is with these considerations, that I wish to explore some of the underlying reasons for marginalization and repression of my fellow Caribbean black women in society. And I believe that through Calypso lyrics and Literary texts that speak about the experiences of the common woman and man of our society audiences can become informed and might be more responsive to critical gender issues that face the people of our society.

Therefore, this thesis will also explore how women composers of Calypso seek to resist female subordination in their societies. Some of these composers whose work I will examine include Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee. In addition, this thesis I will explore some of the strategies for resistance to oppressive structures used by the protagonists in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory. This is done in the hopes of using these texts as tools to enlighten today's black women how to grapple with female subordination. I base this belief in the understanding that Calypso exemplifies the oral literature of the English-speaking Caribbean and it disseminates information to the masses of people simultaneously. Then too, Calypso lyrics by female composers should be able to portray women in a positive sense seeing that more often than not, those Calypsos by a vast majority of male composers portray women in a negative sense. Realizing that Calypso is constantly in the public focus, I believe that the messages can greatly impact public attitudes toward women.

Similarly, Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory can be used as texts for liberatory pedagogy and strategies to resist and change negative attitudes towards women. In Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston for example, a strong African-American woman Janie Crawford, seeks freedom, justice, and independence by resisting the dictates of people of her oppressive society. To show the extent to which the heroine in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God is subordinated Janie Crawford the protagonist notes:

Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no mo' but Ah ain't no old woman neither. Ah reckon Ah looks mah age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat's ah whole lot more'n you kin say . . . when you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life . . . then Joe Starks realized all the meanings and his vanity bled like a flood. Janie had robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness that all men cherish, which was terrible (Hurston 79).

Here one sees how Hurston's Janie resists the attempts made by Joe Starks her chauvinistic husband, and mayor of the Town of Eatonville who tries to subordinate her. At the same time, she is able to crush his male ego by telling him "When you pull down yo britches, you look lak de change of life." Clearly, Joe Starks then realizes that Janie is a hell of a force for him to reckon with. She crushes his male ego by making him realize the fact that he is no longer sexually appealing to her. In fact, it would seem that he underestimates Janie's abilities as a woman who is much younger than him. Janie's ability to resist his coercion of her into the female form he espouses takes him by surprise. She is not the young girl he sees when he marries. She matures considerably and openly resists his controlling nature.

Similarly, Sophie Caco in Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory rejects the subordinate

treatment she receives from her Grandme, Taunte Atie and her mother Martine. For instance, a conversation which takes place between Sophie Caco, and her sex therapist exemplifies this: “Do you understand why your mother was so adamantly against your being with a man, a much older man at that? It is only natural, dear heart. She also felt that you were the only person who would never leave her” (Danticat 210). Here one also sees that Sophie resists the dictates of her mother and society. For example, her mother wishes for Sophie to marry a man of financial means. Instead, Sophie marries a man of limited financial means and who is much older than she is.

For another example, Sophie is tested for virginity by insertion. Her mother Martine uses her finger to test Sophie weekly. Sophie resists these tests at length by inserting a pestle into her vagina. “My flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed sheet. I took the pestle and the bloody sheet and stuffed them into a bag. It was gone, the veil that always held back my mother’s finger every time she tested me” (Danticat 88). Of course, this brave and disturbing act of resistance to the subordinate treatment Sophie receives from her mother ends the series of virginity tests.

Even more, Sophie’s Taunte (Aunt), Atie’s, words: “I have the curse of a girl whose papa loved her best (Danticat 165) and her mother’s words: “We come from a place where in one instant, you can lose your father and all your other dreams” (165) are some significant statements that can serve to elucidate my discussion. These statements also reveal the extent to which women in Sophie’s hometown are subordinated. Not only are women subordinated, but they are also silenced, physically and sexually abused, by the patriarchal figures in their lives. However, Sophie, on the other hand, although her maternal figures try hard to silence her, she eventually resists by doing the opposite of what she is socialized to do.

In addition to the texts *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*,

Calypso lyrics by Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee, can be used to teach strategies for resisting hegemonic female subordination, since calypso performance is part of the popular culture of the English-speaking Caribbean. Furthermore, calypso lyrics speak for the ordinary woman and man and is one of the oldest and longest standing traditions for transmitting information to people. For example, Calypso Rose affirms “I could understand why a woman must have a outside man. A man does run like rat and have his wife abide by that. And every night he is having a ball. When he reach home he ain’t kissing the wife at all.” (Goetrich 24) Here we notice that Calypso Rose brings to our attention the very important issue of infidelity, which is the case in many marriages of our society. Clearly, infidelity is an issue that often leads to some serious consequences in marriage such as divorce and domestic violence, which are growing problems in our society.

Statistics from the Social and Welfare Department show that on the island of Anguilla for example, between 2000 and 2006 there were 23 recorded cases of divorce while between 2000 and 2006 there were 203 recorded cases of domestic violence. This is a disturbing phenomenon given the small population size of Anguilla, which is approximately 11,561 inhabitants. Similarly, in Puerto Rico, statistics on domestic violence show that there are 21,000 incidents of domestic violence per year. In the year 2000, for example, there were 48 incidents for every 10,000 persons. However, the alarming part is the fact that 86% of the victims of domestic violence are women between the ages of 20 and 29. Meanwhile, 44% of the victims are children. Of the 86% of women victims, 78% of the incidents take place in the victim’s home while 6% take place in public places (<http://www.tendenciaspr.com/ingles/violence.html>). This too, is an extremely disturbing phenomenon given Puerto Rico’s population size, which is approximately 4 million people. What these figures suggest is that many Caribbean women and their children live

in sheer misery due to abuse. Thus we see that domestic violence is a harsh reality in Anguillian and Puerto Rican society. Hence, there is an increasing need for women to become liberated from abuse in the home and other forms of mistreatment in society.

Similarly, Singing Vennie in song Women's Liberation notes:

Women's liberation should mean equal opportunity and equal responsibility. We must demand more leadership roles . . . if we continue tolerating abuse by men and are afraid to stand up to them; this liberation is a figment of our imagination. It is an idea whose time is yet to come (Singing Vennie 2003).

Singing Vennie by these words seems to be indicating that women no longer tolerate abuse from men and that they should challenge the men when they try to subordinate them. She also insists that women should find themselves in leadership positions to gain empowerment against hegemonic oppression. Clearly, these lyrics can be useful texts to teach compatibility in gender relationships so that gender disparity can be lessened. Furthermore, the enlightening messages that the Calypso texts offer can enable women to resist female subordination and become liberated in their society.

Accordingly, Paulo Freire states that for the socially oppressed to become liberated they must at first become humanized.

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human (Freire 65-66).

Clearly, female liberation can only come about for women in our society if they acquire an

understanding of the root causes of their oppression.

Additionally, our students need to see the value and importance of liberation of oppressed individuals of society so that they can begin to live lives that involve fewer gender conflicts and that are more meaningful. In classrooms teachers could begin to allow their students opportunities to see the need for them to become socially liberated by making explicit strategies for resisting gender disparity. This can be done through the incorporation of elements from popular culture such as Calypso texts, and texts such as *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* by Edwidge Danticat, that speak about the struggles of common people, and simultaneously, offer strategies for resisting female subordination and hegemonic oppression. Finally, our students could use the enlightenment that gender education can offer to help them resist some of their gender conflicts. Through feminist thinking awareness can be created to help to address some of these gender conflicts.

Feminist Criticism according to Rosemarie Tong, articulates the “Highly elaborate” and “deeply entrenched” nature of the sex/gender system, but also contains sketching exit routes out of it. In cases of Radical Feminism, radical feminists propose ways to free women from the cage of femininity. These proposals have ranged from working toward an androgynous culture in which male and female differences are minimized to replacing the male centered culture with a female centered culture.

One way in which radical feminists have proposed to enable women to escape from male domination is through transforming the institution of heterosexuality so that neither men nor women play a dominant role (Tong 95). Instead, a balance of power should be sought to create a more equitable arrangement. Kate Millet maintains in her book *Sexual Politics* that:

Sex is political primarily because the male-female relationship is the paradigm for

all power relationships: racial, political, or economic. Unless the clinging to male supremacy as a birthright is finally forgone, all systems of oppression will continue to function simply by virtue of their logical and emotional mandate in the primary human situation (96).

Black women's oppression then, it seems, is deeply rooted in societal patriarchy which feminists attempt to deconstruct.

Accordingly, Antonio Gramsci notes that:

The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sexual question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics" (Hoare and Smith 296).

Hence, I presume that expressions of feminist thinking in the form of Calypso lyrics and the novel can help to create awareness for Caribbean women so that can they discover and devise new ways to resist oppressive patriarchal structures. Zora Neale's novel Their Eyes Were Watching God deals with the struggles of the African-American people, particularly Janie Crawford a woman who experiences oppression in her society, but she boldly fights back. Edwidge Danticat's novel Breath, Eyes, Memory deals with the struggles of Sophie Caco in an oppressive Haitian society and she also fights back. In addition, Antonio Gramsci notes that:

Regional literature, too, has been essentially folkloric and picturesque. The 'regional' people are seen 'paternalistically' from the outside, with the disenchanting cosmopolitan spirit of tourists in search of strong and original raw sensations. The deeply rooted 'apolitical' nature of Italian writers, coated with a

verbose national rhetoric, has been really harmful to them (Forgacs and Smith 202).

Here one notices that Gramsci sees “Regional Literature” as “folkloric and picturesque” and like Calypso texts, they speak for the everyday woman and man of our society. It informs of experiences that are similar to the experiences of the common people of society. Thus, Black women can compare the tribulation of the characters and those of their own lives. Unlike the literature of “high culture” regional literature is free of verbosity, authentic, and thus, more appealing to audiences. Thus Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory potentially, can be useful texts to catch the attention of audiences due to the meta language, sentiments, and expressions of the common folk and the picturesque themes such as subordination, abuse, job exploitation, identity struggle, political oppression, wife and child neglect, discrimination, and gender stereotyping that are presented in them.

Accordingly, Ermalao Ruberi notes that “Popular songs conform to people’s way of thinking and feeling” (Hoare and Smith 195). In like fashion, Gramsci maintains that “what distinguishes a popular song within the context of a nation and its culture is neither its artistic aspect nor its historical origin, but the way in which it conceives the world and life, in contrast with official society” (195). In light of this, the Calypso which are popular songs informs of the experiences of the common people and so might be a useful medium to teach strategies for resistance against hegemonic oppression.

Norman Whitten and Arlene Torres point out that in the case of women’s songs: “The commentary closely parallels the attitudes that people voice in other social contexts. The emotions that women’s songs express are extremely varied, from tender love to bitter jealousy,

but there is a statistical tendency for them to be more negative than those composed by men.” (Whitten and Torres 247) From this observation, it is imperative for positive Calypso lyrics composed by women themselves to be made available to women, both inside and outside the classroom, so that they can become aware of important gender disparities found in the existing system of western patriarchy. If this phenomenon goes by unnoticed, many women including our students will continue to conform to patriarchal standards without questioning the repressive guises and contradictions.

On the other hand, Postcolonial Criticism is the study of cultural behavior and expression in relationship to the formerly colonized world. Postcolonial criticism refers to the analysis of literary works written by writers from countries and cultures that at one time were controlled by colonizing powers. According to Michael Meyer:

Many of these analyses point out how writers from colonial powers sometimes misrepresent colonized cultures by reflecting more on their own values: Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” represents African culture differently than Chinua Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart” does for example . . . Post colonial criticism represent a broad range of approaches to examining race, gender, and class in historical contexts of cultures (1547).

Antonio Gramsci also supports this view. He points out in his hegemony of western culture over the whole world culture, how European imperialism has imbued all other world cultures with its cultural aesthetics and value systems. For instance he claims that:

Even if one admits that other cultures have had an importance and a significance in the process of “hierarchical” unification of world civilization, they have had a universal value only in so far as they have become constituent elements of

European culture- the only historically and concretely universal culture. That is, as they have contributed to the process of European thought and been assimilated by it (416).

In light of these observations, it would seem that some of the oppression, which faces women and other people of our society stems from our Western Patriarchal Hegemony. Therefore, I believe that Calypso texts of female composers and literary texts such as Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory which are both narrative expressions of the thinking and feeling of common women and men of society, can be used to create awareness and strategies for resistance to oppressive hegemonic forces.

Objectives

The purposes for conducting this thesis are as follows:

1. To examine strategies of resistance used in Calypso lyrics of Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee, and on the strong representations of the heroines in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory so that female subordination could be lessened in our Caribbean Community.
2. To use the understanding of these strategies for resistance presented in Calypso texts by Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie and Queen Bee to lessen gender conflicts in our Caribbean Community.
3. To shed some light on various gender conflicts involving black women such as identity struggle, political struggle, unemployment, and domestication as represented in the texts of Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God, Danticat Breath, Eyes, Memory, and the Calypso Composers: Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee in

order for people of our Caribbean Community to develop an understanding of some strategies for resisting hegemonic oppression.

4. To use the ideas in this thesis to creatively generate methods that could be used by teachers of the wider Caribbean Community to provide empowering educational experiences to their female students through Freireian Pedagogy. Teachers could try to instill within their students, resistance strategies against social pressures.

Methodology

This thesis draws mainly on Feminist and Post Colonial Criticism and Freirian Pedagogy to understand lyrics of Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee highlighting gender issues found therein. Similarly, the following two novels: Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston and Breath, Eyes, Memory by Edwidge Danticat, as primary sources which provide fictional strategies for resistance to female repression will also be analyzed. I will also compare the themes of female subordination and gender disparity in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God with that of Danticats Breath, Eyes, Memory.

Organization of the Chapters

Chapter One provides a justification, objectives, and a description of the methodology used in this thesis. A Review of Literature is provided in Chapter Two to ground the work in its intellectual context. Chapter Three provides an analysis of Calypso lyrics of Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee. Chapter Four compares Janie: the Bad Girl in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God Versus Sophie: The Silenced Girl in Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory. Finally, Chapter Five provides conclusions and

pedagogical implications for women, teachers, and the Department of Education.

Chapter Two Review of Literature

Feminist Criticism

According to Rosemary Tong, feminist criticism “articulates the “highly elaborate” and “deeply entrenched” nature of sex/gender system, but also in sketching out exit routes out of it” (Tong 95). Further, Tong disputes that some radical feminists propose ways to free women from the cage of femininity. These proposals have ranged from working toward an androgynous culture in which male and female differences are minimized to replacing the male centered culture with a female centered culture. One way in which radical feminists have proposed to enable women to escape from male domination is through transforming the institution of heterosexuality so that neither men nor women play a dominant role.

On the other hand, Kate Millet notes in her book Sex Politics that:

Sex is political primarily because the male-female relationship is the paradigm for all power relationships: racial, political, or economic, and unless the clinging to male supremacy as a birthright is finally gone, all systems of oppression will continue to function simply by virtue of their logical and emotional mandate in the primary human situation (96).

Clearly Millet emphasizes the importance of fostering a female identity as an “escape route” from male domination in western culture which seeks to satisfy male interests. They also indicate that gender equity can replace male domination to give women an identity only if heterosexuality is transformed.

Black feminism emerged in the 1970’s and 1980’s and indicates that traditional literary canon has shown little interest in black history, culture, and literature. That the world view about

Africa and people of African origin has been tainted with false racial stereotypes exemplifies this. What this means is that black women's issues have been ignored for too long. Therefore, the following discussion which provides a cross-section of gender, race, and class issues involving black women, should help to further elucidate some findings in the field of black feminist criticism and in black women's struggle for overcoming female subordination and hegemonic oppression.

Accordingly, John R. Willingham notes that black women have been violently attacked in all manner of ways in Western literature and culture in general; thus for them, the personal is even more political than for other women. He also notes that they often reject the classic literary tradition as oppressive and biased in that it only addresses the realities of upper-middle class women who often practice feminism only in order to become part of the patriarchal power structure (Willingham 208). Considering that black women continue to be attacked in Western literature and culture, and the so-called middle class feminists (whose works are canonized), practice feminism for self-serving interests and to become a part of the existing patriarchy, it is disturbing. Clearly, these feminists defeat the purpose of feminism for financial gain. What they are in fact doing is to misrepresent black women and to maintain the Status Quo. Hence black women reject the literary tradition which functions only to achieve the political ends of western hegemonic society. Next I will attempt to define and discuss the role of western hegemony in Black women's oppression.

Hegemony

A Hegemonic society is one with binding rules or norms which influences the values, ideas, and belief systems of the people. According to Antonio Gramsci, Western culture influences all other world cultures.

Even if one admits that other cultures have had an importance and a significance in the process of hierarchal unification of world civilization they have had a universal value in so far as they have become constituent elements of European cultureThey have contributed to the process of European thought and been assimilated by it” (Nowell Smith 416).

Gramsci disputes the fact that Western culture’s intent is to dominate and so it spreads its influence across all other world cultures.

Further, Quintan Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell Smith maintain that:

The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sex question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics (Hoare and Nowell Smith 296).

Hoare and Nowell Smith also see feminist thinking as an avenue for black and other women to escape the social pressures caused by the western hegemony. To Hoare and Nowell Smith gender equity is the single means for the sex question to be rid of its unhealthy characteristics in an oppressive society. Evidence of these unhealthy characteristics is also examined in postcolonial criticism which will be emphasized next.

Post Colonial Criticism

According to Michael Meyer, Post colonialism refers to “the analysis of colonial cultures by writers from the colonizing country. Many of these analyses point out how writers from colonial powers sometimes misrepresent colonized cultures by reflecting more on their own values Post colonial criticism also examines race, gender, and class in historical contexts of

cultures” (Meyer 1547). Here we see that racism, gender, and class systems are maintained by our social and cultural constructions. With this in mind, we should aim for the formation of a feminine identity which as seen by Hoare and Nowell Smith to be “the most important question of an ethical and civil order.” Therefore, it is imperative for black women to become aware of feminist thinking and consciousness to enable them to come to grips with social repression.

Chinua Achebe, a native African and a post colonial writer seeks to address issues of race, gender, and class in Africa in his works: Things Fall Apart, Man of the People, and in his short fiction: “Girls at War.” For instance, in “Girls at War” Achebe points out the following:

Believe me you are a great girl. That was the day he finally believed there might be something in this talk about revolution. He had seen plenty of girls and women marching and demonstrating before now. But somehow he had never been able to give it much thought. He didn’t doubt that the girls and the women took themselves seriously, they obviously did . . . You girls are really at war, aren’t you? . . . That is what you men want us to do. “Well he said, here is one man who doesn’t want you to do that. Do you remember the girl with khaki jeans who searched me without mercy at the checkpoint?” “That is the girl I want you to become again. Do you remember her?” “That time done pass. Now every body wants survival. They call it number six. You put number six; I put number six. Everything all right (Ramraj 8).

Achebe brings into focus the need for a feminist identity in Africa. Because the women in this work are disgruntled with their subdued positions in society they fight back verbally, through marches, and public demonstrations. Clearly, the women in Achebe’s work seem to challenge authority and signal that it is time for a change in their lives. This idea brings us to the realization

that women in Achebe's society may be becoming increasingly more sensitive to the source of their objectification- which is through society's binding dictates and so, wish to become more humanized. According to this viewpoint, Paulo Freire addresses the issue of societal oppression of people in his work: Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Freirian Pedagogy

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, notes in his work: Pedagogy of the Oppressed that for socially oppressed people to become humanized they must at first become liberated:

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and becomes involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human (Freire 65-66).

Freire seems to entreat his fellow humans in Western Culture to wake up and resist the social order that keeps them dehumanized. Thus for oppressed black women to “struggle for their liberation . . .and become more fully human” (65-66), they should resist the social order that oppresses them.

Considering that our students are the future leaders of society then we need to sensitize them to sources of their oppression and offer pedagogy that will enlighten them and help to influence their thinking so that they can resist forms of racial, gender, and class oppression in society. Teachers can use Calypso texts and popular literary texts to bring into class discussions some critical themes such as male infidelity, female subordination, domestic violence, sexual harassment, female exploitation, and commodification of the female body. Additionally, themes of gender disparity, child neglect, child abuse, hegemonic oppression, and hegemonic resistance

could also be raised so that students can become conscious of important race, gender and class issues which affect their lives. Thus, I now consider it appropriate to further discuss the role of society in women's oppression. According to Alice Walker, women's creativity, identity, and mother or sister bonds can serve as rubrics for resisting oppressive structures.

Black Women's use of Creativity, Identity, and the Mother and Sister Bonds in Grappling with Social Repression

Alice Walker stresses the importance of the black female identity and creativity as tools to grapple with social oppression. For example, she maintains in her essay: "In Search of our Mother's Gardens" that many black women have always asserted their creativity:

Therefore, we must fearlessly pull out of ourselves and look at and identify with our lives the living creativity some of our great-grandmothers were not allowed to know. I stress some of them because it is well known that the majority of our Great-grandmothers knew, even without "knowing" it the reality of their spirituality. Even if they didn't recognize it beyond what happened in singing at church- and they never had any intention of giving up that creativity (Walker 166).

Clearly Walker affirms her "womanist" stand and advocates for today's Black women to go back to the old "ways" of knowing to discover coping mechanisms for some of their stresses. And, she suggests that they may overcome some of the newer challenges that are presented each day of their lives by such methods. It is also evident, that she is in strong support of female creativity and spirituality that work hand in hand as agents of women's empowerment. In short, women can devise creative ways to survive each day of their lives where their deep faith and convictions may serve as driving forces to keep their struggles alive. As stated in the introduction, once

women become empowered with resistant abilities to society' stereotypes they would be better able to bring about radical changes, not only in their personal lives, but they would be able to heavily influence the attitudes of others towards them.

Similarly, Toni Morrison points out in the article "Black Matters" that her work requires her to think about how free she can be as an African-American woman writer in her tenderized, sexualized, wholly racialized society (Morrison 4). What she appears to mean is thus: that she has had to deal with the problem of her work becoming acceptable in the face of an antagonizing society. Morrison goes on to add that her project to explore "how free she can be as an African-American woman writer in her tenderized, sexualized, racist society" does not rise from delight nor disappointment but from the intriguing manner in which writers tell stories to secretly fight social wars:

My project rises from delight, not from disappointment. It rises from what I know about the ways writers transform aspects of their social grounding into aspects of language, and the ways they tell stories fight secret wars, limn out all sorts of debates blanketed in their text. And rises from my certainty that writers always know at some level they do this (4).

Then she maintains that for some time she has been thinking about the validity or vulnerability of a certain set of assumptions conventionally accepted among literary historians and critics and circulated as "knowledge" (5). She asserts that:

This knowledge holds that traditional canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first, Africans and then, African-Americans in the United States. It assumes that this presence which shaped the body politic, the constitution, and the entire history of

the culture has had no significant place or consequence in the origin and development of that culture's literature (5).

Like Walker, Morrison attempts to address the social status of African-Americans who still suffer from historic trauma and languish for recognition. Undoubtedly, her thesis can be applicable to the cause of her sister Black women many who continue to be traumatized, socially repressed, and fight against all odds to secure a space in society. It would also seem that the literary canon does not inform us about the invaluable contribution Black people make to the shaping of society. From this observation, it would seem that Black writers and artists are fighting a losing battle. But this observation should be reason enough for them to vigorously continue their struggle for literary and cultural recognition. Clearly, black women should tell their own stories as Morrison says and should try to escape what seems to be life in "life in the shadows." By practicing subtle forms of resistance in the form of storytelling and by using some of the coping strategies which their African mothers used during the times of African enslavement black women's journey to escape oppression could be started.

As a case in point, Audrey Lord asks us to seek the black mother in each of us. "We should rely on "intuitive" language rather than literary analysis, to see African culture's emphasis upon the mother-bond as an alternative to white patriarchal culture's way of thinking" (Labor and Willingham 209-210). Additionally, Olson and Hirsh further add to our understanding. In an interview they conducted with bell hooks when they asked her: "Do you believe sisterhood can be a viable concept for feminist movement in the 1990's? How should it be understood today?" hooks responded as follows:

If we are to continue our progressive movements for change and to welcome diversity and multiculturalism, solidarity has to become a more central agenda.

For me sisterhood always has been a rubric for talking about feminist theoretical construction of solidarity. And it seems to me that we need to return that discussion to our thinking . . . I am thinking particularly about work that has been very negative toward the idea of experience, the use of experience (Olson and Hirsh 122-123).

For hooks sisterhood is the rubric for Black women's resistance to the various oppressive social structures. That hooks should mention 'the use of experience' to be a viable medium for constructing feminist solidarity it suggests that one should not overlook the importance of past experience of Black mothers and sisters in the struggle against black women's oppression.

Then Olson and Hirsch asked hooks:

You make the point in *Ain't I a Woman* that feminist rhetoric often deploys an analogy between "women" as an oppressed group and "blacks. And this analogy "unwittingly" caused people to suggest that to them, the term 'woman' is synonymous with 'white women' and the term 'black' synonymous with 'black men,' thereby creating a sexist-racist attitude toward black women" Do you believe that feminist rhetoric has changed since you first wrote this?"

In answer to this question, hooks responded as follows:

What disturbs me about this new trend is that I do feel we have made major changes in feminist theory and that people were really working to be inclusive, to try to think from different positions. But it's very easy for people to undermine those intentions that I do believe were made. Feminist rhetoric was changing. It disturbs me a lot that neither Susan Faludi's book nor Naomi Wolf's book shows any awareness of the push to think about differences of race, class, and gender.

They both reconstruct the kind of monolithic category of woman even though Wolf has some analysis in the footnotes (that's in *The Beauty Myth*) of differences for black women (123).

It would seem then, that black women's realities are not being addressed by many writers particularly, white feminists. Thus hooks appears to strongly support the view that black women should unite and go back to the old ways of using "the mother and sister-bonds" to resist oppression from white supremacy that is implicitly present in the tenets of white feminism. In fact, that Walker and Morrison also seem to think along these lines suggests that there may be a considerable degree of relevance to hooks' argument. Furthermore, that hooks should emphasize Fauldi and Wolf's failure to include an analysis of race, class, and gender in the feminist reviews of their works suggests the need for more women writers to closely examine the realities of marginalized groups of women and other persons. Rather than looking at some women or all people as a monolithic group, the unique experiences of various groups should be dealt with. In essence, if these realities are not examined then, the question here would be thus: Do black women really exist? And will the scourge of "black" as inferior, ugly, and sub-human ever be reversed? I will now attempt to explain what the motivation for the labels that are placed on black women might be.

Racial Stereotypes and the Commodification of Black Women's Bodies

bell hooks in her book [Black Looks](#) helps us to understand what the motivation might be:

As we enter the dessert place, they all burst into laughter and point to a row of gigantic chocolate breasts complete with nipples-huge edible tits. They think this is a delicious idea seeing no connection between this racialized image and the racism expressed in the entryway. Living in a world where white folks are no

longer nursed and nurtured primarily by black female caretakers they do not look at these symbolic breasts and consciously think about ‘mammies.’ They do not see this representation of chocolate breasts as a sign of displaced long for a racist past when the bodies of black women were commodities available to anyone white who could pay the price (Helming 106).

Again one realizes that black women continue to be objectified and used mainly for their sexual attributes and clearly their bodies seem to be one of the catalysts which perpetuate capitalism. Accordingly, Michel Foucault claims that whether it is “the proletariat” “women” or the “oppressed,” they are mirror images that merely recreate and sustain the discourse of power” (O’Barn, Malson, and West Phal-Wile 308). From these observations, it would seem then that Black women’s oppression and subordination are the result of the struggle for power; and money, the “God” of power seems to be at the heart of it all. Furthermore, it can be observed that the patriarchal capitalists retain their power by targeting Black women and other oppressed groups of people. To elucidate the degree to which Black women are exploited in the structure of capitalism, I will now discuss how their struggle is extended in the marketplace.

Black Women and Struggle in the Cultural Context of Western Patriarchy

Clearly, Black women’s struggle is extended in the marketplace. For example, Marilyn French notes that “in western art for example, the commodities are designed to appeal to male buyers. The ultimate consumer is always presumed to be male, even in advertisements directed at women” (French 161). Here again one notices an example of male prowess in western culture and the appeals used to get this attention rests on the commodification of women.

For another example, Nancy J. Chodorow affirms that women’s oppression is social and not psychological. “It is concerned with wage inequity, job segregation, rape, wife abuse, the

unequal sexual division of labor in the home, and men's power over women" (Chodorow 167). Here we get the picture that women's subordination is caused by the culture they live in. Due to Western culture's chief function, which is economic, we find that women and other socially challenged groups remain marginalized as a capitalist stratagem.

For yet another example, Gita Sen challenges us that "the cultural subordination of women has reinforced male control of resources and power, and the divisions of labor have enshrined male privilege. While gender-based systems of subordination have been transformed by economic growth, commercialization, and market expansion, subordination persists" (Sen 28). What this persistence suggests is that our western culture functions primarily for economic reasons and at the expense of women. Thus, the consequence of this cultural model makes it imperative to subordinate women in order for the patriarchal capitalists to predominate. Zermarie Deacon confirms this point in stating that women are contracted into positions of subordination by performing the labor necessary for the upkeep of the home and society by virtue of their lesser status to men. "Women are thus oppressed as they perform the labor necessary for the upkeep of society at their own expense; in other words, they relinquish a level of control over their lives and freedom in order to perform their domestic duties" (Deacon 224).

Clearly, Deacon suggests that black and women in general, are seen mainly for their marketing value in our society. By performing their household duties, unconsciously, many women are self-sacrificing to help in the maintenance of a patriarchal society, which seems to be one of the major reasons for their subordination. As a case in point, Benson argues that women produce classes both biologically and psychologically. "Women biologically reproduce both the working and the ruling classes necessary for the upkeep of capitalism, but they also reproduce individual workers and individual capitalists" (Benson 196). Here Benson draws our attention to

some very critical issues with regard to woman's role in biological reproduction and production in the capitalist market. It is indeed interesting since, ordinarily, one might never think of one's children as potential commodities that also perpetuate capitalism. In other words, Benson seems to be challenging women to limit their family sizes as a possible strategy for resisting female subordination and hegemonic oppression. Historically, the black woman's right to their own children and control over the numbers of children she chose to have has been a problem.

Further, the demeaning part about these power issues in the case of black women is the realization that while there have been considerable economic changes in their societies they still remain marginalized. The fact that it was black women's very breasts which nurtured the offspring of many white children whose parents did not seem to have the time do so, as indicated by bell hooks, and no recognition is given in praise of their services, it is highly disturbing. Yet, the media continues to portray black women and their physical attributes in a negative sense. What's more, disturbing is the fact that it was with their very black hands that black women slaved to help keep the mainstream society afloat. Thus, it is high time that more black women become aware of the negatives that circulate about them and address these negatives for themselves. By becoming aware of these negatives, they can challenge society's negative thinking through demonstrating their resentment of their inaccurate portrayals.

Carolyn Heilbrun suggests one way which women can escape society's pressures. She insists that the most talented women should not be in women's groups but in men's groups where the power lies (Heilbrun 199). It should be pointed out here that in order for our black women to challenge society's negative thinking those who are critical and independent thinkers should become a part of men's groups "where the power lies," according to Heilbrun. Once those women become a part of the men's groups they can be a voice that challenges male biases and

simultaneously, by example, they can also call on their black sisters to challenge society's repressive stereotypes so that they can become "socially liberated" according to Paulo Freire, already mentioned.

Lindsay German also insists that "women's liberation can come only through a collective world struggle to change the exploitative system and bring in a socialist society based on production for need not for profit, co-operation, not competition" (German 1). This means that black women need to integrate their efforts so that they can challenge capitalist social structures on all fronts. Because capitalism functions mainly for economic reasons and thus thrives on women, the poor, and other oppressed classes of society, black women need to resist by challenging the basis of all social institutions. These institutions include marriage, the home, education, religion and others that repress them; and which are not easily detectable because of the insidious norms.

Equally important, today's black women should acquire a sound knowledge and an understanding of some of the past struggles of enslaved African women and become sensitive to the strategies they utilized for resisting subordination and hegemonic oppression. For instance, enslaved African women, the maternal ancestors of today's Black women resisted oppression by creating consciousness so that their people would not continue to conform to the hegemonic norms that oppressed them. They seemed to particularly revere the "mother" and "sister" bonds which seemed to serve as unifying devices against oppression, even as pointed out earlier, by Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Audrey Lord. Thus, knowledge of the complex struggles of their maternal African ancestors seems to be necessary for black women as models for building appropriate relations. It is becoming increasingly necessary for black women to see the need to unite so that they can overcome in their struggle against subordination and oppression in today's

society by using all manner of tools. One of the major tools against women's oppression that this thesis advocates are strategies for resistance to hegemonic norms. These strategies are used by female calypso composers namely Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie and Queen Bee; and heroines in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory, strategies, which will be discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4. But first, I consider it crucial to examine another important aspect of women's struggle against societal oppression.

Black Women and Struggle through Popular Music and Novels

As stated, Black women's struggle involves the use of all manner of tools. Accordingly, James Cone maintains that:

Black music unites the joy and the sorrow, the love and the hate and the despair of black people and it moves the people toward the direction of total liberation. It shapes and defines black being and creates cultural structures for black expression. Black music is unifying because it confronts the individual with the truth of black existence and affirms that black being is possible only in a communal context (Braxton and McLaughlin 4).

Here Cone points out the usefulness of black music. It would seem then that the Calypso music ties black people together culturally and they should use it as a medium to keep them psychologically bonded to their African forbears who lived united with each other. W. E. B. Dubois also points out, "through all the sorrow songs- there breathes a hope- a faith in the ultimate justice of things" (Dubois 206). Here one can infer that the calypso music in addition to its entertainment purposes, can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation to sensitize and soothe the aching emotions of an oppressed people like countless women folk who cry out for

relief from their subordinated positions in world society. Dubois also maintains that:

These songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world. They tell us in these eager days that life was joyous to the black slave . . . they are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment, and they tell of death and suffering an unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways (199-200).

Here Dubois claims that the songs of the black slave are folkloric and are true expressions of their emotions through which they breathe hope and faith in the face of their oppression and suffering. Similarly, black women's songs can be useful instruments which tell of their sufferings and can also breathe hope on their struggle in the social marketplace.

In addition, Ermalao Ruberi indicates that "popular songs are composed by the people for the people . . . But which the people adopt because they conform to their way of thinking and feeling" (Forgacs, and Nowell Smith, 195). We notice that Popular songs seem to have the potentiality to receive the response of the people since they are composed by the common people themselves for their purposes and not for the purposes of authority. Even so, Forgacs and Nowell Smith further indicate that "regional literature too, has been essentially folkloric and picturesque (202) . . . The popular novel and musical geniuses have the kind of popularity which many writers lack" (378). Here we see that literature similarly, has the ability to appeal to the masses of people because it informs about their common struggles, emotions, and thinking. In like fashion then, contemporary texts which inform about the experiences and tribulations of ordinary people seem to have the potentiality to breathe hope on the nation of black women and hopefully, get their response. Therefore, it might be feasible for texts by Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie and Queen Bee, coupled with Zora Neale Hurston's

Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory which express the emotions of sorrow and regret can be used to create awareness about women's subordinate treatment. Simultaneously, they might provide some useful mediums for opposing the same.

Equally important, Norman Whitten and Arlene Torres inform that:

The commentary in women's songs closely parallels the attitudes that people voice in other social contexts. The emotions that women's songs express are extremely varied, from tender love to bitter jealousy, but there is a statistical tendency for them to be more negative than those composed by men (Whitten and Torres 247).

Clearly, women like numerous other people are disgruntled with the repression they endure.

Women's songs are folkloric in nature and this means that ordinary women compose them for ordinary women and people of our society. But the fact that they tend to be more negative than those composed by men it shows that women try to voice their discontentment with their subordinate positions in a male-dominated western society. Simply, women seem to be attempting to resist social repression by speaking out in popular songs that naturally reflect their "thinking and feelings" according to Ruberi, and this is important for stirring consciousness about their grievances.

Forgacs and Nowell Smith maintain that "the popular culture music has to some extent substituted that artistic expression which is provided by the popular novel and that musical geniuses have had the kind of popularity which writers have lacked" (378). From this observation, it would seem that popular musical expressions such as the Calypso speak for the masses of people- the ordinary folk and so far outweigh the written expressions of many sophisticated writers, whose work primarily reflect the cultural impulses of high society. On the

contrary, popular music reflects and tells about the true experiences, realities, and thinking of the common woman and man. In fact, people can even relate to the tribulations of writers whose work is not verbose, but rather realistic and more appealing to audiences. For a prime example of this, Langston Hughes' music and poems are considered to be folkloric since they appeal to ordinary people. Likewise, texts by Calypso composers and writers whose work seem to inform about the struggles of ordinary folk can be used to create awareness and instill within Black women resistant abilities.

Furthermore, J. Storey indicates that Popular Culture, has been the object of feminist analysis because cultural politics are crucially important to feminism as they involve struggles and meaning. "It is not enough to dismiss popular culture as merely serving the complementary systems of Capitalism and Patriarchy, peddling "false consciousness" to the duped masses. It can also be seen as a site where meanings are contested and where dominant ideologies can be disturbed" (Storey 129). Here one notices that mass productions of popular culture can be very useful forms of dialoguing about oppressive hegemonic systems. Perhaps our Black women can draw on those aspects of popular cultural and artistic expressions that contest our existing dominant hegemonic systems. Black women can draw on texts that provide resistance strategies by female Calypso composers and ordinary heroines in Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston and Breath, Eyes, Memory by Edwidge Danticat. In these texts, women figures contest the ideologies of the dominant culture or hegemony through their defiance of societal expectations principally, of mothers, aunts, husbands, and friends quite contrary to popular view. At this point, I will proceed to explore the role of the maternal ancestry in the contemporary novel and in the work of Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory.

The Maternal Ancestry in the Contemporary Novel and in the Works of Zora Neale Hurston, and Edwidge Danticat

Joanne Braxton and Andree Nicola McLaughlin acknowledge that:

The ancestral figure most common in the work of contemporary writers is an outraged mother... Not only does the ancestor figure lend a “benevolent, instructive, and protective” presence to the text She passes on her feminine wisdom for the good of the “tribe” and the survival of all Black people, especially those in the African Diaspora created by the Atlantic Slave Trade (300).

Clearly, Braxton and McLaughlin also appear to support the view that the mother-bond and unity that could preserve the nation of black people from oppression and, undoubtedly, might be a useful mechanism to help resolve gender struggles.

Similarly, William Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris seem to revere unity (be it racial, mother or sister bonds) as a useful device by which black women and men can grapple with the problem of oppression. For example, they maintain that “Black Nationalism which grew out of American enslavement of Africans . . . presupposes that African Ancestry unifies blacks as a group to overcome the ill effects of their common experience of oppression.” They further point out that “the racial bond serves as the unifying thread” of Black Nationalism (76). Here one can see a direct link to the unifying mother-bond line of thought advanced by Alice Walker, and the sister-bond advanced by bell hooks, and to the Black Nationalism. It would seem then, that Andrews, Smith Foster and Harris concertedly recommend that oppressed blacks, (particularly women, who are forced to struggle with the scourge of gender discrimination) should use unity as a resistance medium against their subordination and hegemonic oppression. Similarly, Harry Middleton Hyatt indicates the work of Zora Neale

Hurston (the predecessor of Walker and hooks) also supported a maternal ancestry. For example, he maintains that “the deeply satisfying aspect of the re-discovery of Zora Neale Hurston’s work is that black women generated it to establish a maternal literary ancestry” (Hurston 196).

V. P Franklin also points out the importance of Zora Neale Hurston’s experiences with black folk culture and expressions and the role this played in informing her work as a woman writer. “Black culture and expressions instilled in her an appreciation for the intelligence and creativity of the black masses that was in sharp contrast to the contemporary preoccupation with the “pathology of black life” found in the social science literature and the works of some African-American literary artists” (Franklin 213). What one realizes here is that Hurston was emphasizing the pathological nature of black life and culture due to the oppression caused to black people by the mainstream culture. She seems to have been addressing the issues facing the common folk of her community which does not exclude Black women, who perhaps were at the heart of her concerns. Hence it may be safe to deduce that the experiences that Janie Crawford, the protagonist in Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God, help to manifest Hurston’s vision and ideal for black women of her time. That Janie Crawford struggles for her freedom from social pressures by running away from Eatonville to elope with Tea-Cake, her young lover and she returns feeling satisfied and happy despite the name-calling, stares, and criticism she receives from her dogmatic neighbors exemplifies this. Hurston seems to have wished for some major social and political changes for black women of her native hometown of Eatonville.

Even so, Braxton and McLaughlin point out that “Hurston aimed for an intellectual portrait of the black female self . . . and has created alternate versions of the black female self that go well beyond refuting the negative stereotypes of black women in much of American Literature She chose to create a self, molded out of the certainties of her own being and

concerns with ideas connected to a larger world outside of herself' (279). According to Braxton and McLaughlin, it would seem that Hurston was sensitive to the gender stereotyping and limits women of her society were facing due to some larger social problems, such as class and race struggle. As a case in point, Michael Meyer stresses that:

The single most glaring fault Black Americans find with Southern Literature by white writers is in the psychology and philosophy which of necessity in most instances is racist. This has to be understood in terms of the society, the values emphasized in American education, the nature of slavery and segregation . . . which kept the races apart, . . . and have ostracized the artistic accomplishments of Black people and ignored their literature The earliest writers were fighting a racial battle. The white writers were making apologies for slavery and the Black writers protesting against the inhumanity of the slave system. . . With the substitution of segregation, the white child was educated to regard race as more important than humanity and the Black child was educated to imitate a white world as superior to his and thus taught to hate himself. The battle and conflict can be seen in the literature (Meyer 454).

Here one can infer that Hurston being a Black woman writer was also attempting to address the issue of racism and help to tell the true stories of Black women and men.

Andrews, Foster Smith, and Harris also claim that the Harlem Renaissance, the period of social and racial rebirth for black people in the United States ushered in more assertive and more militant black nationalists, such as Zora Neale Hurston. "These nationalists exemplify the shift from the turn of the century black nationalism which often promoted a racial uplift founded on white constructions of civilization"(Andrews, Foster Smith, and Harris 78). What this implies is

that, through Black Nationalism, black writers and artists began to celebrate vital aspects of African-American life that had been previously ignored and regarded as primal and uncivilized. V. P Franklin exemplifies my point. For instance he claims that Zora Neale Hurston was interested in exploring those elements of her personal experience that defined her as an individual. “The work was filled with statements about her ideals; it just did not examine political ideologies” (Franklin 209). Here again one can also infer that Hurston was attempting to address the negative stereotypes of her Black women and men for herself. Probably she wanted to redefine the Black woman’s character which was tainted with false racial stereotypes. Now that I have discussed the maternal ancestry in the work of Zora Neale Hurston’s work, I will explain the role of mothers and sisters in influencing the ideals of young women in Edwidge Danticat’s work Breath, Eyes, Memory yet at the same time, in aiding to subordinate them.

The Maternal Ancestry in Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory

Similarly, Edwidge Danticat seems to help define the character of her Haitian women in Breath, Eyes, Memory by maintaining that through her writing she wanted to create an awareness of some of her experiences for audiences. “I wanted to raise the voice of a lot of the people I knew growing up, and this was for the most part... poor people who had extraordinary dreams but also very amazing obstacles” (Danticat 1). When asked why she decided to write Breath, Eyes, Memory Danticat points out that:

I wanted to discuss some themes that concerned me I wanted to include some of the political realities of Haiti-- as a young girl felt and interpreted them--and how that affected ordinary people, the way that people tried to carry on their daily lives even under a dictatorship or post-dictatorship. Finally, I wanted to deal with mother-daughter relationships and the way that mothers sometimes attempt to

make themselves the guardians of their daughter's sexuality (7).

In addition, when asked if she thought that the mothers' concern with their daughters' sexuality, the concern for virginity as expressed in the novel Breath, Eyes, Memory is something that is particularly and singularly Haitian, Danticat entreats us that:

The testing in the book, for example, goes back to the Virgin Mary. If you look at the apocryphal gospels, after the Virgin Mary gives birth to the Christ child, a midwife comes and tries to test her virginity by insertion . . . The family in the book was never meant to be a "Typical" Haitian family, if there is ever a typical Haitian family in any culture. The family is very much Haitian, but they live their own internal and individual matriarchal reality and they worship the Virgin Mary and the Haitian Goddess Erzulie in many interesting forms. The essential thing to all the mothers in the book is to try, in their own way, to be the best mothers they can be, given their circumstances, because they want their daughters to go further in life than they did themselves (7).

From these accounts one can see how Danticat points out key examples of female subordination and hegemonic oppression which face countless women in her Haitian society as well as in other societies and cultures. Here Danticat reveals how the concept of testing for a woman's virginity by insertion dates back to the apocryphal gospels, in which the Virgin Mary is tested after giving birth to Jesus. So, we can see that the concept of testing for a woman's virginity is a long-standing tradition which is influenced by Biblical standards. Thus, mothers today continue the same legacy in one form or another by subordinating their daughters to ensure that they remain chaste until they are married which is perceived to be the sublime. And clearly we notice that although the mother bond seems to be a useful a rubric for resistance to oppressive structures as

mentioned by Alice Walker, it also seems to have a very diminishing effect for many women in Danticat's society, as well as in other societies. Thus, the question here would be as follows: How far could one go with using the mother bond as a rubric for women's resistance to insidious social structures? Should one use the mother bond along with several other rubrics for resistance or should the mother bond be ruled out completely? It would seem that in some instances the mother bond is quite strong a force against oppression while in others, it is that very bond that subordinates many young women. For instance, in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes Memory Sophie, the protagonist, is supported and protected by her mother Martine, and her Grandme. Yet at the same time, they are the ones who forcibly attempt to subdue her into a timid, pliable, creature. But Sophie rebels against this subjective treatment. Conversely, however, Danticat also indicates some strategies that women could utilize to resist subjective treatment and gender stereotyping in the sentences that follow.

Examples of Gender Neutrality, Respect, and Solidarity in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes Memory

For example, the protagonist of Danticat's work Breath, Eyes, Memory, Sophie, is told about a cultural association known as "Potluck" in which she was socialized in gender relations of the Haitian past. She is told this legend by one of her maternal figures, Taunte Atie, who recalls the time when women and men lived united in their native town, Croix Des Rossets:

Back then a whole village would get together and clear a field for planting. The group would take turns clearing each person's land, until all the land in the village was cleared and planted. The women would cook large amounts of food while the men worked. Then at sunset, when the work was done, every one would gather and enjoy a feast of eating, dancing, and laughter . . . in spite of where they might

live, this potluck was open to everybody who wanted to come . . . the workers used their friendships . . . Or their groupings in the common yards as a reason to get together, eat, and celebrate life (11).

Clearly, the Potluck festival not only offered an opportunity for the ordinary people to make merry, but it allowed for discussion of critical social issues, gender neutrality, and solidarity.

For another example of gender neutrality and respect to women in Breath, Eyes, Memory, Danticat notes that in the cane fields, the men sang songs, once they were belted at by the old “konbits” or older women of the community of Croix Des Rosettes. For instance, Sophie’s Grandme Ife was greeted by some workmen as “Bonjou Grandme Ife” and she responded to them as “Bonjou good men” (115). Clearly this was a sign of respect and honor to the senior women of the community. Here one also notices some prime examples of events that could be utilized to model what gender relations today should be like. Admittedly, here it can be seen that Danticat creates an atmosphere of freedom, unity, and respect in these excerpts of her work.

Furthermore, the women and men in Danticat’s excerpt appear to be united through their open socialization in the common yards. This type of socialization could serve to be an excellent example for women and men of our society to pattern as a strategy that expresses resistance to some of today’s oppressive gender norms. And it should be mentioned that “the Potluck” celebration seems to be a very similar to the celebrations used by enslaved Africans on slave plantations on several Caribbean islands during pre-emancipation as well as post-emancipation years. Thus, at this time I consider it necessary to make a sojourn to Black women’s use of Cariso as a viable medium that conflicted with mainstream standards during pre as well as in post emancipation years. Hopefully, this sojourn will help to elucidate the historic trauma aforementioned in Chapter 1, that scores of Black women have experienced as an inherent part

and parcel of their ongoing struggle for identity, space, and voice in the social, cultural, and political contexts of the wider English speaking Caribbean.

Black Women and Protest in Cariso during Pre and Post Emancipation Years in Trinidad

Sophia Lamson notes that during pre-emancipation years enslaved women used Cariso singing as a form of protest to enable them to overcome some of the oppression they experienced during enslavement. Lamson indicates that:

Male negroes played Calinda a sport which involved the use of long, hard-wood sticks in pairs, trios, or quartets while females were always present with refreshments for the males and for singing the choruses meanwhile they performed ludicrous dances extemporaneously. These choruses were called Cariso. Cariso was purely a female song. No males sang these songs (Lamson 1957).

Here one notices a strong example of the sort of subtle forms of resistance and double entendre the enslaved women and men used to outwit and hence undermine the ruling hegemony on slave plantations.

Anna Goetrich also points out that female calypsonians during the Jamette era (French Colonization of Trinidad) were forced to register as prostitutes and they were subject to the Contagious Disease Ordinance because of their unstinting efforts to resist the norms of the planter hegemony. She claims that:

Any female accused of prostitution . . . (especially if she frequented the stick yards) was forced to register as a prostitute and subject to periodic examinations . . . If they failed to co-operate they were isolated, labeled as criminals, and continually harassed by the law. Worst still, they could be sent to prison if they

were caught singing Cariso (Goetrich 23).

Here one sees that the enslaved women appeared to be ready and resilient to carry on their Cariso performances regardless of the consequences from the ruling hegemony.

Hollis Liverpool also notes that in post-emancipation times the Carnival preparations around 1852 in Trinidad, there was a Negro Ball in which Negro ladies dressed in handkerchiefs and beads as large as gooseberries and wore skirts of all colors and danced with a set of ludicrous evolutions that baffle descriptions. And he goes on to add that for “Carnival preparations in Carnival tents and for the Dame Lorraine Festival, women made “Jerkinings”, courtesies, and “genuflections” and one in which women would throw the hem of their “Druillette” (skirts) over both their arms. Throwing their skirts over their arms was a way of sexually taunting Frenchmen who once had the use of their bodies but who could no longer claim the possession of them. Liverpool concludes that the displays were a part of the African transcript” (Liverpool 260). In essence, it would seem that the Dame Loraine Festival allowed the enslaved women to have some sense of autonomy since they openly made sexually taunting exhibits before the Frenchmen who previously used their bodies. Perhaps what is more important is the fact that they were publicly demonstrating their determination to resist oppression from the Frenchmen.

For another example of the enslaved women’s resistance to their ruling hegemony, Sophie Lamson further points out that “on St. Thomas Virgin Islands, the slaves met in the hills to sing, drum, . . . and incidentally plan rebellion. These dances were known as “Bamboula” and were usually led by women known as “Queens” (Lamson 1957). Here one discovers that the “Queens” of the Virgin Islands appear to have played a very similar role to the Cariso performers of Trinidad. One also notices how the Cariso performers appeared to have seen the urgency and importance of working as a unified force with fellow enslaved men in an attempt to secure their

freedom from hegemonic oppression. For yet another example of enslaved women's attempts to resist hegemonic oppression, Keith Warner informs that Gros Jean, of Martinique who settled in Trinidad during the 18th century, allowed enslaved women to sing Cariso in his cave court" (Warner 9). Again one realizes that the Cariso singers seemed to be fighting against all odds to resist subordination from the oppressive planter hegemony.

It should also be pointed out here that the female participants of Cariso shared a similar fate and a similar struggle with that of their fellow female slaves on the African-American plantations. That is to say, they seemed to work together for the total benefit of their people. By their participation in the African-American Negro Spirituals black women in America have also demonstrated their resistance strategies against hegemonic oppression in the form of songs and music.

Accordingly, Andrews, Smith Foster, and Harris also point out very some important aspects about our black ancestors, their music, and their lives even as do Lamson and Goetrich. For instance Andrews, Smith Foster, and Harris note that the expressions of black people in the form of Negro Spirituals, Blues and Jazz serve as "powerful symbols or proof of suffering, survival, social communication, and identity, in an oppressive environment" (84). Quite similarly, the Cariso [calypso] could be seen as a symbol of the suffering, survival, social communication, and identity for the female composers and countless of other Afro-Caribbean women.

On the other hand, Andrews, Foster Smith, and Harris also point out the significance of "the Blues Idiom Style" that depends upon a use of stream of consciousness narrative technique. According to Foster et al "the Blues Idiom Style" reproduces the Call-and-Response or theme and variations structure of blues and jazz music as an agent in combating oppression" (88).

Unquestionably then, the stream of consciousness narrative technique seems to be a powerful defense mechanism against oppression. In this sense then, the narrative technique might prove to be an effective defense mechanism against sexism and oppression.

For a prime example, Andrea Shaw advances the significance of using the narrative technique in creating consciousness against oppression. She states that “the Calypso performances resist the pervasive objectification of the black female body in both Caribbean and North American cultures since the gyrations and scantily clad bodies offend the religiously underscored Western behavioral norms of society” (Shaw 4). It seems that the Calypso then has been seen as a tool for women to resist hegemonic tendencies. Even more, David Johnson maintains that “Calypso singers throughout the 20th century have often used their music as a form of political and social protest, making fun of government leaders or reflecting on local conditions” (2). Johnson too seems to share the view that the Calypso challenges hegemonic tendencies. Andrea Shaw further claims that “the Calypso is historically associated with the colonial resistance and presents a perpetual challenge to neocolonial cultural norms” (1). Shaw goes on to add that:

During slavery as part of the Christmas Jookoon festivities, set girls paraded through the streets of Jamaica festooned in elaborate clothing and competed with each other to see who was the best dressed. These set girls as well as Jamette singers have left their legacy of spectacular behavior that manifests itself in both carnival and Calypso The astonishing gyrations of these women simultaneously attracted the public’s attention and its disgruntlement (1-2).

But we must question why the female Jamette performers should be resented. What seems to be the issue at hand here is the issue of womanhood. Culturally speaking, women are usually

perceived to be flowery, delicate, and silent creatures. In line with these cultural constructs for women, Sigrid Wiegel argues that “woman embodies femaleness, that is to say, her body is defined and pinpointed as the locus of femaleness in the male order” (Malson, O’Barn, and West Phal-Wile 166). Of course, the question here is why femaleness should be determined by the characteristics of a woman’s body. Clearly such thinking shows how crippling the issue of gender stereotyping can be.

Because the Jamette festival portrayed women to be the direct opposite of flowery, delicate, and silent creatures, they seemed to be determined, tough, lascivious, and unyielding in their attempts to resist the planters’ dictates. Unquestionably then, the Cariso [Calypso] would be seen as debauched, lewd, and lecherous since the creators of this genre were affirming a valuable aspect of their womanhood, African character and culture. Simultaneously, they were challenging and undermining the dictates of the paternalistic planter and ruling classes. Thus there seems to be substantial historical evidence of the instrumental role played by black enslaved women in seeking retribution for the injustices they suffered due to oppressive hegemonic norms. The singing of Cariso [Calypso], coupled with the artful gyrations of their bodies, appear to be empowering weapons for fighting the dominant hegemony. Again, what is also revealed is their wit and their unique African creativity. Black women seemed to possess extraordinary genius and resistant abilities since they resisted the oppressive structure of slave society in the following ways. First, that many of the Jamette singers and dancers were branded as prostitutes by authority and could be sent to prison once they were caught singing Cariso (Goetrich 23). Second, that they persisted to sing Calypso at best, despite colonial ordinances it reveals the unique strength they possessed.

Perhaps what is more important is the fact that these women were able to carry on the

Cariso displays while enslaved African men played Calinda, a sport which involved the use of long hard-wood sticks in pairs, trios, or quartets in harmony (Lamson 1957). It would also seem that the enslaved women and men showed little signs of gender biases. It would even seem that the enslaved women were using their voices and bodily movements, not for reasons of power, but instead to symbolize their freedom because, back in Africa, women and men seemed to live harmoniously. Oludah Equiano's slave narrative for instance, infers that African women and men lived united with each other and free from bondage:

I was trained up from my earliest years in the acts of agriculture and war; and my mother adorned me with emblems, after the manner of our greatest warriors. In this way I grew up until I turned the age of eleven, when an end was put to my happiness in the following manner: - . . . they sometimes took opportunities of our parents absence to attack and carry off as many as they could seize . . . without giving us time to cry out , or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, and ran off with us in the nearest woods (Equiano 1789).

Here it should be pointed out that, although there seems to be evidence of patriarchy in African culture women also played leading roles. Equiano's statements exemplify the significant role played by his mother in adorning him with his warrior emblems and the degree of unity and happiness that existed in his African home.

Then naturally, the Cariso performances that not only united enslaved women and men but served as an escape route from slave bondage would be met with open resentment and protest from the mainstream society. In other words, for the enslaved women and men to be united it meant that they would gain power to resist the oppression caused them by the institution of slavery. Thus, the Cariso displays that resisted hegemonic standards are still seen as offensive

and resented by many people of Caribbean society particularly, in the case of women Calypso composers.

Present-day Resentment to Calypso Performances by Women in Caribbean Society

One example of present-day resentment to the Calypso in Caribbean society and particularly women composers, is the following: Gordon Rohlehr, a popular calypso critic of Trinidad and Tobago maintains that “the bawdy language and gestures of the women in the street have been pushed to a degree of wantonness. This wantonness cannot be surpassed, and which must not be tolerated” (Shaw, 6). Here it can be seen that Rohlehr like many people have strong reservations about the pattern of conduct women should display in public. Interestingly though, one wonders why should women be seen as angels in the public’s eye and yet many men wish for them to be aggressive sexual partners in private. Here there seems to be a contradiction in the expectations of many men for women. Admittedly, their expectations for the female to vacillate from one mode of behavior to another ever so often can be most perplexing for many women.

For another example of present-day resentment from mainstream society toward women in Calypso that exemplifies my point, Patricia Mohammed argues that:

A brief examination of the lyrics of some calypsos over the last decade shows not only how sexual relations are being affected by the changing circumstances of women, but also the major concerns of women and men as the change occurs. We can see for instance, the various forms of sexual violence which women experience from day to day. Calypsonians are generally male. This clearly affects the way in which women are portrayed as either manipulative sex objects or inferiors (Mohammed 1).

Here it should be mentioned that female performers of Calypso should not be judged based on

their physical characteristics. Instead, they should be judged based on the message that they bring to audiences. What this shows is how gender stereotyping pervades the minds of people of society and how detrimental it can be to women's careers and the role they play in society.

For yet another example of present-day resentment to the Calypso from mainstream society, Jamaica Kincaid's work "Girl" (already mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis) shows how the girl child is trained not to sing "Benna" (Calypso music) on Sundays. But it is ironic that the speaker in Kincaid's work should forewarn the girl child not to sing "Benna" which was the very song that our maternal African ancestors used as a strategy for resisting oppression and for female empowerment. Accordingly, Maude Dikobe urges us to see Calypso as a symbol of empowerment. For instance, she states that:

It is critically important to foreground the stereotype of the Jamette in order to understand the constellation of popular conventions that have come to determine performers' vulgarity or lack of it. How, for example, do cultural or class factors affect the acceptance of sexuality in dance? Although the word Jamette is now used in a new context, and has come, to some extent, to represent an increasingly appealing sort of subversion (the rebellion against repressive social structures), it has not yet lost its ties with its original meaning. The unruliness and disrespect for law associated with lewd sexual characters and costumes (Dikobe 7).

It appears that enslaved women had a just cause for their so-called "lewd" songs and dance performances. They seemed to be ready and resilient in their efforts to redeem their Africa pride and liberation they enjoyed back in Africa, prior to enslavement. It also appears that they knew exactly just what to do to draw the public's attention: They creatively used their voices and bodies as symbols of their struggle against subordination and hegemonic oppression.

But perhaps more importantly, the Cariso and Jammette women managed to offend slave masters who were bent on controlling them in virtually every sense of the word. It would seem that the slave masters wished to control the very thinking of these women due to the fact that the slave masters established “Ordinances” or laws to prohibit enslaved women’s very creative acts of resistance from slavery through the singing and performances of Cariso. Here it can be inferred that the slave masters probably foresaw an inevitable loss of slaves or chattel, personal attacks, and slave rebellions. Therefore, thinking from the perspective of the slave master, one can begin to see that the resentment to “lewd” Cariso singing and performances that challenged mainstream norms, was absolutely necessary. Given the consequences for participation in these so-called lewd performances enslaved women continued to resist as they realized that it was an empowering force against the oppressive masters. In light of this, I will now further highlight the function of female eroticism as a rubric for resisting oppression.

Female Identity and Erotic Autonomy in Calypso Performances

April Gordon seeks to elucidate the significance of empowerment for women against female subordination in the face of an oppressive western patriarchal society. For example, she debates the issue of empowerment in the following statements:

Empowerment means women’s challenging all forms of oppression that affect their lives- be it patriarchy, race, class, colonialism, or peripheralization in the global economy. Empowerment is based on women’s increasing their own self-reliance, and their right to make choices . . . it means critically questioning the value and direction of Western-designed development and having a greater voice in shaping their societies (Gordon 157).

Here Gordon points out the need for women to be able to assume autonomy and “power” in their

societies by questioning the principles and value systems of our patriarchal political and social structure for an explanation for their subordination. And at the same time, Gordon insists that “While women and men suffer from class oppression and poverty, patriarchal oppression is suffered only by women” (160). With the latter idea in mind, it is therefore imperative for women to become empowered by becoming attentive to the fact that they have limits in their society and thus, challenge the various sources of their oppression.

Accordingly, Audrey Lord indicates that female eroticism or “erotic autonomy” can serve as a tool of empowerment. “The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, and the plasticized sensation... I see the erotic as a source within each of us that lies in a deeply female plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling” (Dikobe 1). And Dikobe admits that the female calypsonians’ use of “movement, sexuality, and agency [erotic autonomy] can be a point of departure for women as it expresses a female power related to the erotic” (4-5).

In light of this, it is quite interesting to note that black enslaved women seemed to use the erotic “Cariso song and dance performances” as their point of departure from hegemonic oppression and atrocities done to them during years of enslavement. In addition, realizing that the art of Calypso has survived our African forbears and lives on as the mouth piece for the common woman and man of our society, it suggests that Calypso could be a point of departure or starting point, for women of our society to resist subordination and hegemonic oppression. Even more, Andrea Shaw maintains that Mikhail Bakhtin’s text “Rabelais and his World” describes the Carnavalesce as a mode of resistance to highbrow culture and this resistance is accomplished via a redeployment of “proper” upper-class rituals such as language and fashion” (4). Here it would seem that Bakhtin values our so-called “low culture” which is the culture of the masses of

people of our society. Clearly Bakhtin insinuates that the “Language” or message of the common women and men of our society, such as Calypso lyrics and folkloric novels, tells a substantial truth. They tell about the experiences of ordinary people and might be a useful weapon for resisting oppression since people would naturally be drawn to respond to issues that are known to them.

Evidently, Black women today should follow very closely in the footsteps of their maternal African predecessors both here in the Caribbean and on the North American continent to help resist the racist and sexist negatives about them. Of course, it is the negative racist and sexist stereotypes that often cause objectification of their black bodies, and oppression in their societies. Zora Neale Hurston already mentioned, exemplifies my point that she has been “Amazed by the Anglo-Saxon’s lack of curiosity about the internal lives and the emotions of the Negroes, and for that matter, any non-Anglo-Saxon people’s within our borders, above the class of unskilled labor” (Hurston 179).

Hurston’s work: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for example, provides some strong examples of gender and racial stereotypes about black women. And her protagonist Janie Crawford, plays the role of the “paranoid” or rebellious woman who resists these racial and gender stereotypes that result from “Appolonian” or mainstream norms. For example, Janie points out to Tea Cake, her lover, laughingly in a conversation: “De ones de white man know is nice colored folks. De ones he don’t know is bad niggers” (172). Here Janie insinuates that she is a bad woman in the good sense. In addition, by walking back to Eatonville behaving like nothing happened after her affair with Tea-Cake, meanwhile the appalled neighbors stare her without cease confirms this fact. Indeed, this event is a most compelling one for Eatonville’s people since they bowed down to Janie’s now deceased husband Joe Starks, the former mayor, and they

expect Janie to do succumb to Joe's will and carry on his honor. The following quote exemplifies this: "The town had a basketful of feelings good and bad about Joe's positions and possessions, but none had the temerity to challenge him" (Hurston 50). But Janie, the rebellious girl, not only challenges Joe Starks and the town people, she puts them in their place.

Similarly, Edwidge Danticat's Sophie Caco although her maternal figures try to silence her, she seems to see things as a paranoid woman who resists various mainstream norms with their countless holds, limits, and stereotypes for women and men of her Haitian society. First, by taking her own virginity not with a penis but, with the wooden pestle for a mortar that is used to crush grain like corn and peas. Second, she resists by "shacking up" and marrying Joseph, a much older man than herself who has very little money.

Finally, if a majority of black women continue to remain in the dark about the harsh realities of class, race, and gender stereotyping which still affect them and their offspring today, one might probably wonder for one's entire lifetime what the future for generations of African women will be like. According to Hurston, one wonders when a majority of black women ever be able to see the light" (169). Will more black women be able to become conscious about critical racist and sexist issues that continually negate their lives? Will there ever be an end to gender disparity? Will there ever be an end to gender conflicts if we do not try to educate our young women and men, the future leaders, about the urgency for them to become aware of some of strategies for resisting female subordination and hegemonic oppression today?

Chapter Three

Black Women and Protest in Calypso Lyrics.

As can be seen in Chapter Two, women played a key role in Cariso in the Caribbean during pre-emancipation times and seem to have left a legacy behind for contemporary female composers of Calypso. Seeing that Calypso originated with the early female singers of Cariso during pre-emancipation times and is one of the longest standing forms of art that expresses the thoughts and emotions of the common women and men of Caribbean society, women's participation in Calypso has historic importance. According to Andrea Shaw, enslaved women used the Calypso as a form of social and political protest (Shaw 1). Hence, the songs of contemporary female calypsonians could be similarly used to draw students and the public's attention to urgent, pressing, critical gender issues that help to keep women in subordinate positions.

First, I will focus on the Calypso lyrics of Calypso Rose of Trinidad. Next I will discuss the lyrics of Singing Sandra. Then, I will discuss the lyrics of Singing Francine. Then I will discuss the lyrics of Singing Vennie, which will be followed, by the lyrics of Queen Bee. Of course, these lyrics address some critical issues found in male-female relationships in today's Caribbean society as well as in many other parts of the world society.

Now to further elucidate the degree of importance of Calypso to the common man and woman of our society, Calypso Rose, the first female calypso singer in Post-emancipation times in Trinidad, took issue with the repressed status of women in her society. In 1967, she filled the air with the magnificent sounds of her Road March hit "Fire! Fire! In she wire-wire." With this hit, Calypso Rose affirmed her "self-pride" and her feminism.

Yet, Calypso Rose was often criticized (and she is still criticized) and labeled as a lesbian

for her militant approach in promoting her calypsos. She would wind on the stage like a worm as she performed to aid in getting her message across to the audiences. Gotreich also points out that Calypso Rose, “has been referred to as the chief purveyor of smut for her sexually charged calypsos and yet male calypsonians whose material of this time were equally if not more racy and were rarely held in an unfavorable light for producing it” (24). From this observation, one might begin to question why Calypso Rose should be labeled as a lesbian or stigmatized by people of her society, for promoting song lyrics that address woman’s repression in their society. We must also ask why the male calypsonians aren’t blamed or labeled for purveying smut through their song lyrics. Here one also notices strong evidence of female subordination and societal protest against their participation in the arena of Calypso.

But Anna Gotreich takes this gender-role issue in Calypso, a step further. She affirms that many Calypsos by Rose present more than recognition of female sexuality; they assert the need for respect and equality for the female partner. For a classic example of this, Goetrich maintains that Calypso Rose affirms “I could understand why a woman must have an outside man. A man does want to run like rat and have his wife abide by that. And every night he is having a ball. When he reach home he ain’t kissing he wife at all”(24). Clearly, many women and men of our society can readily identify with a similar problem about which Rose speaks for extramarital relationships have always plagued the sanctity of the marriage bed. Hence Rose’s lyrics could serve to reinforce the intensity of gender disparity in our society. It also shows that there is an increasing need for a balance in male and female relationships. Women and men should be treated equally and there should not be different expectations for women and men in society. The rules that apply to men should also apply to women.

Another female composer Singing Sandra, of Trinidad, supports gender equity. She

maintains that she is forming a housewife association, for it is not too late to negotiate gender disparity in our society:

I forming a housewife association. Who agree with me come and sign de form.
Oh yes! Talking about male exploitation? What once was a habit now is
denounced. But it is not too late to negotiate because I truly feel we deserve a
better deal. Check this! We have to wash and scrub, bend over a tub. Always on
we feet in de kitchen feeling de heat. Hard work! Hard work! Den later at night de
man does want a bite. Dey right in context. Dey want you to flex. But it's down to
time. It's down to time. Ladies do what you like, from tonight we going on strike.
Tell dem no more hard work. No more hard work! (Singing Sandra 2002)

Indeed Singing Sandra puts out a great challenge to women of our society to “Sign the Housewife Association form.” By signing the form and by ceasing to do the “Hard work” the housewives can team up to resist the subordinate treatment they receive from their husbands, boyfriends, or male partners. In no uncertain terms, Singing Sandra expresses zero tolerance for male exploitation of their wives. The fact that Singing Sandra mentions, “I truly feel we deserve a better deal . . . Always on we feet in de kitchen feeling de heat. Hard work! hard work Den later at night de man does want a bite. Dey right in context. Dey want you to flex” we notice that in addition to daily drudging with household chores the housewives are expected to flex at night because “de man does want a bite.” Clearly, the husbands seem to be merciless and most selfish. In light of this, these husbands would die by their belief that household chores should be done by women only. This is a sad situation because all the burden and strain falls on the wives who also have to care for the children. What these house wives should do to alleviate some of the strain is, as Singing Sandra recommends, “Go on strike” do not give “the man a bite” and leave

the hard work undone. Perhaps the men would then wake up from their slumber and begin to help with the household chores and treat their wives with more respect.

To further protest her displeasure for male exploitation of the female in society, Singing Sandra warns women to women to keep their “dignity and self respect,” in her classic song “Die With My Dignity:”

You looking out to find something to do. You met a boss man who promise to help you. But then de man let down de condition. Nothing else but humiliation. He want to see you in a fancy fancy pose. He want to see how you look without your clothes. He want you to cock up like a bloody acrobat. He wife at home he can't ask she to do that. But if with all this humiliation, you get a job these days as a woman. Tell dem dey could keep dey money. I goin keep my honey and Die with my Dignity (Singing Sandra 1987).

It would seem that the one sure thing many male bosses look forward to is to exploit their female employees. They intrude on the women's sexuality. These men should have a better work ethic and learn to treat their female employees with respect. They should also think about how they would wish to have their mother, wife, or sisters treated by other men. “You meet a boss man who promise to help you. But then de man let down de condition. Nothing else but humiliation. He want to see you in a fancy fancy pose. He want to see how you look without your clothes. He want you to cock up like a bloody acrobat” exemplifies this. Here it should be pointed out that acrobats perform on trapeziums in the arena of sports only and it is dehumanizing treatment for these men to expect their female employees to fulfill their job requirements in addition to becoming their bed partners. The female employees should demand more pay and some of these bosses' inheritance before falling prey to and going to bed with them. Perhaps the bosses would

respect them then.

Unfortunately, instead of helping their female employees, these male bosses help themselves by intruding on the female employees' sexuality and forcing them into sexual activity against their will. And one knows well that having money is absolutely necessary to meet the challenging demands of today's competitive world society. Hence many female employees fall into the difficult spot of yielding to their intimidating male bosses so that they could earn a living. Often, these female employees give in to the male bosses because many of them have children and they do not wish to see their children starve.

Singing Sandra seems to realize that in a society that is so repressive the single answer to women's humiliation seems to be for them to maintain their "self-respect and dignity." She encourages women to be strong and resist male exploitation through singing "Tell dem to keep their money. I goin keep my honey and die with my dignity." Once women are able to stand up to their male bosses and let them know straight up that they seek employment only, the bosses might suddenly realize that they should not mix business affairs with their selfish, physical male desires. Probably more bosses who have ulterior sexual motives might re-think their conniving, sexual schemes with females, and give them the respect they deserve.

In addition, Singing Francine expresses her discontent for female exploitation in the home by their husbands, boyfriends, or male partners in her hit "Enough is Enough," in which the husband remains at home while the wife goes out to work and he does not "hit a stroke" in the home:

She tell she husband she going to work
But she had big plans it was no joke
For years she working but always broke

While she husband daily- don' drive a stroke

So she tell him

Chorus

Enough is enough . . . (repeated 8 times)

We can go on this way . . . (repeated 4 times)

It wouldn't work out (repeated 2 times)

He wouldn't ask she: how was your day?

Girl what's for dinner he would declare!

She does her duty as a good wife

But he demands and controls her life

She cook she wash and iron too

Enough is enough (Singing Francine CD Trinidad 2003)

Now it is irksome to see that the wife in Francine's song goes out to work all day and the husband just waits until she comes home to get his dinner. It suggests that this man is plain lazy or mentally, or emotionally disturbed. Imagine that meanwhile the rest of the world is awake this husband seems to be asleep and has no care in the world. Ironically, his only concerns seem to be when the wife starts to complain that he claims: "Children looking, neighbor peeping, stranger watching, Girl stop fretting!" Here it appears that the husband in spite of himself, he wants to be able to maintain a good self-image. He clearly does not want the children to know about any rifts between him and the mother. Also, he is concerned about how the neighbors and the strangers perceive him. It should be mentioned that the husband wants to be able to keep his chins up in society. But the sickening part is the fact that the wife who self-sacrifices for him and the children every day, he seems not to care about her welfare.

From these observations, it can be deduced that the husband thinks it is his wife's duty to be slaving for him. This is a clear example of gender stereotyping in Western culture. And equally important, one needs to consider where it is that that men learn these gender stereotypes and one should attempt to challenge them. Men are once boys and it has to do with how these men are brought up. Boys are taught by parents at home. In the home chores are divided between boys and girls. Girls are taught how to sew, cook, wash, clean, and iron and so on, while boys do outdoor tasks such as cleaning the car, watering the plants, walk the dogs and so on. Therefore, one can begin to see how and where the husbands learn their behavioral traits and so more often than not; treat their wives in the ways they do. While the home teaches children gender roles, it does not prepare them for dealing with the consequences of gender stereotyping. Thus, one needs to seriously consider ways of teaching one's children and students gender equity.

Clearly, Singing Francine emphasizes the need for egalitarianism and balance in the home. With regard to household duties and other household responsibilities some men simply refuse to participate. It would seem that they deem housework to be a "woman thing." Here we notice an example of divisive gender roles in the home. But what is most problematic about gender stereotyping in the home is the fact that some of the men who abdicate duties to women and children in the home, "do not drive a stroke" of work and still want to dominate. Unfortunately, ever so often we hear wives and women complaining about their husbands, boyfriends, or male partners not doing their share of the chores, child rearing, payment of bills, and other responsibilities. These complaints are made by women so often that it seems as if the men in their lives believe that it is their birthright not to help them work. Perhaps what is most disturbing is that it seems that women are slaves to their husbands, boyfriends, or male partners in this respect.

It is sad to admit but many frantic women of our society seem to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown as they relate the sorrowful stories about their men's unwillingness, to shoulder their responsibilities, just as presented by Singing Francine in her song "Enough is enough." This is a sad phenomenon that needs serious attention because the troubling part is the realization that often, many men who fit into this category are controlling and very demanding of women. These are those men who are usually harsh, bitter, and violent toward women. Admittedly, there are some of these very men who seem to detest women and their relationships with women never last.

It would also seem that some of these same men who do not work and instead stay at home and wait for their wives, girlfriends, or female partners to bring home the paychecks are men who are emotionally disturbed and seriously in need of help. If their problems are not addressed then they will continue their cycle of controlling, abusing, and keeping women in subordinate positions. Worst still, these men could jeopardize their own children's lives because some our children often suffer from emotional problems due to the ugly and unpleasant episodes they live with of their parents' disagreements and fights which at times, lead to domestic violence. Girl children must be seriously impacted by these circumstances. To be completely honest, many girls of Caribbean society grow up with a low self-esteem and a void in their lives due to absence of father figures. Often, some of these girls turn to their male partners in hopes of filling these voids but then they soon realize that the male partners also disappoint them. In light of these circumstances, it is clear that male infidelity and parental irresponsibility can cause major problems in the lives of children our students, and the future women and men of society.

Singing Francine exemplifies my point that male infidelity and parental irresponsibility can lead to serious consequences such as emotional problems in their children's lives. She also

stresses how many women of our Caribbean society cry out for help on a day-to-day basis when the men in their lives, do not shoulder the responsibilities for their children and the home in her song, “Dead Beat Dads:”

This chile didn’ ask to come here . . .
And it’s de parents’ responsibility
To make sure dat dese children got
A good home wid a safe environment
An plenty ah love to move around in
But some heartless fathers turn dey backs
An de mothers an dem sufferin’
Dey don care if de children live or die
But when dey get big man an woman
Hear dese same shameless men talkin’
Dat’s my son! Dat’s my daughter!
She’s a doctor. He’s a lawyer

Chorus

You should be facing Joe Brown or Judge Judy
To make you pay for dese children voids
You ought to taught a big lesson
Bout when a man is really a man . . . (Singing Francine CD Trinidad 2004) See
Appendix for full text of this song.

Ever so often women in Caribbean society complain about child neglect and about how they struggle to make two ends meet and provide for their children while the men seem to be either

hibernating or going on vacation somewhere in the by ways of society. It would seem that these fathers do not care about their wives and women. They also seem not to have a sense of purpose in life. In discussing the behavior pattern of such men it was discovered that men of African origin are polygamous and so Caribbean men have the tendency to chase several women. But one cannot easily buy into that considering that men from other parts of the world also neglect their children and chase several women. Thus, it would seem that male infidelity is a global problem which needs to be addressed today or else the future men of society will observe and learn these negative behaviors and follow suite. Therefore, students, the future young women and men need to become aware of gender issues so that they can learn about compatibility in gender relationships.

Singing Francine seems to be highly annoyed by the failure of some fathers to support their children financially and emotionally. For instance, she sings “when dey were sick an dey was hungry how much food? How much money you paid to keep a shelter over their head?” (Singing Francine 2003) Yes, many men of our society fail to even own their children in the first place, moreover to support them financially or emotionally. Again, it is a sad situation since children are the ones most seriously affected when their biological fathers neglect them. It is then that many stepfathers and mothers’ boyfriends abuse not only the mothers but the children are also physically, sexually, and emotionally abused. The line “dead beat dads” cause de stepfathers to abuse de mothers” exemplifies this. Mothers and children suffer from male neglect, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. But as stated, child abuse is even worst than that of their mothers since “children need to have a home environment that is safe” and free of violence. According to Singing Francine, the lack of a safe home environment causes “emotional problems” and “voids” in the children’s lives.

On the other hand, the fathers who fall into this category seem to be apathetic, unconcerned, and heartless toward their children. Here it would seem that men who commit such negative acts against their children are emotionally disturbed and in dire need of help themselves. That Singing Francine claims some of the “Dead beat dads it’s true Cruzan Rum was your retreat you didn’t care if de children live on de street” exemplifies this. For one wonders how could any father in his right state of mind and who conceived children refuse to help take care of them? Then, it would seem that these said fathers might have had emotional problems as children themselves and their problems may have gone by unnoticed and at length they too, become biological fathers and simply refuse to acknowledge their own children as well. But it should be pointed out that this is a cycle that needs to be broken today before male infidelity in our society gets increasingly worse and our women and children continue to suffer physically and emotionally. What one envisions here is a future society where today’s gender, marital and other problems will increase six and seven fold.

Admittedly, it seems that male infidelity is part and parcel of a bigger social problem. For why would the “Dead beat dads” take to the bottle as an occupation? Might it be that they cannot find useful employment? Might it be that they willfully refuse to be functional dads? Or might it be that these “Dead beat dads” are struggling like the masses of our people in society against societal oppression that makes them disgruntled and miserable? For another example, Francine sings “when you lef yuh children without a penny” this could suggest that the men might not have the funds to feed their children because of the class struggle which keeps the poor women and men of Caribbean society poor. One can suggest this given that “the shameless men” do acknowledge their children biologically only. After all, by returning and challenging the mothers when they try to discipline the children exemplifies this. The statement “Instead of telling de

chile to obey de mothers an de elders who correct dem you causin' a big meley! When mom say dat's wrong you tell dem dat's right an you don' know what's really going on" exemplifies this point.

In addition, one can infer that child neglect and child abuse could be the "Dead Beat Dads' way of giving vent to their frustrations in their oppressive society. So, they run away from their responsibilities that they seemingly cannot handle due to a shortage of financial resources. And in the height of their frustrations they find others to oppress instead of continuing to struggle civilly for survival in an oppressive society. Paulo Freire points out that the oppressed usually mirror the images of the oppressor in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed. So, it might be safe to infer that the "Dead beat Dads" might be mirroring the images of their society and simultaneously, upholding the divisive and oppressive virtues thereof. In Singing Francine's song there are strong representations of gender divisiveness such as the husband's expecting his wife to cook, clean, and look after the children.

Furthermore, Western culture is patriarchal and dominated by men. Even the Holy Bible provides evidence of sexist language and male biases. In one instance, God the creator is referred to as he. "God . . .rested from all his work which he had made" (Gen. 2. 3). And God said, let us make man in our image, . . . And let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 2. 26).

In another instance, the popular story of the woman of Samaria who is sentenced to be stoned to death by the Pharisees exemplifies this (John 4). Therefore, it may seem natural that men should subordinate their wives and children. But, one should be reminded here that women and men are created equally by the creator and should be treated equally. As stated earlier, the

rules that apply to men should apply to women. Other wise, there may always be unavoidable gender struggles.

However, Singing Vennie attempts to refute societal subordination of the female in her song “Women’s Liberation.” In “Women’s Liberation” Singing Vennie appears to see the need for equality among women and men in Caribbean society:

Women’s liberation should mean equal opportunity and equal responsibility. We must always demand more leadership roles. This is no longer a man’s world. If we lose our self-respect and are seen only as sex objects... If we continue tolerating abuse by men and are afraid to stand up to them, this liberation is a figment of our imagination. It is an idea whose time is yet to come (Singing Vennie 2003)

Clearly, Singing Vennie challenges women to take up the mantle and find themselves in leadership positions of society. And what do leadership roles mean for women? Leadership roles for women mean that women could overcome the numerous daily struggles that appear before them by using their “self-respect and brain power” as tools to combat some of the repressive social forces they contend with, such as male exploitation in the home and in the work place. By Singing Vennie stating “if we continue tolerating abuse from men and are afraid to stand up to them,” suggests that she is encouraging women to challenge the dictates of our existing patriarchal society. This means that if women refuse to conform to the social norms they may witness liberation, which is equal opportunity and equal responsibility. Perhaps more men might have more respect for women of their society and see them as their equals, rather than as their “inferiors.”

For yet another example of gender disparity in our society, Queen Bee in her debut

Calypso performance, “On the Other Side” expresses the cries of women who are also exploited by their male bosses at work, and by their husbands and men in the home. She claims the following:

To find a woman job placement, most times, She is victim and innocent trying to survive on a small salary. Pressure and harassment at work daily, they promise you this and they promise you that. They even want you to scratch they back.

Hush woman don't you cry. Never let yourself down! One of these days you'll get your crown. Earn the respect of every man. Be proud because you're a woman

(Queen Bee 2003)

Admittedly, Queen Bee, like Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra and others touch on an extremely troubling issue in these lyrics which face us the women and men of society-the problem of gender disparity. Queen Bee points out that women in Anguillian society have a difficult task to find employment and when they do their salary is so small. In fact, there are instances in society in which women and men perform the same duties and the men receive bigger salaries than the women do. Queen Bee goes on to discuss the issue of sexual harassment on the job by men who even promise some women that they would send them to university and worst, to take them to the moon.

Sadly, many women are too naïve to resist by standing up to these men and to telling them to get to hell. That Queen Bee mentions, “they even want you to scratch their back” emphasizes the demeaning behavior of these male bosses. It is like saying what else do these men expect of women. However, Queen Bee ends with strong words of encouragement for Anguillian and other women “one of these days you'll get your crown. Earn the respect of every man. Be proud because you are a woman” (Queen Bee 2003). On this note, Queen Bee beckons

to women to relinquish all charges, maintain the respect of every man, by putting them in their rightful places once they attempt to invade their person. Also, the fact that she mentions “On the Other Side” it implies that women need to rethink their positions in the various institutions of society and consider following new and different roles. With specific reference to the disrespectful treatment women receive in the workplace, if they do not stand up to their bosses and other men by either insulting them or reporting their sexual assaults to a court of law, the men would continue to target them as well as other women. There needs to be a stop to men’s disrespect of women once and for all. Clearly, female exploitation seems to be increasing in our society and there needs to be systems put in place to lessen its effect, if not correct it. The fact that all these female calypsonians aforementioned, appear to beckon to the people of our society for help, it speaks volumes of the intensity and complexity of female exploitation.

Admittedly, the lyrics of Calypso Rose and other female Calypso singers should be highly valued since they speak about the importance of women’s maintaining their “self respect” as a form of resisting male exploitation in the workplace and wider society. They also speak about important gender issues that affect the common women and men of our society. They speak about the gender struggles and hegemonic oppression that are common to the poor, the peasant, and the preacher of our society.

However, an important line of the lyrics examined that one might take exception to reads, “she is victim, and innocent” by Singing Vennie. Clearly, the intent is for women to become critical thinkers and to have hearts, wills, and minds of their own. But for one to label women as “victim” and “innocent” conforms to the existing societal typecast of women as “others,” “inferiors,” and “less than” their male counterparts. Of course, women are victimized due to the social constructions of patriarchal society and usually many of them seem to be helpless to find

solutions to the negative treatment they receive. And one must admit that although ideologically speaking, the majority of the song lyrics of these calypso composers are designed to protest the repressed state of their women folk, at the same time the intent should be to deviate from some of the existing sexist generic language stereotypes. Whether or not one chooses to accept this view, unconsciously, the idea of labeling women as “victims” can lead to the further division between women and men (sexism).

Considering that Calypso Rose and other female composers protest issues affecting women in Caribbean society such as gender stereotyping, subordination, exploitation by husbands and male bosses, sexual harassment, child neglect, child abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and gender disparity, it suggests that women’s issues are getting increasingly worse. To lessen these problems, which all seem to be caused by society’s hegemonic norms, students and other people of society need to become more attentive to the messages that these female Calypso composers offer. To briefly recall a few, Calypso Rose advises that women should demand equality and respect from their husbands even if it means having “a outside man.” Similarly, Singing Sandra recommends “forming a housewife association” and that women should maintain their self respect and “Die with their dignity.” Even more, Singing Vennie notes that women should “demand more leadership positions and equal responsibility.” And equally important Queen Bee encourages women to consider being on “The Other Side” and to assume as equal a role as men in society. Perhaps more importantly, for many women who are emotionally and physically abused Singing Francine calls into question the possibility of moving out in her song “Enough is Enough.” Once women become more attentive to the song lyrics composed by women themselves a wider awareness about gender conflicts and strategies for resisting these conflicts could be created.

Finally, women and men can use some of the advice from Calypso texts to prescribe to other people of society. Otherwise, some people might never realize the root causes of their gender conflicts. Women should find the lyrics of Calypso Rose and other female Calypso singers to be empowering forms of resistance against female subordination. Furthermore, the messages presented in their songs should be empowering considering that they speak about theirs and other women's lived experiences and are coming from the "horses mouth." That is to say, that the women's songs are true expressions of women's sufferings and continuing struggle for recognition and acceptance in the heavily patriarchal political, social, and cultural context of a unique Caribbean society with all its diversity.

Chapter Four

Janie the “Bad” Girl in Zora Neale Hurston’s: Their Eyes Were Watching God and Sophie the “Silenced” Girl in Edwidge Danticat’s: Breath, Eyes, Memory: A Study of Contrast and Similarity.

I am so perpetually terrified of being called a bad girl
So eternally blown out by the winds of my inner judges
That I must cling to any authority that grants me marginal
Approval, then I risk that might never, never, even turn towards that within me
that guides and orders my existence, that lets the truth of my life emerge. Oh grant
me courage to be myself!

(Judith Duerk 78)

Judith Duerk points to a quintessential problem of being a girl. One should have the liberty to do as one pleases regardless of the beliefs, convictions, and dictates of the people of one’s society. Neither should a girl be called a “bad girl” simply because she opts to act, behave, or think contrarily to the accepted way of life in her culture or society. Similarly, Janie, the protagonist of Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God should be able to express herself and develop her character without limits, without holds, and without interference from people in the town of Eatonville.

In like fashion, Sophie, the protagonist in Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory should be able to explore her womanhood, make choices, and have freedom of speech, in her native Haitian society. But is this the case? Clearly, these female protagonists seem to face similar gender struggles to the “Bad girl” described in the excerpt quoted above, from Duerk’s work. That is to say, both protagonists in Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God and Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory have to deal with the issue of female subordination.

In Zora Neale Hurston's novel Their Eyes Were Watching God, for example, Janie, the protagonist, can be used to unearth some of the major gender struggles facing the broader group of Black women in the Southern United States. For instance, Janie marries at an early age and lives with a repressive first husband Mr. Logan Killicks, who tries to control her. In an attempt to resist Logan Killicks' repressive control, Janie runs away with Mr. Joe Starks, another elderly negro whom ironically, she marries quickly and who also tries to control her. But unlike Logan Killicks, Joe Starks uses his fists with the hope to intimidate and to control Janie. He is not however successful in his attempts to subordinate her to his will.

The fact that Janie repeats running away from Eatonville shortly following Mr. Starks' death shows clearly that Joe Starks in spite of his repressive nature is no match for Janie. And it is ironic that she immediately seems to find happiness when she meets the young, easygoing, and carefree, Tea Cake, with whom she is free to explore her sexuality and to define her own womanhood. Here one could infer that she probably opposes the binding ties of marriage and societal interference in her life. Considering the deep-seated value systems of the people of her society, one could infer that Janie's apparent decision to spend her time with Tea Cake marks the beginning of the end of her subordinate role as a wife. So, in essence, she ventures out from the known in the town of Eatonville to the unknown in the Everglades in spite of a hurricane warning, it seems once and for all, to be "herself." Here one can see that Janie is bent on finding her freedom come hell or high water.

Even so, In Chapter 3 of Their Eyes Were Watching God Hurston notes, "Janie had no chance to know things so she had to ask. Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated? Did marriage compel love like the sun compels the day?" (Hurston 21) For Janie though, marriage does not end the "cosmic loneliness of the unmated." In her marriage, she clearly demonstrates

loneliness, unhappiness, and a deep yearning for love “unlike the sun the day” (21). Hence she has to search until she finds the source of happiness, which could only be possible if she searches deep down, within herself. In the words of Duerk, Janie has to discover: “That within herself that guides and orders her existence, that lets the truth of her life emerge,” so that she can be “granted the courage to become herself” (78).

Only through her “desire to become herself” can Janie Hurston’s protagonist, be liberated from female subordination, a fact implied by Hurston. Tony Taylor a villager of Eatonville notes in a conversation with Mr. Joe Starks (Janie’s second husband), prior to his marriage to Janie, that she did not really want Starks as a husband.

Aw git reconciled! Dat woman don’t want you. You got tuh learn dat de women in de world ain’t brought up on no turpentine still, and no saw mill camp. There’s some women dat jus ain’t for you tuh broach. You can’t git her wid no fish sandwich (39).

Clearly, Janie seems not to be an easy “fish to catch” nor a simple puzzle to solve. Indeed she is labeled the “Bad girl” simply because she wants her freedom; and she does not easily yield to her male suitors, irrespective of their financial holdings, influence, or power. Therefore, she resents Joe Starks’ attempts to woo and subdue her.

In a similar African work, Chinua Achebe, cited in Victor Ramraj’s Concert of Voices emphasizes the “Bad girl’s” resentment to being put in a subordinate position by society in his work “Girls at War”:

Believe me you are a great girl. That was the day he finally believed there might be something in this talk about revolution. He had seen plenty of girls and women marching and demonstrating before now. But somehow he had never been able to give it much thought. He didn’t doubt that the girls and the women took

themselves seriously, they obviously did . . . you girls are really at war, aren't you? . . . that is what you men want us to do. "Well, he said, here is one man who doesn't want you to do that. Do you remember the girl with khaki jeans who searched me without mercy at the check point?" "That is the girl I want you to become again. Do you remember her?" "That time done pass. Now everybody want survival. They call it number six. You put number six; I put number six. Everything all right (Ramraj 8).

In spite of herself, the "Bad girl" in Achebe's "Girls at War" seems to receive respect from Nkwanko, her suitor, for her tough unyielding demeanor. And the realization that she points out: "You put number six; I put number six," shows her need to receive equal respect from him.

Similarly, Hurston's Janie desires freedom from female subordination, and to be "herself" such that she openly resists the dictates of her grandmother who insists that she should woo a man for his wealth as it symbolizes security to her and the people of their society. For instance, when her grandmother points out in a conversation regarding Logan Killicks her first suitor, that she should appreciate his offer to court her and make her his wife, Janie openly disapproves. But because of the grandmother's expectations she marries nonetheless. The following excerpt in which her authoritative grandmother lectures her describes Janie's resentment at the time:

If you don't want him, you sho oughta. Heah you is wid de onliest organ in town, amongst colored folks, in yo parlor. Got a house bought and paid for and sixty acres uh land right on de big road and ... Lawd have mussy! Dat's de very prong all us black women gits hung on. Dis love! Dat's just what got us pullin' and uh haulin' and sweating and doin' from can't see in de morning' till can't see at night. Dat's how come de ole folks can't say dat bein' uh fool don't kill nobody.

It jus makes you sweat. Ah bet you wants some dressed up dude dat got to look at de sole of his shoe every time he cross de street tuh see whether he got enough leather dere to make it cross. You can buy and sell such as dem wid dat you got. In fact you can buy ‘em and give ‘em away (Hurston 23).

From this observation, it can be interpreted that Janie is not necessarily impressed with materialism, nor wealth. Instead, she clearly demonstrates her need for survival; her need for exploring her womanhood; and her need to make sense of her world herself, even if it means she will be branded as the “Bad girl.”

Contrarily, her grandmother represents the matriarchal figure who tries hard to uphold the status quo and persists in her pressure for Janie to become mentally conditioned to her gendered woman’s role. Therefore, Janie is expected to behave lady like so that she could demand a reputable husband. Probably to the grandmother, Janie as a developing young woman should easily fall in line with the order of the day so that she could become an “ideal” or stereotypical woman. But one knows very well, that the idealization of women and men presents major problems such as “future shock” as Paulo Freire, author of Pedagogy of the Oppressed terms it. In the case of students, they could easily experience “future shock” since no one is perfect and society’s gender “ideals” are not consistent. Clearly, there are exceptions to every rule and certainly, to every ideal. Admittedly, women and men will fail to live up to societal expectations at one point or another, regardless of the gender stereotypes used by people of society.

On the other hand, the grandmother in Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God by insinuating “ You can buy and sell such as dem wid dat you got. In fact, you can buy ‘em and give ‘em away” (23), further stresses the insidious nature of society’s carving out a set role for the female. By this statement, the grandmother’s insistence that Janie chooses a man of means

could underscore her vision for Janie. Her grandmother's vision could be either for her to assimilate into the wealthier class of women of their community or merely, to have Janie married for the sake of being the wife of one deemed to be a "gentleman" in the eyes of people of society. But Janie does not, it seems, wish to be married to a "gentleman." Neither does the property of Logan Killicks seem to matter to her. Instead, (toward the end of the novel), she seems to revere a man, the direct opposite of Logan Killicks, who possesses over sixty acres of land, a house, and a farm. Instead, she finds Tea Cake, the so-called "bad guy," by society's standards, who ironically, brings Janie the kind of freedom, passion, happiness, and identity she seems to have been searching for, for so long.

Similarly, during the time of Janie's marriage to Mayor Joe Starks, Hurston indicates that "Janie soon begins to feel the impact of awe and envy against her sensibilities. The wife of the Mayor was not just another woman as she had supposed. She slept with authority and so she was part of it in the town's mind. She couldn't get but so close to most of them in spirit" (46). Here one notices evidence of how the town of Eatonville shows a deep respect for Mr. Joe Starks, a male chauvinist who clearly values chivalry and his public life more than he values Janie. For instance, he treats her brutally-by slapping her in the face in public presence to see if he could subordinate her to his will. Meanwhile, the town's people seem to be nonchalant and insensitive to Janie's personal emotions, interests and desires. Like Joe Starks, they completely disregard Janie's desire for freedom. From this observation, it is clear that the town's people falsely assume that Janie automatically shares Starks' authority since she is presumed to sleep with it.

It is indeed ironic that Janie's behavior pattern during her marriage to Joe Starks, and even after his death, reveals that her liberty surpasses the wealth and fame that her marriage promises in the eyes of the town's people. For instance, when she runs away with Tea Cake, the love of

her life, she finds peace of mind in the Everglades. She finds this peace far away from the restrictions, labels, stigmatization, subordination, and “Bad girl” talk of Eatonville.

Furthermore, when she returns to Eatonville after her elope with Tea Cake, and shortly following his death, Janie boldly faces the neighbors as if nothing has happened. She does not care what they think about her. She finds happiness and sexual satisfaction with Tea Cake, the young love of her life. And she walks back into the town feeling sexually and emotionally fulfilled. Many of the neighbors are shocked out of their wits and dumbfounded. Of course Janie admits:

Ah'm back home again and ah'm satisfied tuh be heah. Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons. Dis house ain't so absent of things lak it used tuh befo' Tea Cake come along. It's full uh thoughts, 'specially dat bedroom (191).

Undoubtedly, Janie is tired of people's interference in her life, and wants autonomy. Therefore, she avoids the limelight and reverts to a more private experience of life in the Everglades to have her peace of mind and self-satisfaction. In fact, it is not until after she goes there that she seems to truly find “herself,” as she admits above. She can now make independent choices and comparisons about what she deems to be important or unimportant in her life. Clearly, the single thing that promises happiness and self-identity to Janie seems to be the very forbidden “Bad girl” lifestyle.

In like manner, Sophie the protagonist in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory like Hurston's Janie, is branded a “Bad girl.” Despite the unstinting efforts of her Grandme Ife (Grandmother Ife), Taunte Atie (Aunt Atie), and her mother Martine, to put her in a subordinate position and silence her, Sophie still turns out to be a so-called “Bad girl.” She is branded as the “Bad girl” because she begins to question the rulings of her matriarchal Grandme Ife, Taunte

Atie, and mother Martine. These significant mother figures all try hard to ensure that she is schooled from very early, in “the way of old” for prospective women: that is to say, “Little girls should be seen and not heard.” But Sophie eventually resists this subordinate way of life. Here one cannot omit to mention the subtlety of their mothering dynamic. It is interesting to note that they clearly love the girl child, yet their binding system of training attempts to mould her into a pliable, defenseless, being. At length, Sophie resists their subordination nonetheless.

One prime example that reveals female subordination in Danticat’s work, which Sophie resists, is when Sophie learns one day in needle class that little girls should not stare. This she learns from an old lady who warns her granddaughter not to do so (Danticat 9). Sophie begins to question this binding system of rule and she also points out that while “the older boys huddled in small groups near the school yard fence as they chatted over their books the girls formed circles around their grandmother’s feet, learning to sew” (9). Here one realizes not only a classic example of female subordination, but a clear indicator of gender disparity among little girls and boys at play as well as in the classroom. Admittedly, it would seem that in Haitian society at this point of time, book knowledge is important for boys only, meanwhile the traditional tasks such as sewing seems to be important for girls only. Here one witnesses a very compelling gender lesson which could be used to heighten our students’ awareness on critical issues such as gender disparity that takes place in and outside the classroom.

To be more specific, it is examples such as these that teachers can use to draw their students’ attention to gender disparity. Teachers can even have their students to enact the roles of the literary characters and perform short skits to point out important themes that are raised in specific scenes. Certainly, students will find the scene of the grandmother training the granddaughter not to stare to be funny. Also, the scene in which the boys huddle in groups freely

around the fence meanwhile the girls gather around their grandmother's feet can be extremely exciting for students.

Another instance that depicts Sophie's subordination but can be used to promote gender equity is the following conversation (regarding the educational ideals for women of her family), in which her mother Martine points out the following to Sophie:

Your schooling is the only thing that will make people respect you... you are going to work hard here, and no one is going to break your heart because you cannot read or write. You have a chance to become the kind of woman Atie and I always wanted to be. If you make something of your life you will succeed. You can raise our heads (43-44).

Admittedly, this is a classic example of how women can assume gender equity and independence since the dividends for having a sound education are great in today's competitive world society. Furthermore, Paulo Freire notes how education can provide tools that are necessary for empowering women and men and thus leading to social liberation. "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of women and men upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire 79). When the child is able to make independent and free choices about his or her life, this should be seen as an empowering expression. Therefore, the female child should be trained to strive for a sound education and thus, her independence, which promises both social and economic rewards. However, there should not be an idealization on her capabilities. In fact, the child whether girl or boy, should be able to make independent choices- as to what they in effect-desire to achieve in life. Equally important, he or she would be able to build his or her educational values free from gender biases and psychologically impacting insidious sexist language.

Perhaps the same idea applies to Sophie. While her Grandme Ife and Taunte Atie have educational ideals for Sophie which they express with great determination, Sophie has a heart, a mind, and a will of her own. It is not clear at the end of the novel what Sophie will do. It is likely that she could opt not to “make something of her life” quite the opposite of what Martine, her dogmatic, mother, Aunt Atie, and Grandmother Ife all desire. Admittedly, the statement “make something of your life” coupled with their subordinate treatment of Sophie seem to summarize the unwritten rules for a developing woman in Sophie’s community.

Furthermore, it is the insidious nature of the language used as well as the manner in which the message is put across that makes an element with a positive intent, be conveyed in a negative sense that has impact. In other words, the message although positive seems to contradict itself. As a case in point, Aunt Atie tells Sophie in one of their numerous conversations, “We always dreamt of becoming important women. We were going to be the first women doctors from my mother’s village. We would not stop at being doctors either. We were going to be engineers too. Imagine our surprise when we found out we had limits” (43). The interesting part here is that although Aunt Atie and Martine, Sophie’s mother, try so hard to be doctors, they do not become doctors and they find out they have limits. Yet, they hope that by also subordinating Sophie, she will be able to be an ideal young woman and attain the levels of success that they could not. The point is that it is the subordinate treatment they receive in their society that makes it impossible for them to be “doctors” in the first place, calling into question the means they propose for Sophie’s success.

Hence, Sophie seems to take to questioning the women role models of her family, at times rebelling, and being a ‘Bad girl,’ possibly, to subvert their forceful stereotypes. Possibly, she wishes to discover for “herself” and shape an identity of her own. To say this otherwise, Sophie

seems to reject the subordinate role that these women propose for her in order to carve out an alternative role of her own. To qualify the above statements, in spite of the virginity tests Sophie receives from her mother Martine, which are intended to intimidate Sophie and deter her from having sex before marriage, Sophie has sex nonetheless. Even so, she experiments with sex by forcefully depressing a pestle into her vagina. Sophie seems both curious and disgusted. So, she obviously has “to test the waters” for herself.

To further demonstrate the insidious nature of subordination during her mother’s frequent tests, Sophie learns to repeat the words of the Virgin Mother’s Prayer. “Hail Mary... so full of grace. The Lord is with you... You are blessed among women... Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners” (84). In essence, it seems that a girl’s maintaining her virginity is a very significant part of the religious and family ideal for women in Sophie’s homestead Croix Des Rossets, Haiti, as is usually the case with the issue of virginity in many families in many cultures. But in Danticat’s account of virginity, it is extremely troubling.

For example, Sophie lies still and accepts the testing as she repeats in sanctimonious fashion, the Virgin Mother’s Prayer. Some other girls would have run away or resented it immediately, but Sophie accepts the invasion of her person. Clearly, these virginity tests are done as a religious ritual. No wonder Sophie is initially intimidated and seems to be silenced into accepting them as a proper thing to do. Her mother does these tests for a considerable period of time before Sophie begins to resist them. And Martine, Sophie’s mother, for example, is overly frantic when she finally discovers that Sophie is no longer the virgin girl she believes her to be. Distraught, she turns Sophie out of the house.

Like many frantic mothers today in our Caribbean social context who may come to the light that their daughter or daughters have lost their virginity, probably due to a pregnancy, Martine is

enraged and immediately cuts any mother-daughter ties with Sophie. As stated, she turns her out of her house. Martine cuts ties with Sophie not for pregnancy, but just the thought that she is no longer the cherished “Virgin” girl whose hymen would block the entry of her finger each time she tests her. And oddly enough to lose her virginity, Sophie claims that she inserts a pestle into her vagina to rid her mother’s continual testing her for virginity:

My flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed sheet. I took the pestle and the bloody sheet and stuffed them into a bag. It was gone, the veil that always held my mother’s finger back every time she tested me (88).

Of course today in our Caribbean social context, there is often the talk in reference to a girl’s virginity, that she has allowed some “bird to pick her precious cherry.” So, one can now begin to imagine how precious the virginity that Danticat’s Martine, tries to protect Sophie, her girl child, from losing. As a case in point, Martine once relates the following to Sophie as she is about to test her with “the finger” that Sophie dreaded. This account not only astounds Sophie; but it deeply disturbs her; and is a coming of age for her:

When I was a girl, my mother used to test us to see if we were virgins. She would put her finger in our very private parts and see if it would go inside.

Your Taunte Atie hated it. She used to scream like a pig in a slaughterhouse. The way my mother was raised, a mother is supposed to do that to her daughter until the daughter is married. It is her responsibility to keep her pure (60-61).

Indeed this is a most disturbing realization since many girls in our times have the same or similar experiences, due to frantic mothers who are on the verge of a nervous breakdown over the their daughters’ inevitable loss of their virginity. And the fact that Sophie’s mother has to

literally examine her child with a “finger” to determine if she is still a virgin is a peculiar phenomenon which is passed down from mother to girl child and from generation to generation.

In light of this, Sophie’s maternal figures not only try to put her in a subordinate position in the name of upholding family virtues, but they reveal a considerable degree of distrust for her. They also humiliate and cause her to have a very poor self-esteem even up until her adulthood. Evidence of this is demonstrated when Sophie marries and experiences sexual frigidity with her husband, Joseph. It seems that her sexual future is blighted since the horror of the virginity tests of her past still plague her life. One can imagine that Sophie admits to seeing her mother executing the virginity tests using the dreaded “finger” every time she has sex with her husband.

Equally important, the sexually frigid Sophie who experiences no sexual pleasure, due the nightmare of her virginity tests, has to turn to a sexual phobia group for emotional support. It is not until after attending this sexual phobia group and later returning to Croix Des Rossets, Haiti, with the women who raise her, her Grandme and Taunte Atie, that Sophie is finally able to confront her problem of sexual frigidity. Prior to this, Sophie has incessant nightmares about the virginity tests and of her erratic mother, who also has her own share of a past rape and virginity test horrors, that plague her own life. What this shared experience shows is that the problem of female subordination has deep, long and lasting effects which often go on without repair in families, from one generation to the next.

Also, it shows how ghastly female subordination could be, and how it could penetrate society so far that it could contribute to the further gender stereotyping about women and the destruction of the lives of countless other able-bodied women. To be more specific, female subordination could potentially leave scores of other women, at best, ill at ease and disgruntled. Worst, it could

contribute to mass insanity, flawed sexuality, and identity crisis in women. Sophie admits that:

After Joseph and I got married, all through the first year I had suicidal thoughts. Some nights I woke up in a cold sweat wondering if my mother's anxiety was somehow hereditary or if it was something I had caught from living with her . . . I would wake up wondering if a man with no face, was pounding life into a helpless young girl (193).

Sophie is sexually frigid as already stated, and lives with the rape ghost of her mother's past that seems to be passed on to her. But luckily for Sophie, she is able to bounce back and handle her problems that are caused by subordination, only through continual resentment of the unwritten rules imposed on her by her superiors. Thus, one discovers that Sophie constantly undermines the dictates of the key influential figures in her life—mainly her mother Martine and Grandme Ife, who attempt tirelessly, to subordinate her into a “virtuous girl's role.” Taunte Atie subordinates Sophie but to a lesser extent, since she too, has often resented the way of their Great mother, Grandme Ife as a maturing woman.

In yet another attempt, Sophie resents the subordinate treatment of her mother Martine, when she decides to marry Joseph, a man much older than her with little financial means. This fact could also be an outward manifestation of her inner struggle to confound the insidious dogma regarding women of her society. Her mother Martine appears to idealize this dogma since she too is socialized to accept it as “the sublime.” The statement “The way my mother was raised, a girl is supposed to do that to her daughter until the daughter is married. It is her responsibility to keep her pure,” (60-61) exemplifies this. Even more, it leads one to think that Martine seeks justification for her subordinate treatment of Sophie. On the other hand, Sophie, in spite of her fighting spirit to resent this religious dogma, is still momentarily silenced. One can deduce that

she is momentarily silenced since she dares not verbally question her mother about its essence. And what's more, she does not question why Martine continually conforms to the apparently subliminal way of the Virgin Mary, which not only sets fear in Sophie, but it objectifies her. The religious incantations about the Virgin Mary that Sophie repeats during her virginity tests exemplify this.

Despite the pressure of the virginity tests and the "holier-than-thou-art" value systems Sophie learns from her Grandme Ife, Taunte Atie, and her mother, Sophie seems to have a burning desire and a strong urge to explore the very things she is forbidden from tampering with. Some of these things include premarital sex, cohabitation with a man she is not married to, and marrying a man with little financial means. Here again, one discovers that Sophie, like Janie, constantly resents the antagonizing oppressive pressures imposed on her by her society, pressures that are designed to guard against her being a "Bad girl." Sophie's and Janie's oppression seem to come primarily from their maternal figures who themselves seem to hide, the scars of the very problems that they face in their respective societies because of their own mothers.

That Sophie's Grandme Ife and Taunte Atie hide from Sophie the horror of rape that Martine, Sophie's own mother faces and which causes Sophie to be conceived and is the best kept secret for many years, exemplifies the generational and societal complicity in the oppression of women. That Janie's Grandme Ife also hides the rape horror through which Janie is conceived further reveals both the grandparents' inner struggle to counteract the oppression she faces and her struggle to overcome it. Once more, Chinua Achebe's "Girls at War" further highlights the tenacious role, played by society in shaping and subordinating women. For instance he mentions:

Gladys, he thought, was just a mirror reflecting a society that had gone

completely rotten and maggoty at the centre. The mirror itself was intact; a lot of smudge but no more. All that was needed was a clean duster. “I have a duty to her,” “the little girl that once revealed to me our situation. Now she is in danger, under some terrible influence . . . There must be some man at the centre of it. Perhaps it is one of these heartless attacker-traders who traffic in foreign currencies and make their hundreds of thousands by sending young men to hazard their lives bartering looted goods for cigarettes behind enemy lines. Perhaps it is one of those contractors who receive piles of money daily for food they never deliver to the army, perhaps, some vulgar and cowardly army officer full of filthy barrack talk and fictitious stories of heroism (11).

Unquestionably here, the female protagonist Gladys in Achebe’s work seems to be waging a social war and it also reveals how our repressive patriarchal capitalist society heavily influences the thinking, behavior and actions of people. Accordingly, Carl Rogers’ theory of “Conditions of worth” in Personality Development highlights the idea that “people are the products of the environment that shapes them” (Rogers). What this suggests is that the dogmatic attitudes of Sophie’s and Janie’s grandparents were reflections of the insidious norms of their respective societies.

Perhaps the account of Rogers coupled with Achebe’s account that “Gladys was just a mirror reflecting a society that had gone completely rotten and maggoty at the centre” (11), could probably explain some of the behavioral idiosyncrasies exhibited by Janie and Sophie and their mother figures. To begin with, the behavioral idiosyncrasy of Janie and Sophie, might be manifestations of resentment to the subordinate treatment they receive from authority figures, such as their grandmothers and the men in their lives. In addition, their behavioral idiosyncrasy

might be a clear signal of their desire to witness change in a society that seems to be failing in its promises to them as women once they adhere to the gendered expectations. Janie and Sophie are expected to live up to these binding expectations without fail. As stated earlier on, what one realizes here is the apparently insidious scheme that social structures indoctrinate individuals to become a part of without choice.

Also, there is strong evidence of the principle to conquer is to divide. By keeping women and men socially divided is to keep them under control and in subordinate positions. Therefore, Janie's and Sophie's whose thinking and actions differ from those of their respective societies, naturally are seen to be rebellious women. They are rebellious because they refuse to be chained and led by a "social leash." To qualify this statement Sophie notes:

I come from a place where women live near the trees that, blowing in the wind, sound like music. These women tell stories to their children both to frighten and delight them. These women, they are fluttering lanterns on the hills, the fireflies in the night, the faces that loom over you and recreate the same unspeakable acts that they themselves lived through. There is always a place where nightmares are passed on through generations like heirlooms, where women like cardinal birds return to look at their own faces in stagnant bodies of water. I come from a place where breath, eyes, and memory are one, a place from which you carry your past like hair on your head, where women return to their children as butterflies or as tears in the eyes of the statues that their daughters pray to. My mother was as brave as stars at dawn. She too was from this place (233- 234).

Clearly Sophie highlights the idea that mothers seem to be at the heart of their daughters' subordination. Mothers are at the heart of this subordination since it is they who usually first

show their daughters love and support, and at the same time, set the rules and enforce them. The statement “these women tell stories to their children both to frighten and delight them” (234), exemplifies this point.

However, Sophie also claims that the same mothers also “return to their daughters as butterflies or as tears in the eyes of the statues they pray to” (234). What this statement implies, is the fact that although the mothers try to be “brave as stars at dawn” before their daughters, they too, have their share of gigantic problems which there often seems to be no answers to.

Edwidge Danticat seems to have the answer to some mothers’ problems. For example, she acknowledges the insidious role played by our political structures in female subordination and suffering in Breath, Eyes, Memory:

Your experiences in the night, your grandmother’s obsessions, your mother’s “tests” have taken on a larger meaning, and your body is now being asked to represent a larger space than your flesh. You are being asked, I have been told, to represent every girl child, every woman in this land that you and I love so much. Tired of protesting, I feel I must explain... I have always taken for granted this story which is yours, and only yours, and would always be read as such. But some of the voices that come back to me from these hills respond with a different kind of understanding than I had hoped . . . And I write this to you, thanking you for the journey of healing- from here and back- that you and I have been through together, with every step wishing that both our living and dead will rest in peace (236).

Here it is imperative to mention that if women start to realize the root cause of their oppression it could be the beginning of the end of their obsessions, tests, and protests. Once

women are able to identify with and understand the tribulations of their fellow women, they can learn important escape routes and strategies against subordination and suffering. Danticat writes to Sophie thanking her for the “journey of healing from here and back.” This suggests that by understanding the tribulations and resistance strategies used by ancestors and present day heroines women can easier overcome some of their struggles. Perhaps by adapting some of the methods of resistance women will begin to see the light and discover self-identity, respect, and as equal a space as men in society. It should be noted that for women to resist means that they would be stepping outside the box and taking a stand for what they believe in. Only brave women take such a stand.

For example, Janie, the protagonist, in Their Eyes Were Watching God takes a stand for what she believes in. She takes a stand for what she believes in, regardless of the consequences she would have to face. Through her determination and unyielding spirit Janie proves her unique strength of character. The following quote attests to her strength:

The day of the gun, and the bloody body, and the courthouse came and commenced to sing a sobbing sigh out of every corner in the room out of each and every chair and thing. Commenced to sing, commenced to sob and sigh, singing and sobbing. Then Tea Cake came prancing around her where she was and the song of the sigh flew out of the window and lit in the top of the pine trees. Tea Cake, came with the sun for a shawl. Of course, he wasn't dead. He wasn't dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see

(Hurstun 193).

Evidently, Janie demonstrates a unique strength of character. To top all her struggles, Janie has to face a possible trial for Tea Cake's death. Being the last person to know his whereabouts naturally she would be held as the prime suspect. But in the face of it all, she is able to wage her struggles independently, and find herself. The inner peace and freedom she finds as she builds a new world around Tea Cake helps her find herself. Furthermore, Janie's admits that she finds self-discovery. To qualify this statement, Janie states the following: "Two things everybody got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh find God, and they got tuh find out about living fuh theyselves" (192).

In essence, one should have the freedom to think, act, or behave as one pleases in spite of one's culture or society. Girls should be able to think, or act as they please even though their identities are formed in part by the cultures in which they are born and raised. They should be able to find themselves free of labels such as "Bad girl" or "Good girl." But the interesting idea here is that labels such as "Bad girl" are exactly what seems to bring one the peace of mind one aspires for in life. In fact, it is the "Bad girl" resistant lifestyle that brings Janie and Sophie their peace of mind.

Finally, the struggles that Janie and Sophie have to wage depict those struggles of women who are subordinated in the real world. Whether or not girls are considered to be "Bad girls" or "Silenced girls" their experiences and their ways of resentment toward female subordination, though they may be manifested differently, are very similar. Clearly, Janie's and Sophie's thinking and behavior patterns depict those of many strong women who wish to experience freedom in the real world. Their struggles are commensurate with the struggles of the common women of society. They are subordinated by mothers and men just as ordinary women are

subordinated. Probably what is heartening is the fact that Janie and Sophie resent these subordinate roles. They have to deal with gender stereotyping just as everyday women do. They also struggle “to find themselves” as Duerk maintains in her quote that she too, wishes “to find herself.” Therefore, the texts Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston, and Breath, Eyes, Memory, by Edwidge Danticat, seem to provide some major implications for people with regard to female subordination and gender disparity, in the face of oppressive societies. In short, the texts presented occur to provide some compelling narrative methods for fostering gender equity among our students.

Chapter Five Conclusion

My intent was to find means by which female subordination and gender disparity could be lessened in our society by the use of Calypso lyrics in the classroom. The lyrics and literary texts analyzed were by Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, Queen Bee, Zora Neale Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat Breath, Eyes, Memory that offer narrative strategies for resistance against female subordination and hegemonic oppression. Based on the premise on which scholars in the field of Black feminist criticism such as Alice Walker, Bell hooks, Toni Morrison, and Audrey Lord, seem to agree, that female subordination and gender disparity are by-products of hegemonic oppression. Walker, Hooks, and Morrison maintain that the mother and sister bonds act as a unifying device against our divisive, oppressive Western hegemony. By keeping women and men divided by gender, the capitalist patriarchs seem to be able to maintain their power to control and to subordinate women, the prime targets for their market. Similarly, Audrey Lord, a Black feminist, sees “female eroticism” as a form of empowerment for women. When women are able to freely express themselves by resisting the gender stereotypes of their repressive society, Lord sees this as a tool for empowerment.

Admittedly, European imperial culture seems to be both arrogant and chauvinistic. A classic example of this is the way women and men live in the colonies of former European countries and simply conform to the European gender norms and other societal stereotypes without questioning the contradictions, loopholes, and double standards that exist in that patriarchal system. The point is that our people just want to maintain the image of the stereotypical woman and man in our society and unconsciously they conform to European hegemonic norms. At the same time, they allow the capitalists the chance to deprive them of

their individualism, their liberty, and their free will.

Hence my conclusion is that Calypso lyrics by Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, and Queen Bee, and texts by Zora Neale Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat Breath, Eyes, Memory which offer strategies for hegemonic resistance can lessen female subordination. This assertion can be validated in the research findings of Lindsay German who maintains that “Women’s liberation can come only through a collective world struggle to change the exploitative system and bring in a socialist society based on production for need not for profit, co-operation, not competition” (German1). From these observations, it would seem that female subordination is institutionalized and there is no easy means to break from it. If women do not become sensitive to the source of their oppression and devise ways to resist it, then the capitalists will continue to dominate and oppress the people of our society. In like fashion, men will continue to dominate and subordinate women in the home and in the wider society if women do not take action, in their own best interest.

My conclusion also finds support in the research findings of Nancy J. Chodorow who maintains that “Women’s oppression is social and not psychological. It is concerned with wage inequality, job segregation, rape, wife abuse, the unequal sexual division of labor in the home, and men’s power over women” (Chodorow 167). Again, for this same reason, our women need to become aware of the source of their oppression so that they can begin to resist and thus become empowered. Perhaps female subordination might be considerably lessened in our society.

My conclusions also seem to be compatible with the research findings of Andrea Shaw who maintains that Calypsos are historically associated with the colonial resistance and present a challenge to neocolonial cultural forms. By the same token, my conclusion is based on Ermalao

Ruberi's theory that "Popular songs" and "Popular literature" inform of the thinking, feeling and expressions of the common people of society. The popular novel and musical geniuses have the kind of popularity that many writers lack. Therefore, I conclude that texts which propose expressions of the thinking of ordinary people such as Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes, Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory and Calypso lyrics by Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, Singing Francine, Singing Vennie, can lessen women's hardships. In short, these strategies for resistance presented in Their Eyes Were Watching God, Breath, Eyes, Memory, and in the Calypso and Queen Bee, can be useful mediums for teaching gender education. And they seem to provide some noticeable resistance strategies against female subordination and hegemonic oppression.

Some of the resistance strategies identified in the texts are as follows: First, women need to be included in leadership positions as implied by Singing Vennie. "Until women can find themselves in leadership positions and stop tolerating abuse from men women's liberation will continue to be a figment of the imagination." Considering that women are usually the ones who work behind the scenes to keep the family and wider society together then the valuable contributions that they make to shaping and maintaining society should be honorably recognized. Second, Singing Francine reminds us of the importance of investing in the human resource in her rendition: "Dead Beat Dads." We need to witness a change in society not in terms of economics but in terms of people. By the lines "These children didn't ask to come here. But it's de parents responsibility to make sure that dese children got a good home with a safe environment and plenty of love to move around in," Francine implies the following. We should invest in our children by providing an environment of love, nurture, and support that will last them for a lifetime.

Admittedly, Caribbean fathers as well as fathers from the world over must realize their duty, responsibility, and obligation to the children they help to conceive and help to nurture them or else a continued lack of their presence will add to the problems of Caribbean society and the world. To confirm this statement, Singing Francine further notes that if the Dead Beat Dads do not shoulder their responsibilities by assisting the mothers they will be held responsible for the children's voids and emotional problems. In light of this, parents need to set their priorities straight and value their children more than money because money will disappear instantly. What will it profit parents to gain the world and to lose what should be their precious children?

Third, Queen Bee reminds us that we need to end our social dualities. As long as there are social dualities of which gender for example, is a major limitation, our women will always experience subordination. Queen Bee indicates that Black women should start to think from the point of view of men- "On de Other Side," and assume new roles in the home, in the workplace, and in the wider society. By the same token, Calypso Rose insists that she could understand why a woman must have an outside man. "Man does run like rat and have he wife abide by dat." In this line, Calypso Rose justifies the wife's need to seek an outside man since the husband fails to do his duty. For yet another example, Singing Sandra calls for women to form a housewife association as part of their struggle for equality and respect from their husbands. "I forming a housewife association. Who agree with me come and sign de form. Talk about gross male exploitation. No more hard work! Tell dem no more hard work!" Through this association with fellow women, women can implement systems of coping with male exploitation in the home.

Fourth, Singing Sandra draws our attention to a highly important concept for women to observe in their resolve against exploitation by male bosses. "Tell dem to keep their money. I going keep my honey and die with my dignity." By these compelling statements, women are

called upon to honorably refuse work related sexual exploitation. They need to realize that by refusing to accept exploitative treatment in the work place, there are multiple other avenues of opportunity for them to achieve their goals. Indeed, relative to Singing Sandra's idea of forming a house wife association and Queen Bee's thinking from the standpoint of "The Other Side," which is the man's standpoint, Singing Sandra calls for women to resist subordinate roles so that they could define their own standards. Clearly, if they continue to conform to the established social norms they will certainly continue to be disrespected, exploited, and silenced.

A fifth strategy is for the Department of Education to see the need to include popular narrative expressions such as Calypso and literary texts into their curricula. Students can readily relate to these texts as they often share the tribulations that these texts speak about. Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God for example, highlights some very strong examples of resistance to gender disparity and female subordination. Janie Crawford, the heroine, resists subordination from two successive husbands despite their wealth and influence. She trades the wealth and influence for a simpler way of life with a man many people would label to be discreditable and unworthy of her friendship. In addition, Janie sleeps with this younger man, Tea Cake, and walks back shamelessly to the town of Eatonville, despite the criticism and snares she knows she would be met with. Janie seems not to care about what people think about her. She makes some difficult decisions in the face of resentment but clearly, defining her sexuality and ensuring her happiness takes priority over what people think about her.

A sixth example is found in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory Sophie Caco, the heroine, resents subordination first from her earliest teachers and mother figures her Grandme Ife, Taunte Atie, and her mother Martine. Sophie chooses a man much older than her and whom her family does not approve of. She also shacks up with him although he has little financial

resources. And when Sophie marries Joseph she does not surrender to his will. She maintains her individuality. Also, she runs away to Haiti with Brigitte, her daughter when he upsets her. Joseph then gets the point and follows Sophie to Haiti to be re-united with her. Even more, Sophie inserts a pestle for a mortar into her vagina to deflower herself so that her mother would cease from testing her for virginity by insertion. The dripping blood onto the bed sheets seems to be a symbolism that her mother will cease to control Sophie's sexuality. Here we realize that "one does not always have to bear the pain" (Danticat 99), as Sophie's Aunt Tice, tells her. One can liberate oneself by making choices that will have positive repercussions.

A seventh example is the women's circle described in Breath, Eyes Memory where Sophie's Grandme Ife and other women gathered to cook, sew, and to support each other in times of trouble and to speak about life, is a useful strategy against hegemonic oppression. From an association such as the women's circle women can dialogue and critically begin to question oppressive forces and find viable solutions to the same.

An eighth example is Sophie's association with the black Santeria priestess (206), who gives her support about the importance of her mother line for protection, support, and guidance is also a noteworthy resistance medium against Black women's oppression. But I must highlight the need for women not to be over reliant on the motherly protection that also has the propensity to unconsciously lock young women into their traditional gender roles. However, what we realize is that although Sophie seeks support from women figures she still resists any form of protection that attempts to subordinate her.

A ninth example is when Janie Crawford in Breath Eyes Memory goes to a female neighbor in whom she confides and relates her interest in Tea Cake, the love of Janie's life. Although the neighbor advises Janie about Tea Cake, in the final analysis, Janie has to confront

her problems and find solutions independently. She does not depend on a mother figure for support. She uses her discretion to find solutions to her problems.

For yet another example of resistance to hegemonic norms, Singing Sandra calls for women to form a housewife association as part of their struggle for equality and respect from their husbands. “I forming a housewife association. Who agree with me come and sign de form. Talk about gross male exploitation. No more hard work! Tell dem no more hard work!” Through this association with fellow women, women can implement systems of coping with male exploitation in the home.

Equally important, Singing Sandra draws our attention to a highly important concept for women to observe in their resolve against exploitation by male bosses. “Tell dem to keep their money. I going keep my honey and die with my dignity.” By these compelling statements, women are called upon to honorably refuse work related sexual exploitation. They need to realize that by refusing to accept exploitative treatment in the work place, there are multiple other avenues of opportunity for them to achieve their goals. Indeed, relative to Singing Sandra’s idea of forming a house wife association and Queen Bee’s thinking from the standpoint of “The Other Side,” which is the man’s standpoint, Singing Sandra calls for women to resist subordinate roles so that they could define their own standards. Clearly, if they continue to conform to the established social norms they will certainly continue to be disrespected, exploited, and silenced.

For yet another example, in Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory Sophie Caco, the heroine, resents subordination first from her earliest teachers and mother figures her Grandme Ife, Taunte Atie, and her mother Martine. Sophie chooses a man much older than her and whom her family does not approve of. She also shacks up with him although he has little financial resources. Even more, Sophie inserts a pestle for a mortar into her vagina to deflower herself so

that her mother would cease from testing her for virginity. Her mother does these tests by insertion with a finger. What we realize from these resistant acts of Janie and Sophie and the Calypso composers is the fact that these women are redefining their roles and shaping their own sexuality. From these observations, students can become aware of important gender issues such as female subordination, gender inequity, and discover ways of resisting them in and outside the classroom. The classroom should prepare students for life and not merely for the purpose of passing academic courses. Furthermore, my conclusion has been influenced by Freireian Pedagogy which emphasizes the need for oppressed people to become liberated by not mirroring the images of the oppressor, but by defining their own images and ways of being. Otherwise they would remain dehumanized and probably never see the light to empowerment against oppression.

Implications for Women and Society

Based on research findings, I will propose the following changes for empowering black women of our society against female subordination and I will also make recommendations for lessening gender conflicts in our society through pointing out some useful strategies for people of Caribbean society to resist hegemonic oppression.

First, our society is in dire need of social reconstruction. If capitalism causes our people to be in an oppressed state, then the single thing to do is to reverse it. Seeing that culturally our women are usually strong and influential beings, (historically black women have fought tooth and nail to effect political and social changes for their people) then I propose that our women be included in our leadership positions. The inclusion of women in leadership positions could mean there might finally be an end to the insidious gender stereotyping which puts women, especially black women, who are judged by race and not by their potential and abilities, in a subordinate

position. Singing Vennie's song "Women's Liberation," aforementioned, exemplifies my point. "Women's liberation should mean equal opportunity and equal responsibility. Stop tolerating abuse from men. Otherwise this liberation will be a figment of the imagination." Clearly, we need to have a genderless society. We need to have a society in which no sex can dominate the other. Clearly, the patriarchal capitalists have had their chances and they seem to have abused them by oppressing others to maintain their power. For why would our women and men of society continue to be oppressed? Why else would our black women continue to be discriminated against because of race, and used primarily for their sexual characteristics?

Second, as a people we need to think critically about our present status and realize that it is our xenophobic mentality that stifles our mental, social, and economic progress. We seem to be afraid of social change. Often, we think of change and progress only in terms of economics. But we also need to begin to see progress in terms of society. That is to say, if we do not develop our human resource then we are truly defeating the purpose of progress. Our human resource is the most important resource and it needs to be fully developed. If our human resource is developed it is only then that we can boast about progress. Our women are one of those indispensable resources in our society. It is needless to mention their role as wives, caretakers, shakers, and problem solvers. Singing Francine, already mentioned, emphasizes the significant role played by women in her songs "Dead Beat Dads" and "Enough is Enough." In "Dead Beat Dads," she notes how the "Dead Beat Dads" neglect their children and the mothers and uncles care for them. In "Enough is Enough" she notes how the wife is tired from over work as she tries to balance roles in the home and on the job meanwhile her husband remains at home and waits for her to prepare his meals.

Furthermore, if women continue to be subordinated, then clearly, there is a social imbalance.

We should not have a gender warfare that subordinates our women and their children. Thus, our black women need to become aware of their oppression in the first place and second they need to develop resistance strategies against hegemonic oppression. To resist hegemonic oppression in our society, our black women need to begin to challenge the various social systems that are designed to subordinate them. These systems range from the home, the workplace, educational institutions, religious institutions, and other social institutions whose norms put our women in subordinate positions. I believe that texts from our Popular Culture which speak about the struggles of ordinary people can offer some effective strategies against oppressive hegemonic norms in our society because they serve to create awareness and the ordinary women and men can relate to the shared experiences of the characters.

Third, we need to end our social dualities. Clearly these dualities are designed to divide. To divide means to conquer and so we find that the people of our society are constantly at each other's throats and live in a chaotic state. We have dualities in gender. We have dualities in class. We have dualities in race and so on. It is because of these dualities we have this power struggle which oppresses and subordinates our black women and other people of our society. Instead, we need to begin to see the urgency and importance of unity as a weapon against divisive oppression. Our black women need to return to the "Old ways of knowing" according to Alice Walker, and discover the creative and liberating forms of hegemonic resistance used by our ancestral African mother figures. Through observing the ancestral "mother bond" our Black women can become united so that they can grapple with our insidious, divisive hegemony.

But we must also be ever conscious to the fact that, it is also these mother figures who either consciously or unconsciously, subordinate us it seems, with all good intentions. But there comes a time when we need to use our discretion to determine when it is necessary to resist some

of their insidious dictates. And it is these critical decisions that we must make, that will either make or break us. Admittedly, our capitalist hegemony functions like a trickster that keeps us divided. Due to our lack of consciousness about its ability to divide and thus, oppress us, unconsciously, we continue to conform to its norms.

Pedagogical Implications

Our Department of Education should see the need to integrate Freirian Pedagogy into their Curricula. Our school culture has a history of teaching and learning that is commensurate with the Imperial Westminster Model. Clearly that model is long overworked and is failing. Our Caribbean culture is so different from European culture and yet we continue to conform to the norms of the old school system. As sure as there have been major changes in economics and other sectors of life so too, there have been dynamic changes in our education system. The needs of our students are growing as well. Yet we continue to conform to old educational norms: unfortunately, many of our students continue to be taught using old instructional paradigms that limit their critical thinking and creative abilities. Often, I encounter students who are passive learners and who are overly dependent on me to spoon feed them. My teaching philosophy does not permit me to teach students who are passive learners with ease. Therefore, I try hard to structure my lessons so that students can think critically and use their creative abilities to make fuller sense of their world.

In light of this, our students need to have autonomy and a voice in their classrooms to express themselves about critical issues which affect them such as hegemonic gender stereotyping that causes a multiplicity of other social problems such as female subordination, exploitation, and objectification. Once our students become aware of the root causes of these problems then they can begin to consider ways of avoiding them, in the first place. When

students begin to realize that it is the hegemonic norms that they conform to that oppress them, they would resist them. Then, our oppressive hegemony automatically, would begin to lose its grounding: our hegemony is institutionalized and if one hand pulls out then it means that the entire hegemony is bound to topple over. Therefore, enlightenment is a first step in our struggle for reversing our patriarchal hegemony. Our students the future leaders need enlightenment or otherwise our nation will remain in the dark on issues of female subordination and hegemonic oppression forever.

Perhaps more importantly, Freirian Pedagogy which focuses on “Dialogistics” can be a useful form of sensitizing our students to these critical gender issues through popular culture. Once students can dialogue on and become aware of female subordination and gender stereotyping they would be empowered to resist. Instead, of learning by passive and meaningless “Banking” approaches, students would become more critical thinkers and responsive to their realities. What’s more important about dialoguing is that the students can be given opportunities to freely voice their opinions in the classroom, thus resulting in active and more meaningful learning experiences.

We can begin to create awareness against female subordination that is caused by hegemonic oppression by drawing on texts that are presented to our people through popular literature, music and even art. They are all expressions of the thinking, feelings, and emotions of our common women and men. Therefore, Calypso texts that inform about the struggles of ordinary people and Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God and Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory can be used as agents for social transformation and resistance against our oppressive patriarchal Hegemony.

A final recommendation for the Department of Education to see the need to include

popular narrative expressions such as Calypso and literary texts into their curricula: Students can readily relate to these texts as they often share the tribulations that the characters of these texts speak about. Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God for example, highlights some very strong examples of resistance to gender disparity and female subordination. Janie Crawford, the heroine, aforementioned, resists subordination from two successive husbands despite their wealth and influence. She trades the wealth and influence for a simpler way of life with a man many people would label to be discreditable and unworthy of her friendship. In addition, Janie sleeps with this younger man, Tea Cake, and walks back shamelessly to the town of Eatonville, despite the criticism and snares she knows she would be met with. Janie seems not to care about what people think about her. She makes some difficult decisions in the face of resentment but clearly, defining her sexuality and ensuring her happiness takes priority. Many of our students experience similar problems to Janie. The novel addresses real life issues. Many of our students can relate to Janie's struggles. They can also understand the concerns for women and men in society as expressed by the female composers of calypso. What this implies is that teachers can integrate into their teaching critical discussions and activities regarding gender, through popular texts which tap into the real life experiences of students. Students need to become aware of gender issues so that they can develop strategies for coping with the restrictive demands of life within the confines of their inescapable social and cultural contexts. In the appendix section of this thesis, two sample lesson plans highlighting resistance strategies to gender disparity, female subordination, and hegemonic oppression can be found. (See appendix V1 and V11).

Limitations of the Thesis

The most difficult challenge in doing this thesis was to access full texts for all the songs of the female Calypso composers. For those Calypso texts that were available transcriptions had

to be done from the CD's that were available. Therefore, the researcher included in the appendix only full texts of those song lyrics that were available. For the purpose of future research this thesis can further examine the body of Calypso lyrics by female composers on the island of Anguilla for example, between the 1960's and the present. Also, it can further examine the significance of major themes in the work of Zora Neale Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God and the work of Edwidge Danticat Breath, Eyes, Memory and that of two or more other Haitian women writers along lines of history, culture and politics.

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Statistics on Domestic Violence in Puerto Rico

<http://www.tendenciaspr.com/ingles/violence.html> Appendices

Appendices

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Appendix V11.....Lesson Plan 2 focusing on resistance strategies used in Queen Bee’s song “On de other Side.”

Appendix 1

Song “Die with my Dignity” by Singing Sandra

You want to mind your family
You want to help your man financially
You looking out to find something to do
But nowadays it’s really very hard to get
A job as a girl in Trinidad
You meet a boss man who promise to help you
But then de man let down de condition
Nothing else but humiliation

He want to see you in a fancy fancy pose
He want to see how you look without your clothes
He want to know how many men you had before
And if you’re strong enough to take any more
He want you to cock up like a bloody acrobat
He wife at home he can’t ask she to do dat
He use he cash and position
And wait to exploit every woman
He even promise to take you to de promised land
Still you ain’t know if de scamp will hire you
But if with all this humiliation
you get a job these days as a woman
Tell dem dey could keep dey money
I goin’ keep my honey and die with my dignity!

Appendix 11

Song “House-wife Association” by Singing Sandra.

I forming a house-wife association
Talk about gross male exploitation
Who agree with me come and sign de form
What once was a habit now is denounced
Always on we feet in de kitchen feeling de heat
All day long we have to cook, wash, scrub and iron too
Den late at night man does want a bite
Dey right in context and want you to flex
But it’s down to time: Tell dem no more hard work!
No more hard work! No more hard work!
From tonight we goin’ on strike!
Ladies do what you like!

Appendix 111

Song “Enough is Enough” by Singing Francine.

She tell she husband she goin' to work
But she had big plans it was no joke
For years she working but always broke
While she husband daily-don't drive a stroke
So she tell him:

Chorus

Enough is enough . . . (repeated 8 times)
We can go on this way . . . (repeated 4 times)
It wouldn't work out . . . (repeated 2 times)
She say it wouldn't work out
He say de children looking
Neighbor peeping, stranger watching
Girl stop de fussing!
While he kneeling an beggin' she stop
He say yuh have me sweatin'
He lie down watchin' TV all day
An' only waitin' til she appear
He wouldn't ask she: how was your day?
Girl what's for dinner he would declare.

Chorus

Enough is enough . . . (repeated 8 times)
We can go on this way . . . (repeated 4 times)
It wouldn't work out . . . (repeated 3 times)
He say de children looking
Neighbor peeping, stranger watchin'
One word she had for dis man while he pleadin'
An' beggin' she stop fretting
Enough is enough
It wouldn't work out

She does her duty as a good wife

But he demands and controls her life

She cook she wash and iron too

So now she don' know what more to do

So she tell him:

Chorus

Enough is enough . . . (repeated 8 times)

We can go on dis way . . . (repeated 4 times)

It wouldn't work out . . . (repeated 2 times)

Enough is enough! (Singing Francine CD Trinidad 2003)

Appendix 1V

Song “Dead Beat Dads” by Singing Sandra

Shame on you!

I say shame on you!

This chile didn’ ask to come here

But it’s here life is on now

And it’s de parents’ responsibility

To make sure dat dese children got

A good home wid a safe environment

An’ plenty ah love to move around in

But some heartless fathers turn dey backs

An’ de mothers an dem sufferin’

Dey don’ care if de children live or die

But when dey get big man an’ woman

Hear dese same shameless men talkin’

Dat’s my son! Dat’s my daughter!

She’s a doctor. He’s a lawyer.

Ask dem how much contribution dey paid

When de mothers get dey “ney ney”

To pay school fees an’ feed dem

When everybody else had to min’ dem

All dat time dey wasn’ yuh children too?

Tell me! When dey were sick an’ dey was hungry

How much food? How much money you paid

To keep a shelter over their head?

Yuh didn’ care if de children dead.

When de son an’ de daughter was in need of a father

De only one dey saw was mammy while Daddy

Only work hard on his big . . .

Dead beat dads

Cause de stepfathers to abuse their mothers

You is not no fathers
Left de chile to starve
Dead beat dads (repeated 2 times)
Dem is criminals at large
Dey wanted dead or alive
I'd put dem to sit down on a bee hive.
Shame on you!
I say shame on you!
Dead beat dads
You callin' yourself a big man
But I say you is a lil' boy
You should be facing Joe Brown or Judge Judy
To make you pay for dese children voids
You ought to be taught a big lesson
Bout when a man is really a man
Den when you prove you self a real father
Den only den dey should call you on
Dese children will grow up
To know who took care of dem
An dey will blame de so-called fathers
For all de emotional problems
See Mr. Briggs dat's my son
He owns condominiums up town!
Dat's my daughter she grew up so sweet
She have her own office on Wall Street
But of course to make two ends meet
It's true de Cruzan Rum was your retreat
You didn' care if de children live on de street
Bless de uncles an' de mothers
Who were de children father figures
Instead of tellin' de chile to obey

Mothers an' elders who correct dem
You causin' a big meley!
An' you don' know what's really going on
You behaving jus' like a clown
Coming to fight an' curse de mothers down
You is a dead beat dad
But you is a dead beat dad!
Dead beat dad
You is not no father
Lef' de chile to suffer
You ain' have no gratitude
Encourage de chile to be rude
I'm warnin' you you better take heed
Or you will eat all de bread dat de devil need
Shame on you!
Ah say shame on you!
If you fit in dis category
Den of course I'm singin' bout you
If you have neglected your children
Den your conscience should prick you too
Remember dad you getting' down in age
An' sickness is no respecter of persons
Suppose all your children pay you back
When you come beggin' for some reason
An' mothers saying to forgive you
God has provide' she has a heart of gold
She's de best mother is dis world!
So who is your son?
Who is your daughter?
Are you my father?
I don't remember

My real father he is in heaven
I do not know you!
Where do you come from?
Now tell me how would you feel
If dey give you back de hand you deal?
Would you be sad or would you be angry too?
The things dat you sow
Is dat you would reap
Don' wonder if you end up on de street
You expect de same children yo min' you
You don' think de tables could turn on you
Ah! Where is your conscience?
Do you have any?
When you lef' your children without a penny
God bless hard-working mothers first
Dese children have passed de worst
You is a dead beat dad.
If you say dat you love dem
Now is the time to show dem
Prove yourself a father
An' respect de mothers
You is a damn disgrace
And a big insult to the human race!
Our children need guidance from both parents!
I call dem dead beat dads
Lef' dey chile to starve
Dem is criminals at large!

Appendix V

Song: “On de Other Side” by Queen Bee.

God made man and the woman
Why man first is my question?
Is that the reason man feels he’s supreme?
Woman made inferior it really seems

To find a woman a job placement
Sometimes she’s victim and innocent
Trying to survive on a small salary
Pressure and harassment at work daily

If you think that man is the boss
Without a woman he’s really lost
A woman can do a lot of things
From making beds to flying planes

Chorus

After I die and come again
To come as woman would be insane
I want to taste man’s side of life
Next time around he’ll be my wife
Take care of the kids and prepare my food
I am the man now must be understood
My pay will be more so with others I’ll share
Come home late at night he will have to bare
How much of this can a man abide
If he was on the other side
Man without we you cannot live
Remember we have got the extra rib
So tell how much would you let slide If you were on the other side.

Appendix V1

Sample Lesson Plans focusing on Resistance Strategies used in texts Analyzed

Level: English 3104

Genre: Literature (Literary element- Characterization)

Topic: Gender Stereotypes

Time: 50 minutes

Objectives: By the end of the lesson students should be able to:

1. Identify examples of gender stereotyping and female subordination found in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God in a brainstorming group activity.
2. Compare and contrast the characters of Janie and Mayor Joe Starks, Janie's chauvinistic husband in the form of a Journal entry.
3. Role-play the scene in which Janie Crawford, the protagonist, refuses to be subordinated first by Mr. Logan Killicks, her first husband, on the farm and second, by Mr. Joe Starks at the Mayor's quarters.
4. Write a paragraph to describe one of the three characters they have been assigned in their groups.
5. Create a slogan to depict their favorite character.
6. Develop an awareness of the negative impact of gender stereotyping in their lives.

Previous Knowledge: Students are used to stereotyping because of its insidious nature and they can think critically and debate about critical issues that impact their lives. Students can also work co-operatively in groups.

Instructional Cycle:

Introduction:

Teacher and students will review the characters of Janie Crawford, Mr. Logan Killicks, and Mayor Joe Starks. For example, teacher might ask students: what does Janie do to make her a strong woman? Can you describe Mr. Logan Killicks? What adjectives can be used to describe him? What makes Mayor Joe Starks a chauvinistic man? Why do you say this? Discussion will accompany the same for approximately 8 minutes.

Step 1

Students will brainstorm ideas on the (3) three characters aforementioned in (3) three groups. Group A will discuss Janie. Group B will discuss Logan Killicks. Group C will discuss Joe Starks. Groups will use the Venn Diagram as an organizational aid and write at least one paragraph to describe their given character for approximately 10 minutes.

Step 2

Groups will then present their Venn Diagrams and paragraphs about the character. Discussion will accompany the same.

Step 3

Groups will then reassemble to plan a role playing activity on the character they have been assigned for approximately 8 minutes.

Step 4

Groups will role-play the scenes before the class. Students will be encouraged to ask questions and critique the presentations of their classmates for approximately 10 minutes.

Conclusion: Students will create a slogan about their favorite character.

Evaluation:

Self Evaluation:

Appendix V11

Lesson Plan for Queen Bee's song "On the Other Side."

Level: English 3104

Genre: Drama

Topic: Enacting the role of the oppressed female in Queen Bee's song "On the Other Side."

Time: 50 minutes

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson students should be able to:

1. Identify elements of women's oppression in Queen Bee's song "On the Other Side."
2. List the elements of oppression in a Column A and List Possible alternatives in Column B.
3. Present a 5-minute presentation to depict the oppressed women in her oppressed state and in her new role as a liberated woman.
4. Enact the roles of the oppressed woman and the liberated woman.
5. Sing or recite their favorite lines of the song "On de Other Side."

Previous Knowledge: Students can work co-operatively and have been given multiple opportunities to role play in class.

Instructional Cycle:

Introduction:

Teacher will distribute handout with song lyrics of "On the Other Side" and play song. Students

will read handout meanwhile the song is being played. Students are encouraged to sing along as well. Song will be played two times.

Step 1

Students will identify examples of women's oppression in song and relate to class. Discussion will follow the same.

Step 2

Students will list the examples of oppression found in the song text in a column named Column A. In another column named Column B they will list some possible alternatives to the examples of oppression found in the song text.

Step 3

Students will work in groups of 4 or 5 for approximately 10 minutes to prepare a 5 minute skit to demonstrate the roles of the oppressed and liberated woman in society. Students will use their imagination to create ways how to present the same.

Step 4

Groups will make their presentations. Students will be encouraged to ask questions and comment on the group presentations.

Conclusion: Students will sing their favorite lines of the song.

Evaluation:

Self Evaluation: