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DOUGLARISATION AND THE POLITICS OF INDIAN/AFRICAN RELATIONS IN TRINIDAD WRITING

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACRONYMS

AAAS –American Association for the Advancement of Science

ACWWS – Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars

BWIR – British West India Regiment

CAFRA – Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action

CSCS – Centre for the Study of Culture and Society

CWP – Concerned Women for Progress

DLP – Democratic Labour Party

EINC – East Indian National Congress

EIA – East Indian Association

HATT – Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago

ISER – Institute for Social and Economic Research

NAR – National Alliance for Reconstruction

NCIC – National Council for Indian Culture

NJAC – National Joint Action Committee

NJM – New Jewel Movement

NUFF – National Union of Freedom Fighters

PDP – People's Democratic Party

PNC – People's National Congress

PPP – People's Progressive Party

PNM – People's National Movement

SDMS – Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha

UNC – United National Congress

URP – Unemployment Relief Programme

UWI – University of the West Indies

WMA – Workingmen's Association

WWSP – Women Working for Social Progress

GLOSSARY

Anchar – suffix used to describe a condiment prepared with anchar masala, e.g. mango anchar

Babydoll – Carnival character

Barra – circular shaped fried dough used with channa to prepare doubles, a well-known Trinidadian delicacy

Candomblé – syncretic Christian/African religion practised in Brazil

Catha – a story read on a special occasion

Chutney (khimta) – popular musical form originating from Hindi folk songs

Chutney-soca – musical form that fuses calypso and chutney

Doeun – in folk legend, the souls of unbaptised children who live in the forest; they are neuter in gender and their feet point backwards

Doolahin – Hindi word meaning young bride. Used in Trinidad creole to mean young Indian woman

Duppy – ghost

Fantômè – in folk legend a tall and slender man who stands two legs astride crossroads or in cemeteries. He may carry a coffin or drag a chain

Hubshi – Hindi word meaning black

Jab Molassie – diable melasse or molasses devil; Carnival masqueraders represent this character on J'ouvert morning

Jahaaji bhai – brotherhood of the boat; refers to the relationship among Indian immigrants during the passage to the Caribbean

Jankie – Hindi word for flag pole

Jat – Hindi word for nation

Jhandi – flag raised after Hindu prayers

Kala – Hindi word for black

Kala pani – literally translates from Hindi as black water; describes the ocean crossed during the trip from India to the Caribbean

Kalinda – stick fight

Khurma – an Indian sweet

Kilwal – Hindi word used mainly among Indians as a derogatory reference to Africans

La Jablesse – la diablesse; beautiful woman in folk legend who seduces male passers-by; appears with one cloven foot, usually hidden under her long skirt

Mama Glo' - Mama De L'eau; African-derived powerful and benign protector of rivers and the environment; appears as half woman and half water-snake

Matikor – celebration of female sexuality held on the eve of a Hindu wedding

Nanny, nani, nanee – Used to describe old Indian women; also refers to the vagina

Orhini, orh'ni – cloth used by Indian women to cover their heads

Panchayat – council of (male) village elders

Pandita – a female Pundit

Papa Bois – in folk legend, father of the forests; appears as half man and half beast with cloven feet

Paratha – type of roti

Picong – friendly repartee; heckling.

Polorie, pelourie, poulourie – Light dough fried in oil and served with sauce

Sahina – green leaves of the callaloo plant layered with seasoned cornmeal and fried

Santería – syncretic Christian/West African religion practised in Cuba

Sas – Hindi meaning mother-in-law

Shango/Orisha – syncretic Christian/West African/Jewish (and now Hindu) religion practised in Trinidad

Soucouyant – female vampire in folk legend who sheds her skin at night and transforms herself into a flying ball of fire

Talcarry – Hindi meaning gravy

Tassa – drum made from stretched goat-skin; played at Indian ceremonies and festivals in Trinidad and Guyana

This glossary has been compiled with the assistance of Maureen Warner Lewis's Guinea's Other Suns: the African dynamic in Trinidad culture (Dover, Massachusetts: Majority Press) and Ramabai Espinet ed. Creation Fire (Toronto: Sister Vision Press).

INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the negotiation of national, ethnic and gender identity among Indians and Africans in a geographically and historically specific, post-colonial location. I investigate the process of Indian/African interaction through a modality of hybridity called douglarisation, which is extrapolated from Indian/African inter-racial or dougla identity. I argue that ethical considerations of douglarisation and dougla identity have been so consistently and steadfastly reinforced in Trinidad culture over the last fifty years, and perhaps even longer, that these can be creatively extrapolated for theoretical and political benefit. Further, I argue that dougla feminism, proposed by Shalini Puri (1997) and Rosanne Kanhai (1999a), and extended here, provides an opportunity to address the various ways in which women's sexuality is deployed in Indian/African antagonism. In exploring these analytical possibilities, I suggest ways in which dougla feminism connects with other analyses that are currently circulating in intellectual and creative writings by Indian and African women. Locating these continuities is critical because dougla feminism, having emerged from Indian women's considerations of their gendered and ethnic identity, is at risk of being co-opted for a narrow Indian cultural nationalism that sets itself in opposition to African creole nationalism. My understanding of dougla feminism guards against an Indo-centric cultural nationalism and instead privileges cross-cultural interaction while confronting Indian/African antagonisms. I also argue that dougla feminism can elaborate gendered fictional representations of Indian/African relations and I demonstrate this in my readings of the works under scrutiny.

My research in this area is informed by a sense of political urgency in relation to the social and cultural realities of contemporary Trinidad. My investigation of douglarisation takes place at a time when the installation in political office of the predominantly Indian and Indo-centric United National Congress (UNC) in the general election of November 1995 has precipitated renewed competition between Indians and Africans for political, economic and cultural ascendancy. The debates that have followed the 1995 election and which now precede the impending general election, scheduled for December 11th 2000, repeat the conservatism that has been pervasive in contests between Indian and African cultural nationalisms since the 1940s through to the present-day. Indeed, calypso historian and literary critic, Professor Gordon Rohlehr, observed with regret that in the decade of the 1990s: 'the "nation" is at its most divided and interethnic tribalism at its fiercest since the pre-Independence period' (1998,

861). Commentators among conservative sections of both the Indian and African communities have continued since the pre-Independence period to posit discrete, separate-but-equal cultural and racial identities that deny the defining ethnic diversity of Trinidad society. Para

Academic and popular cultural production has repeatedly called attention to the heterogeneity of Trinidad as compared to other Caribbean societies. The early population of Trinidad was mainly Amerindian and Spanish but this was superseded by a predominantly French/African orientation in the eighteenth century (Wood 1968; Williams 1962; Brereton 1981). This was further supplemented following 1810 (because of the revolutions along the Spanish Main) with almost 4,000 people from Venezuela as well as others from St Vincent, Grenada, St Lucia and Dominica who had lived under the Spanish Crown and migrated to Trinidad (Wood 1968, 33). Slavery and indentureship brought Africans and Indians and British experiments with sources of labour following emancipation further augmented the population with blacks from the United States, Africa and other Caribbean territories, whites from Scotland, France, Germany and Portugal, and about 2,500 Chinese (Brereton 1981, 99). A small Amerindian population survives alongside a twentieth century Syrian/Lebanese community. In this context, the insistence on notions of 'pure' ethnic and racial identity may be no less than absurd, yet it remains one of the many contradictions that complicate scholarly investigations of Trinidad society. Trinidad's ethnic diversity is implicit in this thesis, taken for granted almost, and my emphasis on Indian/African ethnic interaction is not to be mistaken as blindness to the extent to which Trinidad, like the Caribbean more generally, is a signifier of diversity (Hall 1994, 402). I found it necessary however to isolate the Indian/African relationship as much as possible in order to facilitate critical scrutiny.

It has also been necessary, indeed instructive, to isolate Trinidad from the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean, including the island of Tobago which is part of the nation state of Trinidad and Tobago. The exclusion of Tobago is logical. Tobago was annexed to Trinidad in 1889 but had a wholly different history (Williams 1962, 140 -151). In particular it does not have a history of Indian indentured labour and so does not contribute to an understanding of the relationship between Indians and Africans that is being interrogated here. In order to provide a detailed, materially specific context for this work, I have also sought to separate Trinidad from other locations in the English-speaking Caribbean where Indian communities co-exist with African communities. In chapter one I point to differences in the demographic and historical profile of Indian communities in Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Grenada, and argue for a sustained exploration of the Trinidad experience. In particular, Guyana and Trinidad share relevant similarities which I note but I argue that

significant differences must emerge from Guyana's history of violent Indian/African confrontation.

The politically urgent moment in which the thesis is written informs my concern to theorise douglarisation while being equally, or perhaps even more, concerned to animate a political intervention that privileges inter-ethnic exchanges in the current tense political climate globally. The 1987 and 1999 Fijian coups; the violent confrontations in Guyana since the 1950s through to the present; and the repressive, military offensive in East African states in the post-Independence period, typify the sinister conservatism of cultural nationalisms. Trinidad society, meanwhile, despite its ethnic divisions, remains an example of post-colonial negotiation of national and cultural identity that has not deteriorated into violent confrontation or constitutional crisis, although as I point out in chapter one, there have been periods when confrontation seemed inevitable. My belief that inter-ethnic violence marks a tragically defining moment in groups' relationships with each other that serves to so obfuscate the rich and enabling possibilities of cross-cultural interaction as to render them superficial and nostalgic, emptied of political potential, further strengthens the political intention of this work.

The term Indian is used throughout to refer to the descendants of Indian indentured labourers, a group that is variously referred to as East Indian or Indo -Caribbean. The term African is similarly used to refer to the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean, a group variously referred to as African Caribbean, creole or Afro-creole. The terms Indian and African are not used here to suggest that Indian and African ethnic identities are pure or stable categories. Indeed, the subject of this thesis is cross-cultural interaction and it would be a fundamental contradiction to posit immutatable and discrete Indian and African ethnic identities.[1] The terms, as they are used here, are convenient and recognisable; they are also useful in avoiding confusing slippages among the variety of other terms that are available.

I use post-colonial to signal the various complex relationships between Trinidad's history of colonialism and its post-independence negotiations of ethnic, gender and national identity, although I shall not engage with the theoretical debates surrounding the terms postcolonial, post-colonial, post-coloniality and post (-) colonial (McClintock 1992; Mishra and Hodge 1991; Loomba 1991). Post-colonialism, as I use it here, serves a convenient function as an organising rubric for the scholarship on which I draw to conduct this investigation of the dynamics of Indian/African relations in Trinidad at strategic moments during the last century. Trinidad society, engineered as it was by colonial imperialism and

Europe's need for cheap labour, is a 'post-colony' (Niranjana 1996, 18). Post-colonial theory offers a series of interventions – both intellectually and politically motivated – that seek to understand the complex matrix of history, culture and politics and that offer ethical ways of re-thinking models of cultural interaction and representation. I draw on these in the thesis.

From the 1940s through to the present, oppositional discourses on Indian/African relations from both the Indian and African communities in Trinidad have created circular arguments over national cultural symbols and national representation, over political representation, and over representations of one by the other. The current historical juncture at which this thesis is being written calls attention to one additional factor that I argue is critical to the positive political potential of douglarisation – feminism and the women's movement. Although I argue that feminism was securely co-opted by Caribbean nationalist projects that were almost invariably masculinist in their orientation, and that, in Trinidad particularly, the Indian/African division engineered by the bipartisan political infrastructure at the time of Independence influenced the development of Caribbean feminist theorising and the organised women's movement which replicated the wider societal marginalisation of Indian women, I also point to recent feminist scholarship that significantly attempts to rethink assumptions about a homogenised Caribbean female subject and questions of ethnic difference. Considerations of African women's involvement in African creole nationalism and the 1970s Black Power movement, and critiques of the masculinist ideology of those resistance movements provide opportunities for reflection and change. Meanwhile, representatives of a generation of Indian women who gained greater access to formal education in the 1950s, have emerged as key figures in both the organised women's movement in Trinidad and among feminist scholars in the region. They have joined African women in still tentative discussions about how Indian women's experiences and identity negotiations must reconfigure discussions that rely singularly on representations of the stoic and resistant African matriarch. At a time when other professional and educated Indian women of the same generation are being co-opted to serve the cause of Indian cultural nationalism - a project which has received political impetus from the ruling UNC and which is perhaps even more staunchly masculinist than its predecessor, African creole nationalism – these discussions provide opportunities for thinking about the relationship between feminism and competing nationalisms in political terms.

Competitive African creole and Indian nationalisms are undeniably gendered. Oppositional cultural nationalisms burden female identity with the responsibility for cultural

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[1] Also, both Africa and the Asian subcontinent are divided into different regional and ethnic identities.

continuity, inscribed in 'Mother Culture' or what Rohlehr refers to as 'the ethnic womb' (1998, 876). This thesis discusses the ways in which Indian women's bodies have become a primary discursive site on which the battle between Indian and African creole nationalisms is being fought. My own involvement in the Trinidad women's movement over the past ten years as a member of Women Working for Social Progress (WWSP), a group founded by Trinidadian novelist Merle Hodge, also contributes to my commitment to dougla feminism - which simultaneously calls attention to Indian/African interaction and to female subjectivity and which has engaged a handful of Trinidadian academics.

I explore the three concepts – dougla, douglarisation and dougla feminism – through fiction and calypso narratives. Trinidad writing has enabled previous theoretical extrapolations of dougla identity (Poynting 1985; Puri 1997; Reddock 1994b and 1999; Kanhai 1999a) and also enables my attempt in this thesis to theorise on douglarisation and dougla feminism. With regard to dougla feminism, some of the writings that I draw on are teleological projects that fictionally represent feminist theoretical positionings. Rosanne Kanhai and Ramabai Espinet are among the Indian women writers whose work, I argue in the latter part of the thesis, needs to be contextualised by these writers' political involvement in the Trinidad women's movement. The contextualisation is not suggested as a means of devaluing these writings. Indeed, the relationship between politics and literary representation is crucial to Caribbean literature more generally and Caribbean literature has in turn enabled explorations of that relationship. Caribbean literature has received wide attention within post-colonial studies for its relationship with national identity and anti-colonial resistance. Caribbean writers of the 1950s and 1960s such as George Lamming, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Samuel Selvon, Wilson Harris and Derek Walcott have not only represented counter-hegemonic historiographies of colonialism but have been crucial in imagining new communities, and new configurations of old communities, for enabling national and regional identification. Trinidad writing is no different in those respects, except, of course, for calypso and the fact that in a context of Indian/African competition for cultural space, 'culture' and 'nation' have been defined in terms of 'creole' imperatives to the exclusion of Indians and other ethnic groups.[2]

Calypso is part of the Carnivalesque tradition in Trinidad and provides a richly textured and prolific source of creative material that I use alongside fiction. Calypso emerged

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[2] Rohlehr's 1998 retrospective on 'The Culture of Williams' provides an astute analysis of how first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Eric Williams, manipulated folk culture to serve his vision of a 'national' culture.

out of the *kalinda* and *sans humanite picong* tradition. As a popular medium of dialogue between artist and society, calypsoes 'prompt a steady probing of surfaces, a constant piercing of masks, a relentless reduction of the assumption of power and arrogance' (Rohlehr 1998, 863). As part of Carnival celebrations, calypsoes and calypsonians dominate the national cultural scene each year from Christmas through to April. The calypso industry remains male and African-dominated. I am attentive to these biases when I use calypso narratives alongside Trinidad fiction as the primary material for this investigation. My own archival research on calypsoes from 1995 to 2000, the term of the UNC, is one contribution that this thesis makes to ongoing research on calypso.

There are three main objectives of this thesis. First, I am concerned to sketch the historical, cultural and disciplinary contexts of dougla identity and douglarisation. In so doing, I have brought together relevant scholarship and creative expressions in chapter two that demonstrate the political and theoretical viability of douglarisation. As far as I am aware, this is the most sustained work on douglarisation to date and as such it is important for the scholarship and archival material that is presented. Chapter three, which looks at representations of dougla identity in Trinidad writing, is a significant advancement on the existing scholarship and further demonstrates the need for a sustained argument on douglarisation. My second objective is to advance the meagre work currently available on dougla feminism. I achieve this by identifying from chapters one through to five the various ways in which Indian/African relations are unavoidably gendered. In chapters six through to eight, I narrow my focus to explore dougla feminism in relation to Caribbean feminism and cultural nationalisms. The third major objective is the recovery of Trinidad writing that represents Indian/African relations. In this regard, some of the primary sources cited in the thesis are interpreted in new ways while many are literally recovered from public and private archives and therefore presented in their entirety.

In fulfilling these objectives, I would argue that this thesis makes other contributions, particularly to the field of Caribbean literary criticism. It supplements the little attention that has been paid to Indian/African relations in Caribbean literature (Ramchand 1985; Poynting 1986; Kanhai 1995b); it engages with contemporary fictional works by Merle Hodge, Olive Senior and Earl Lovelace that have previously had little critical attention; and it provides an analysis of a small but significant body of fiction by Indian women writers. Some of these texts have been recovered through archival research conducted in Trinidad, some carry 2000 publication dates, some are works in progress, most are published in the 1990s.

Methodology

Jeremy Poynting's mammoth bibliography in his 1985 doctoral thesis on 'Literature and Cultural Pluralism – East Indians in the Caribbean' and UWI librarian Sandra Barnes' bibliography of Indian women's writing, provided early direction for my archival research and this thesis is indebted to their labour. The body of work I select for analysis here is thematically and stylistically significant and the limited size of the archive is not an indication of inadequate research but rather an accurate reflection of the scarcity of archived fiction by women, and fictional representations of Indian/African relations. Some texts which were located but which I did not use in the thesis have been added to the bibliography and will help others interested in researching this area. Even in instances where material was available, other problems were encountered. The short stories from Trinidad's <u>Guardian Weekly Magazine</u> are stored on microfilm at the main library of the University of the West Indies (UWI) but the microfilm printer has not worked for the past two years. As a result I had to copy the stories by hand and the page references were not visible which explains why they are not identified here. In some instances whole paragraphs of some stories are also obscured.

Researching calypsoes presented some peculiar difficulties. The work done by Gordon Rohlehr (1988; 1990; 1992; 1998), Zeno Constance (1991) and David Trotman (1991) were extremely useful for transcripts of calypsoes. Moreover, the centrality of calypso in Trinidad culture ensures that almost all recent studies of Trinidad society contain calypso references; in instances where only select verses are reproduced, it was possible to find missing verses in other books or articles. But calypsoes outside of the Carnival season and those within the Carnival season are somewhat different texts. During the Carnival season calypsoes are performed in calypso tents where, sometimes each night, calypsonians extemporise and transform their texts. Verses are added and subtracted, keeping pace with national events and audience response over the two or three months of the season. The calypso lyrics I include here should not therefore be perceived as stable although I have frozen a certain number and arrangement of verses for scrutiny. Oddly, researching calypsoes from 1995 to 2000 was even more difficult. The calypsoes were everywhere - performed in tents, debated in newspapers and on television - but well-intentioned yet strident copyright laws made it illegal to record the songs. With songs that were sung only in the tents and not otherwise recorded, I sought

the indulgence of some artistes and managed to obtain transcripts. During the seasons when I was not able to attend the calypso tents, authorised video recordings of the performances sufficed.

Where necessary and possible I conducted interviews. I had formal, brief interviews with singer/musician Andre Tanker; calypsonian Bally and Professor Gordon Rohlehr. Informal discussions with former journalist Alfred Aguiton; Black Power activist and intellectual, Khafra Kambon; novelist Merle Hodge; ethnomusicologist Vernella Pilgrim; and critics/creative writers, Rosanne Kanhai and Ramabai Espinet have also benefited the research. I was lucky to re-visit St Lucia for this thesis and I took the opportunity to conduct a few interviews among the Indian communities in Forrestiere and Augier. Luckily too, Derek Walcott's 1998 reading at the University of Warwick provided me with an opportunity to solicit his comments on Indian/African relations in Trinidad six years after his Nobel Prize essay which elevated re-enactments of the epic Ramayana on to the international stage.

Attention to language is a crucial context for this work. This exploration of dougla and douglarisation is enabled by the considerable range of creole languages in the Caribbean and creative experiments with those languages in the processes of national and regional self-identification. The inextricable connection between Caribbean creole languages and Caribbean identity is announced in the fact that creole languages are typically defined by the process through which they were formed rather than by solely linguistic characteristics (Winer 1993, 4). The focus on Caribbean creole languages as acts of identity has increased as the region's thinkers seek to derail the view of the Caribbean as colonial outposts and to legitimise a Caribbean identity. This attention to creole languages as fundamental to Caribbean post-colonial identity is premised on the view of language as 'the very foundation of culture' to which 'all other systems are secondary and derivative' (Jakobsen in Bernabe, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1989, 125). Literary production from Caribbean writers has been so influential in furthering this project that the imposing thesis on creolité by the Martiniquan trio Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant regards 'poetic knowledge, fictional knowledge, literary knowledge' as the only knowledge that can 'discover us, understand us and bring us, evanescent, back to the resuscitation of our consciousness' (Bernabe et al 1989, 99). The writers are careful to note that they are not suggesting that fictional or poetic knowledge is superior to scientific, historical or interdisciplinary knowledge, but they emphasise the extent to which fictional knowledge 'first, imposes itself, and then the intensity with which it can explore what scientists cannot explore' (1989, 123). They support the last by pointing to the recurrence of literary quotations in historical

enquiries, and assert that this occurs because 'artistic knowledge is a supplement to scientific knowledge when it comes to reaching the complexities of reality' (Bernabe et al 1989, 123). For poet/playwright, Derek Walcott, debates over Caribbean languages are additionally, a metaphor of debates over the validity of hybrid cultural identity of which he, Walcott - a *shabine*, a mulatto, a mongrel - is a visible marker. Walcott has consistently twinned discussions of language and identity in his own work. In 'What the Twilight Says' he describes himself as the 'mulatto of style', a 'mongrel' who responds to the words Ashanti and Warwickshire, both 'separately intimating my grandfather's roots, both baptising this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West Indian' (1970, 9). Four years later in his essay 'The Muse of History' he gave a 'strange thanks' to the black and white ghosts of his ancestors for 'the monumental groaning and soldering of two great worlds, like the halves of a fruit seamed by its own bitter juice...' (1974, 64).

Trinidad creole has not benefited easily from the elevation of Caribbean creoles. Despite the fact that Trinidad has 'the most varied ethno-cultural and linguistic history of any island of the Caribbean' (Winer 1993, 8), and despite the fact that assertions of this diversity pervade academic enquiries (Wood 1968; Hodge 1975; Brereton 1981; Yelvington 1993), there remains an assumption that there is no 'real' creole in Trinidad (Winer 1993, 1-2). Creole linguist Lise Winer suggests that this assumption is based on the fact that by the 1920s English was the de facto as well as de jure language of Trinidad and some felt that Trinidad creole moved so far in the direction of English, that Trinidad creole no longer exists as a separate entity (1993, 10). But Winer points out that French creole or French patois remained widespread in Trinidad until the end of the nineteenth century and that Trinidad also had a large number of Spanish speakers, mainly from neighbouring Venezuela, while Bhojpuri was the main language of Indian immigrants (Winer 1993, 9-10). The writings of Samuel Selvon, Earl Lovelace, Merle Hodge among others, and the lyrics of thousands of Trinidad calypsoes provide ample evidence of the range and potential of Trinidad creole. What is of central interest to me in terms of this thesis are the ways in which Trinidad creole 'diffracts and recomposes' (Bernabe et al 1989, 114) the language of Indian/African relations in the words dougla and douglarisation, terms which have themselves emerged from Trinidad's creole lexicon and which, I argue in chapter two, are weighted with the full complexity of Indian/African relations in Trinidad.

Language is crucial also as it affects the crafting of the arguments in this thesis. What can be easily mistaken for a limited Trinidad creole vocabulary of Indian/African relations – nigger, coolie, creole, dougla, racial – is in fact evidence of complicated and densely textured

etymologies. The word creole, for example, has a complex etymology even before its application to Trinidad where, as I show in chapter two, it is further complicated by its usage among different sections of the Indian community. To attempt qualifying explanations at all times would have been tedious so in many instances where I cite prose, poems and calypsoes in which these words appear, I have deferred to the competence of the creole voice and allowed the specific meanings to emerge without a cluster of explanatory footnotes.

The academic language that I use to analyse these works presents different problems. Post-colonial theory offers a vocabulary of hybridity and syncretism which, although enabling, is non-specific. In addition, the startling absence of enquiries into Indian/African exchanges from Trinidad academics means that there is no established vocabulary that discusses Indian/African interaction in relation to creole etymology. As a result, I have been left with the rich but complicated creole vocabulary and academic offerings that suggest little more than 'Afro' and 'Indo' as equivalent prefixes when discussing Indian/African relations in Trinidad. The search for an academic vocabulary with which to discuss Indian/African relations is further affected by the confidence, hubris even, among a significant section of Trinidadians who regard the confrontational postures of Indian and African conservatives as just that – posturing by masqueraders who 'play themselves' all year round dressed in the vocabulary of stereotypes, caricature, and *picong*. This group of people, I suspect, represents a cross-section of Trinidad society and share a conviction that inflamed racial utterances are a predictable and dismissable aspect of Trinidad's political landscape and there is no need for new descriptive and analytical terms to discuss ethical Indian/African interactions that they all know and live daily. This is the group that Walcott thinks can spontaneously neutralise the effect of current inflamed racial rhetoric in Trinidad. In a comment that I discuss more fully in chapter two, Walcott locates his optimism about the future of Indian/African relations in Trinidad thus – 'What I'm optimistic about is not the politics – that's superficial, that's ephemeral, that passes. What I'm optimistic about is the reality of what a Trinidadian **feels**' (1998b). The result of all of these considerations is that I use a language that draws from Trinidad creole and from academic discourses and at times groans under the effort to explain dynamics that many Trinidadians thought for a long time needed no explanation. In this regard somewhat clumsy words such as relationality, relations and relationship recur. At other times, however, creole inflections suggested a potentially richer vocabulary. Merle Hodge and Earl Lovelace are among the writers who, in their exploration of Indian/African relations, offer words such as race, racial, Indianpeople, Blackpeople and neighbourly. In the thesis I released the words from quotation marks and allowed them into the text, unfettered, where

they transform meaning. In particular, the word racial in Trinidad creole is not a misrepresentation of the word racist but in fact represents a different configuration of ethnic relations, a distinction observed by Hodge in For the Life of Laetitia (1993). Perhaps more importantly, racial in the Trinidad creole lexicon transforms the meaning of the word race when used by creole speakers in such a way as to dispense with the need for the term ethnicity. For the most part, I try to avoid confusion by using the word ethnicity but many times the creole voice and meaning are inevitably privileged and I defer to the lexicon of my first language.

CHAPTER ONE

Indians and Africans in the Caribbean:
A Historical and Political Context

This chapter concerns itself with the historical and political encounter between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean. I briefly sketch relevant aspects of African culture that helped shape the society into which Indians arrived in the early nineteenth century.[1] I then look at the Indian indentureship system and identify relevant aspects of Indian culture before exploring the dynamics of Indian/African relations in the Caribbean. In the last regard I broaden my focus to include Jamaica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Grenada and Guyana in order to refine my argument that Trinidad's experience of Indian/African relations is unique in the Caribbean and to emphasise the specific context in which douglarisation is being discussed.

As a point of entry into this discussion of Indian/African relations, I concern myself less with trying to determine what are in fact African and Indian cultural retentions and more with what are perceived and constructed as Indian and African by both groups in relation to each other. In particular, the question of African cultural retentions emerged early in studies of the Caribbean as a vexing and conflictual area of research (Frazier 1960, vii). The difference between what is perceived or claimed as African cultural identity and what is historically verifiable as emerging from specific geographical locations on the African continent was a preoccupation for Caribbean scholars during the 1957 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) sponsored Caribbean Studies symposium. M. G. Smith suggested that the difficulty derived from the 'inverted nature' of the enquiry, in that, instead 'of starting at the beginning of the process of culture contact and change and then tracing its development up to the present, we start at one end of such a process and try to reconstruct hypothetical courses of development for attributions of varying status and value' (1960, 34-46). Another difficulty he identified was the 'uneven historical materials which bear on African cultural persistence' and he found that ambiguities also developed with respect to the distribution of elements of African heritage in the New World (Smith 1960, 37-38). Smith

warned against the concept of an African heritage that assumed a uniformity and uniqueness of African cultures and pointed to the need to account for discontinuities between the traits of Africans in the New World and Africans recently introduced from Africa (1960, 38). Creative expressions unique among Africans in the Caribbean, such as steelband and calypso, also had to be explained (Smith 1960, 34-46). In their discussion of Smith's paper, George Simpson and Peter Hammond demonstrated the conflictual nature of this discussion by making a case for African cultural retentions (1960, 46-53); Simpson was himself among those academics whose interest in African cultural heritage in the Caribbean helped to identify continuities between West African and Caribbean culture. I am alert to these issues when I use the term African in this chapter to discuss aspects of African cultural identity that shaped the society into which Indians arrived.

By 1834, the last year of slavery, the African population in Trinidad was 17, 717 (Brereton 1981, 54-56). After emancipation, although there was no mass disappearance into the bush as the planters had feared, Africans sought to make freedom meaningful by seeking some measure of economic and social independence (Brereton 1981, 80). Historian Bridget Brereton estimates that of 11,000 Africans working in the fields in 1834, 7,000 left (1981, 80). Many remained in agriculture, buying, leasing and squatting on parcels of land, becoming small cultivators while giving part-time labour to the estate. Some left agriculture altogether to become petty traders and hucksters, and a large internal trade in items such as cloth, clothes, flour, tobacco and salt fish grew up among them (Brereton 1981, 80). A few became more prosperous shopkeepers in towns and villages. A large number used their skills as artisans and entered the skilled trades. Most of these collected in towns and started to define the urban orientation of Africans in countries like Trinidad (Brereton 1981; Warner-Lewis, 1991).

Contrary to most popular representations of the African experience in the Caribbean, cultural historian Maureen Warner-Lewis finds that many Africans from Sierra Leone and St. Helena were indentured for plantation labour following emancipation (1991, 14). These indentured Africans were among the African newcomers who considered creole Africans - those born in the Caribbean and who had been indoctrinated into European Christian values - 'outsiders' to African behaviour and interests (Warner-Lewis 1991, 24). Conflicts between

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[1] Indian immigration to Trinidad and Jamaica started in 1845; Guyana in 1851; Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1854; Grenada, St Lucia and St Vincent in 1856; St Kitts in 1861 and Surinam in 1872.

African-born and Caribbean-born Africans were based on cultural differences; Caribbean-born Africans thought the newcomers were bizarre because of their tribal scars, the practice of plaited hair and beard among Mandingo and Hausa men, the way they danced 'like pigmies' and spoke a 'hog language' and carried "funny" and unpronounceable names (Warner-Lewis 1991, 26-27).

Whatever their cultural differences, all Africans existed at the bottom of the colonial social hierarchy, and as the object of nineteenth century racialist ideology. British philosopher, David Hume (1741); English novelist, Anthony Trollope (1859); second President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson (1861); and British historian, James Anthony Froude (1888), are among the most famous exponents of nineteenth century theories of race which asserted African inferiority. These theories of the superiority of whites over Africans have since been memorialised in corresponding stereotypes. Hume was 'apt to suspect' that the African was naturally inferior to whites, they had produced no civilised nation, had no arts and sciences and no ingenious manufactures; he compared the Jamaican 'Negro' to a 'parrot who speaks a few words plainly' (1963 [1741], 213). Trollope described the Jamaican African as idle, unambitious, sensual, and content with little; he despised himself thoroughly, delighted in mimicking white behaviour, and although he is not absolutely without mental power 'as a calf is', he could seldom reason and is only able to carry his conclusions a short way (1968 [1859], 56). Jefferson's studied conclusion was that the African was inferior in reason, dull, tasteless and anomalous in imagination, and generally inferior to whites in the endowments both of body and mind (1964 [1861], 134-138). Froude meanwhile thought the African was conscious of his inferiority down to his heart and, if left to himself, would relapse into savagery in a generation or two (1888, 50-87). These views help to explain Charles Wagley's observation that Caribbean societies formed by the experience of colonialism in the nineteenth century exhibit a continuing emphasis on the social value of phenotypical characteristics and a multitude of 'social race' categories in which Caucasian features have the highest value (1960, 7). They also help sketch the racial hierarchising of the culture into which Indians arrived.

The other salient aspect of social organisation among Africans for the purposes of this dissertation is family structure. The prevalence of female-headed households in the present-day Caribbean has resonance with the matrifocal units among Africans identified in early anthropological and historical accounts. Vera Rubin identifies the matrifocal units of Caribbean African communities as 'one of the regularities of social organisation which has

appeared in the literature from Herskovits to Henriques' (1960, 117). More recently, Brereton found that although nuclear family units headed by the father were common, the majority of enslaved children lived with their mothers in matrifocal units (1981, 55). Today the terminology 'female-headed household' has replaced that early anthropological word 'matrifocal' but the resonance is axiomatic. While it should be noted that this form of family organisation among Africans is 'an instance of social adaptation rather than "cultural tenacity"' (Rubin 1960, 117), it is a feature of social organisation that is common among Africans in the Caribbean. Warner-Lewis adds that in the nineteenth century, many children were also reared by their grandparents, particularly maternal grandparents:

> This close relationship between grandparents and grandchildren was due to a number of factors, among them housing of the compound type; the fact that mothers residing away from their paternal home sent some of their grandchildren to stay with granny; and the appropriation by African grandparents of the first-born grandchild from each of their children. Some women, whose husbands had died or fled or who visited occasionally or regularly, retained patrilocal residence. Sometimes, when a child was orphaned at an early age, his grandparents took him into their home. In the same way, some first generation African Creoles grew up with African godparents, either because the child's parents (Africans) were separated, or to relieve the workload and responsibility of a mother who had several other children to look after (1991, 35).

Features of gender relations among Africans, which contrast sharply with gender relations within the Indian community, are crucially relevant here. The position of African women during slavery is believed to have established the foundation of progressive gender relations among African communities. Sociologist Christine Barrow points out that although Caribbean slavery was one of the most iniquitous and exploitative systems ever to have existed, it did generate a remarkable level of gender equality among slaves, and together with inherited patterns, laid the foundation for contemporary female economic autonomy (1998a, xiii-xiv). She explains that the majority of slave women worked side by side with African men and were treated as equals within a system which, in denying their humanity, also obscured their gender (Barrow 1998a, xiv). This, as we shall see, was in stark contrast to the gender politics among immigrant Indians.

Emerging in nineteenth century African communities was a syncretised European/African creole cultural identity, prominent cultural signifiers of which include the

Shango/Orisha religion, aspects of Caribbean folklore, and Carnival. The roots of the shango/orisha religion can be traced to Yoruba and Christian doctrines (Warner-Lewis 1991; Houk 1993). Shango, similar to the Cuban *santería* and the Brazilian shango and *candomblè*, is the worship of Yoruba orishas or deities during which some worshippers are possessed by the orishas or saints (Warner-Lewis 1991, 116). In present-day Trinidad, the word Orisha is applied to the religion as a replacement for Shango (Warner-Lewis 1991, 121). Warner-Lewis attributes this in part to a conscious effort among Africans to re-connect with Africa; the word shango having been so securely absorbed in the Trinidad language that it has lost its sense of 'otherness' (1991, 121). In this way the Shango/Orisha religion encodes Africanicity in Trinidad. Caribbean folkloric characters such as *Mama Glo, duppy, soucouyant, la jablesse,* the *doeun, Papa Bois* and *fantômè* are also continuous with West African Akan and Yoruba tradition (Warner-Lewis 1991). Carnival, also a creole syncretism, can be traced to the masking rituals among Caribbean Africans from as early as the 1790s. Much of the costuming, rituals, characters and abandon that define Caribbean carnivals proclaim continuities with West and Central African culture (Warner-Lewis 1991, 180-184). In particular, aspects of Carnival that allow women to indulge in sexual and verbal licence and for men to indulge in transvestite behaviour, are reminders of African secret societies (Warner-Lewis 1991, 184). The steelband and calypso, both associated with Carnival, are slightly later creole inventions which are also continuous with aspects of African culture.

These were some of the salient aspects of African cultural identity that helped shape the society into which Indians arrived. At the start of Indian immigration to Trinidad, historian Donald Wood notes, no one seemed to notice that:

> the balance of race relations was to be disturbed as two existing cultures, which were basically European and African, were joined by a completely new one from Asia. The Indian, although Caucasians, were not white; although sometimes darker-skinned than many Africans, they were not negroid. They could not fit into the traditional interplay of European and African in any predictable way (1968, 111).

Indian Indentureship

Nearly half a million Indian indentured labourers arrived in the Caribbean between 1838 and 1917, the period of the indentureship system. Of these, 238,000 went to Guyana (then British Guiana); 145,000 to Trinidad; 21,500 to Jamaica; 39,000 to Guadeloupe; 34,000 to Surinam; 1,550 to St Lucia; 1,820 to St Vincent; and 2,570 to Grenada. In 1859, there were 6,748 Indians in Martinique (Williams 1962, 100). Brereton adds that the majority of indentured labourers arrived from the northern port of Calcutta but a small number came through the Madras port in South India (1981, 103). In India the indentured labourers had lived mostly in the Gangetic plain; the vast majority came from Uttar Pradesh (then the United Provinces), Bihar, Orissa and Oudh. Smaller numbers came from Bengal and the Punjab (Wood 1968, 145). From the available data Wood also concluded that roughly 15 per cent of the immigrants were Muslims, a small number were Christians, mainly from the South, and the majority were Hindus (1968, 144-145). Among the Hindus 40 per cent were from the artisan and agricultural castes like the Kurmi and the Ahir, more than 40 per cent were from the chamar or Untouchable castes and about 18 per cent from the upper castes like Brahmins and Kshatriyas (Wood 1968, 144-145). The Indian immigrants spoke several languages – Magahi, Bangali, Oriya, Assamese, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam – but the dominant languages were Hindi and Bhojpuri (Jha 1985, 14).

Most of the indentured Indians were either poor or destitute, having lost their land or never having owned any in India (Brereton 1981, 103). Most indentured themselves on a voluntary basis to escape the harsh economic conditions of low wages, small landholdings, drought, hopeless debts to moneylenders, economic dislocation caused by British imperialism, and a living standard close to destitution for the agricultural classes (Brereton 1981, 103). Wood noted that famines in India were frequent and devastating (1968, 147) and Brereton adds that the savage repression of the Indian Mutiny (1857) further worsened conditions; this cultural oppression was followed by poor harvests and a rise in prices (1981, 103). Wood found evidence to suggest that some men were induced to emigrate for reasons of a quarrel, a crime or a caste dispute but that for the main part, economic necessity was the factor that forced Indians to indenture themselves (1968, 148).

Almost a decade after the arrival of the first indentured Indian labourers to the Caribbean, the indentureship requirements were regularised into a pattern of three-year contracts with free return passage after ten years residence in the colonies (Brereton 1981,

102). In reality the contracts were for a period of five years, with two years being treated as mandatory 'industrial residence' (Brereton 1981, 102). For a short period, between 1869 and 1880, free lots of Crown land were given to labourers in lieu of return passage, but after 1895 full passage, even for those otherwise eligible, was not paid (Brereton 1981, 107-108). Jamaican historian Verene Shepherd found that voluntary settlement in the Caribbean, combined with planter coercion, resulted in less than 30 per cent of the labourers from Trinidad and Guyana returning to India after they served their time (1993, 13). Less than 10,000 of those who went to Guadeloupe and just over 4,000 of those who went to Martinique chose to return to India; approximately 22 per cent of immigrants from Jamaica returned to India at the end of their period of indenture (Shepherd 1993, 13).

Whereas the system of slavery obscured gendered identities among Africans (Barrow 1998a, xiii-xiv), the institution of indentureship, together with inherited patterns of Indian gender relations, established Indian feminine identity and gender relations as important signifiers of the Indian community. The low proportion of Indian women contracted preoccupied British colonial authorities. Sociologist Rhoda Reddock found that the required ratio of women to men changed at least six times during 1857 to 1879 (1994a, 28). The difficulties that these fluctuations manifested derived from a desire to recruit more women but also 'the right kind of women' (Reddock 1994a, 28; Shepherd 1995, 239). Colonial authorities believed that women and families would encourage labourers to settle in Trinidad, which in turn would secure an experienced labour force and eliminate the cost of return passages; more women also meant that the labour force would be locally reproduced. Historical documents suggest that one third of the women who came to Trinidad were married women and accompanied their husbands but the remainder were mostly widows and women who had run away from their husbands, been put out by their husbands or communities or who were prostitutes (Reddock 1994a, 30). These 'wrong kind' of women (Reddock 1994a, 31) were often recruited in order to fill quotas; Reddock found that in the end very few 'respectable' women migrated and the sex ratio remained unbalanced.

The imbalance in the sex ratio led to competition among Indian men for the available women. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, relations between immigrant men and women reached a crisis. Brereton calculates that between 1878 and 1882 there was an increase in the number of women murdered and that from 1872 to 1900, 87 Indian women were murdered, 65 of whom were wives (1979, 183). Reddock speculates that this increase

was due to a number of factors - an increase in drunkenness in the 1870s, economic crisis that possibly led women to find new partners who could afford a dependent wife, and the increased violence which would have caused many women to flee (1994a, 34). The colonial state apparatus responded to this explosion of violence against women by further legislating against them; Indian women already received lower wages and were unable to purchase land. In 1881, a petition by 274 immigrant men was made law; in essence the law gave men the right to prosecute an unfaithful spouse and her partner in the Magistrates' Court, Complaint Court or Supreme Court, with damages of £10, £25 and more, or imprisonment, and imprisonment of the wife if she refused to return to her husband (Reddock 1994a, 34). This law was incorporated into the Indian Immigration Ordinances of 1881, which also made it an offence for a person to 'entice away', cohabit with or harbour the wife of an immigrant (Reddock 1994a, 35). Although there were laws that recognised threats of violence against women, Reddock found that the penalties were considerably less severe and the wife could not receive alimony or custody of her children if she was found guilty of uncondoned adultery (1994a, 35). Additionally, Reddock found that on some estates there was the practice of carrying forward an ever accumulating debt for rations supplied to pregnant women which resulted in these women earning no wages for months or even years (1994a, 34). This meant, of course, that during the repayment periods, women were totally dependent on men (Reddock 1994a, 38).

The imbalance in the sex ratio and the often fatal violence against the women who were indentured contributed to the commodification of Indian women; Reddock suggests that during indentureship brideprice was higher than its equivalent in India (1994a, 42). She found instances in colonial records where daughters were sold repeatedly but never delivered and, because the men wanted wives, an immigrant with two or three daughters was considered as having valuable property (1994a, 42). Michael Angrosino observed this in his research as early as 1976. In his 'Sexual Politics in the East Indian Family in Trinidad' he finds that whereas in India ownership of land indicated the possession of social and spiritual power, in Trinidad during the indentureship period the bride became the only real commodity (1976, 50-51). As a result, young Indian women were highly prized (Niehoff and Niehoff 1969, 102; Speckman 1965, 150). It seems that once married, however, they substantially diminished in value. Angrosino found that young brides or *doolahins* were almost invariably brutalised by their in-laws 'in order to make it clear that [their] in-laws possessed [them] completely' (1976,

53). The daughter-in-law functioned almost as a domestic servant to her husband's relatives often under the exacting domination of her mother-in-law or *sas* (Angrosino 1976, 45-46).

Constructions of Indian female identity in the post-indentureship period are also crucial in understanding the system of gender relations among Indians that has become a significant marker of ethnic difference between Indians and Africans. Social historian Pat Mohammed's invaluable research into the gender politics of post-indentureship Indian communities in Trinidad suggests that following the social engineering during indentureship, the Indian community re-constituted a gender system based on the classic Indian patriarchy from which they had emerged (1998a). She suggests that it was important for Indian men, emasculated in part by the demeaning experience of indentureship, to re-establish a system of power relations between the sexes that clearly reinforced the old patriarchal order of male dominance and female subservience (Mohammed 1998a, 397). She identifies Indian women's collusion in this project by pointing to child marriages, the tyranny of the *sas* or mother-in-law over her daughter-in-law, and the fact that sons were given the best opportunities for advancement in the family (Mohammed 1998a, 397).

Mohammed's (1998a) and Angrosino's (1976) research on the sequential adaptation of Indian family structures to the Trinidad environment belies a perception that Indian culture has survived the indentureship experience intact. This perception of a persistent Indian culture is often mobilised to contrast the Indian experience with the perceived loss of African culture during slavery and explained by the greater willingness of colonial authorities to allow Indians to retain their culture (Haracksingh 1988, 121). There is no doubt that Indian culture has adjusted, and continues to adjust, in the Caribbean environment. Debates over the survival of the Indian caste system, which has significant implications for Indian/African relations, echoes the debates over African cultural retention that I discussed at the start of this chapter. Barton Schwartz who studied the community he calls 'Boodram' in Trinidad in the early 1960s, concluded that 'caste does not exist' (1967a, 145), a view shared by Arthur Niehoff – 'caste is functionally a matter of little concern in the Hindu community' (1967, 159) – following his study of Indians in the Oropouche Lagoon in the same period. Morton Klass, while agreeing with Schwartz and Niehoff that aspects of the caste system, such as the correlation between occupation and caste and the complex rules regarding pollution of food, are barely remembered in Amity, the village he studied, stressed that all Hindus in Amity still accepted the hierarchy of the four varnas and that the majority of marital unions in Amity at

the time of his study were between members of the same caste (1961, 56-62). Although the question of caste is often raised in relation to Hindus, Trinidad historian Kusha Haracksingh (1988, 117) informs us that by the nineteenth century in India Muslims too had come to develop caste-like structures.

More recent scholarship remains divided on the survival of the caste system. Historians Haracksingh (1988) and J.C. Jha (1985) agree that formal caste structures did not survive the crossing of the *kala pani* or black water separating India from the Caribbean. Haracksingh illustrates this with the endurance of *jahaaji bhai* (brotherhood of the boat) ties which transcended both caste and religious differences (1988, 121). Jha suggests that the general type of manual work assigned to all castes and the competition for the few Indian women available on the plantation would have also made it difficult to maintain the high and low status prescribed by caste (1985, 9-10). But historian Kelvin Singh asserts that the prestige of the Brahmin caste was restored following indentureship and that the Brahman was able to reassert his monopoly of rituals associated with birth, marriage and death (1985, 41). Mohammed meanwhile acknowledges that there were opportunities during the crossing of the *kala-pani* to tamper with caste positions but argues for more research on the reproduction of a new caste system of one sort or another that she believes was adhered to well into the twentieth century (1993, 229). Brereton too believes that 'though caste could not be fully re-established in the Caribbean, it did re-emerge in the post-1870 Indian villages and played a role in their stratification system' (1993, 51).

A distinction made by Adrian C. Mayer may be a useful intervention here. Mayer suggests that although many investigators conclude that the caste **system** no longer exists, **ideas** about caste are still important to varying extents (1967, 17). I suggest that two features of the caste system referred to by Mayer are significant in understanding Indian/African relations in Trinidad. The first relates to caste notions of pollution and the other to the bias against darker-skinned people, both of which are implied in Brereton's generalisation that in the nineteenth century Indians were 'unwilling to interact with Creoles to any considerable extent because of their own prejudices of religion, caste and race' (1993, 51). Regarding caste notions of pollution, Niehoff lists 'ritual cleanness' among the most significant characteristics of caste ideology (1967, 151), and Colin Clarke identifies the retention of the view that purity is important at religious rituals and 'the feeling still prevails that Chamars have unhygienic habits' (1967, 195). Regarding caste bias against darker-skinned people, Clarke finds that

'varna is associated with race or skin colour, the high castes being light skinned and the low castes dark. This tradition is still maintained in San Fernando, and one saying warns Hindus against people whose colour and caste do not coincide in this way: 'Beware of the black Brahmin and the fair "Chamar" ' (Clarke 1967, 175). Also, he finds that Madrassis, an umbrella title applied to the descendants of labourers who were shipped from South India through the port of Madras, were considered lower than Chamars (Clarke 1967, 175). One of his respondents repeated an objection to Madrassis – "Madrassi and Nigger is de same ting" (in Clarke 1967, 175). This view of the Madrassi is consistent with the North Indian bias against South Indians on the basis of the latter's darker skin colour. The term Madrassi is still used in present-day Trinidad to describe dark-skinned Indians. I suggest that these two **ideas** tied to caste ideology combined to help form the Indian prejudice against Africans; if Indians, huddled together with members of different castes and religions during their passage from India to Trinidad, and again in estate barracks, could not totally preserve their notions of purity in relation to each other, they certainly could do so in relation to Africans. The fact that one of the principal villains of the Ramayana, Rawan, is of dark-skinned Dravidian extract and that the Ramayana was and is circulated among Indian villages through the Ramleela celebrations would also support and sustain this bias against Africans.

The evident cultural differences between the African creole population and the Indian immigrants, economic conditions, and the political and cultural influences of the dominant English plantocracy, all combined to determine the future of Indian/African relations in the Caribbean.

Indian/African Relations

Sociologists, anthropologists and historians share the view that colonialism laid the foundation of racial antagonism between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean and that pre-colonial casteist prejudice among Indians also contributed to Indians' general unwillingness to mix with the African population (Williams 1962; Decaires and Fitzpatrick 1999; Shepherd 1988 and 1993; Samaroo 1985). There is hitherto no evidence of similar pre-colonial African prejudice against Indians although Warner-Lewis's attention to the cultural arrogance among Yoruba Africans in relation to Caribbean Africans (1991, 21) and Joan Dayan's reference to the discord between Caribbean Africans and Congo Africans (1995, 43) do establish the

possibility. These generalisations are useful in pointing to the experiences common to all English-speaking Caribbean countries where there are Indian populations - Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent, St Kitts, Grenada, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Caribbean's history of Indian/African relations is certainly overdetermined by British colonialism and its associated system of representation, often reliant on stereotypes, of both Indians and Africans. In his 1962 work, <u>A History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago</u>, Eric Williams observes that colonialism produced exactly the same defamation of character against Amerindians in 1512, Africans in 1790 and Indians in 1869. Amerindians were described as being 'arrogant, thieves, liars, stupid asses, cowardly, dirty like pigs, and filthy in their eating habits' (Williams 1962, 111). Africans were by nature 'unjust, cruel, barbarous, anthropophagous, traitors, liars, thieves, drunkards, proud, lazy, unclean, unchaste, jealous to fury and cowardly' (Williams 1962, 111). Indians were similarly described as 'liars, filthy in their habits, lazy and addicted to pilfering' (Williams 1962, 111). The similarities in these declarations against peoples who were drawn from widely separated parts of the world and who had no prior connection to one another support cultural anthropologist Johannes Fabian's analysis that 'our ways of making the Other are ways of making ourselves' (1990, 756).

These colonial representations of Indians and Africans took root in both communities and continue to order present-day constructions of Indian and African identities. European imperialism imparted certain ideas of physical beauty (such as straight nose, straight features generally, 'good' hair) and culture which discriminated more strongly against Africans than Indians (Decaires and Fitzpatrick 1999, 59); this explains why a Commission appointed to investigate the treatment of Indians in colonial British Guiana reported that Indians despised Africans because they considered themselves superior in civilisation (Samaroo 1985, 78). No doubt Indian casteist contempt for Africans, whom they regarded as hopelessly polluted infidels (Shepherd 1988, 99; 1993, 187), also contributed to feelings of superiority among Indians in relation to Africans. Whereas European ideals of beauty and culture created certain feelings of racial superiority among Indians in relation to Africans, it also however created feelings of inferiority among Indians in relation to Europeans (Decaires and Fitzpatrick 1999, 59).

Drawing further on colonial constructions of African identity, Indians in Trinidad thought that Africans were too interested in dancing, Carnival and expensive clothes (Klass 1961, 244) while those in Guyana echoed the myth that Africans are incapable of handling

finances and preferred to spend all their money on entertainment (Layng 1975, 131). The African family structure, which contrasted with the gender politics among Indians and which was constructed in the terms of colonial discourse as loose and disorganised (Layng 1975, 131) sourced the stereotype of Africans as immoral and promiscuous.

Africans in turn, also using the yardstick of European culture, regarded Indians as culturally inferior. Indian's distinct cultural and religious habits were the source of many stereotypes during colonialism. Historians Donald Wood (1968, 110-111) and Bridget Brereton (1985, 29) note that some of the more sinister aspects of Hinduism such as suttee, infanticide and thuggee, and the bloody 1857 Mutiny, made Englishmen associate Indians with violence and massacre and Africans echoed that view. The famous 'coolie wife murders' also became an essential part of the African view of Indians – the idea took root that Indians held their women in contempt and that 'chopping' was their national way of resolving differences (Brereton 1985, 29).

Brereton suggests that the indenture system, through its construction of the 'coolie' labourer, provided Africans, once at the bottom of the social scale, with an easily recognisable class to whom they could feel superior (1985, 29-30). Africans regarded Indians as 'slave coolies' because they had accepted the contract labour shunned by Africans, and lived in situations little removed from slavery (Shepherd 1988, 98). It is widely held that the infrastructure of the indentureship system provided little opportunity for Indians and Africans to reconsider the stereotypes they held about each other because they were segregated from each other for much of the indentureship period. Singh suggests that relations with the rest of the society outside the plantation were not a part of the original conception behind Indian immigration and that the system operated within a legal framework that minimised the possibilities of social contacts with groups outside the plantation (1985, 33). Jha agrees that no serious attempt was ever made in Trinidad to integrate Indians into the already divided society (1985, 17). While there is no reason to contest these views, it is also true that Indians and Africans would have encountered each other during work, if not during leisure, and, as Warner-Lewis points out, the social adjustments that this encounter would have required have not been investigated (1991, 45). Following indentureship, as Indians in Trinidad and Guyana ended their contracts and sought to settle outside the plantation, they set up exclusively Indian villages in rural areas, further distancing themselves from the African population, which was

concentrated in the towns (Brereton 1981, 114). Whatever contact did occur, according to Brereton, was formal and brief (1981, 114).

Researchers believe that the stereotypes each group held about the other were considerably aggravated by the political economy of colonial society. Indians were introduced to the Caribbean to replace African labour and as indentureship progressed, Brereton notes that Indians did indeed cause unemployment and depress rural wages (1985, 30). In Guyana Indian/African tension was aggravated by severe competition for the limited arable lands on the coasts (Cross 1978, 45) and the decision of the planter-dominated legislature to pay up to one-third of the total cost of Indian immigration from public revenues (Samaroo 1985, 79). This incensed Africans who felt they were subsidising importation of labourers who were being deliberately brought to depress wages (Samaroo 1985, 79).

This context offers some aspects of early Indian/African relations that are useful in understanding the general tenor of relations between these two groups in the English-speaking Caribbean. But the exploration of douglarisation conducted in this thesis relies in part on the geographical and demographic specificity of the Indian/African relationship in Trinidad. Research suggests some significant internal differences in the histories of Indian/African relations in Jamaica, St Vincent, Grenada, St Lucia, Guyana and Trinidad that are crucial to point to here.

Indian settlements in Jamaica never approached the level of ethnic exclusivity they achieved in Trinidad and Guyana (Shepherd 1993, 16). Verene Shepherd, who has extensively investigated Indians in the Jamaican context, points out that post-indentureship Indian settlements in Jamaica were dispersed and their populations were small and lacked density (1993, 112). Further, the settlements were located in areas also populated by Africans; even in the areas where mainly Indian villages developed, there were also significant numbers of Africans (Shepherd 1993, 112). Also, there was no official policy that sanctioned residential separation and Indians in Jamaica lacked the base of land ownership that was essential to the residential separation of the populations in Trinidad and Guyana (Shepherd 1993, 112). Shepherd cites this absence of residential separation as one factor responsible for the assimilation of Indians in Jamaica.[1] She also cites selective creolisation, the process of conforming to the norms of creole society in order to be accepted and move up the social

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[1] Assimilation, and not integration, is used here as Shepherd's research concludes that cultural transfer tended to take place in one direction, that is, from Indian cultural patterns to African cultural patterns.

ladder, as another reason for the abandonment of Indian cultural traditions by younger Indians (Shepherd 1993, 206). In Jamaica these factors were further compounded by a deliberate government policy of assimilation. The planter oligarchy tolerated differences in food, language, dress, music, dance, and domestic rites and customs among Indians but they objected to pluralism in areas that threatened to change basic English legal customs (Shepherd 1993, 211-212). As a result they outlawed Indian cultural rituals relating to marriage, disposal of the dead, divorce, and traditional judicial practices like the panchayat (Shepherd 1993, 212). This contrasts sharply to Trinidad where these cultural signifiers continue to identify the Indian community in the contemporary period.

The other significant factor Shepherd identifies as contributing to the assimilation of Indians in Jamaica is the colonial education system. No effort was made to address the education of Indian children in Jamaica until the 1880s, and when elementary education was made available, Indians refused to send their children to school because children were important wage earners. Indians also opposed the content of the education being imparted and the (English) language of instruction (Shepherd 1993, 186-187). They also observed the possibility for ethnic intermingling in the elementary school system and, according to Shepherd, felt that this would threaten their religious purity and therefore their ethnic survival (1993, 187). Instead, the Indian community established several Indian-only schools between 1910 and 1913 (Shepherd 1993, 192-193). However, by the 1940s the Jamaican government was intolerant of Indian ethnic separateness and Indians, unable to sustain funding for their own schools, entered the government school system where they mixed with other races, mainly Africans (Shepherd 1993, 200). This too contrasts with the experience of Indians in Trinidad where Indians also resisted education for similar reasons but by 1868,   Canadian missionaries had set up Indian-only institutions in which teachers and pupils were almost all Indian (Brereton 1985, 28). And during the period of the 1940s when Indians in Jamaica were entering the government school system, Indians in Trinidad began establishing all-Hindu primary schools. As a result, education did not act as an assimilating force in Trinidad in the same way that it did in Jamaica during the post-indentureship period.

The profile of the Indian community in Jamaica most resembles those in St Lucia, St Vincent and Grenada where the major signifiers of Indian cultural heritage that identify the Trinidad Indian community have disappeared. There is also a commonly high rate of racial exogamy but Shepherd cautions against reading a causal relationship between the high rate of

racial exogamy and assimilation. She acknowledges that the greater willingness of Indians in Jamaica to take sexual partners from other races, especially Africans, is linked to the cultural assimilation of the group there but leaves open the question of whether this is a cause or a symptom of assimilation (Shepherd 1993, 17-18).[3]

The relationship between assimilation and Indian/African inter-ethnic violence, which is a feature of both Jamaican and Guyanese histories of Indian/African relations, must also be left open. Indians and Africans in Jamaica were involved in a violent confrontation during the 1930s. This was a period of economic contraction regionally during which both groups competed for scarce economic resources. In Trinidad, which I will discuss later, this was a period of remarkable Indian/African co-operation, but in Jamaica during the 1938 Labour Riots, Indians, who for the most part remained aloof from the demonstrations, were physically attacked and their property destroyed (Shepherd 1988, 106). Shepherd analyses that during this period in Jamaica, ethnic alliances prevented the formation of class solidarity against the common 'enemy' (Shepherd 1988, 109).

In Guyana, where the Indian population is considerably larger and more culturally distinguishable, ethnic violence has characterised Indian/African relations from the 1950s through to the present period. Guyana and Trinidad share some obvious similarities - histories of slavery and indentureship, the size of the Indian and African groups in relation to the other, construction of each other through colonial stereotypes - but significant differences must emerge from Guyana's history of violent ethnic confrontation. Long before the 1950s there were suggestions of deeper Indian/African animosity in Guyana than in Trinidad. As early as 1880 Wesleyan missionary H.V.P. Bronkhurst who had spent most of his working life with Indians on the estates observed that '...there exists an uncalled for bitter feeling between the native Creole and the Indian Immigrant towards each other' (in Cross 1978, 44). Eleven years later the Protector of Immigrants in Calcutta, Surgeon-Major D.W.D. Comins, commented on the 'mutual antipathy' between Indians and Africans in Guyana while in a parallel mission to Trinidad he observed that Trinidad was 'the favoured home of the cooly settler' where 'he [the Indian] can easily and rapidly attain comfortable independence, and even considerable wealth with corresponding social position' (in Cross 1978, 46). In post-indentureship Guyanese

[3] It is worth noting here that unlike the Indian communities in St Lucia and Jamaica where racial exogamy is prevalent, research on St Vincent suggests that Indians there have by and large maintained racial exclusivity and are concentrated in certain geographical areas such as Richland Park.

society the opportunity for conflict increased because of Guyana's peculiar topography - the population is concentrated along the coast and the cost of expanding into the interior is restrictive (Newman 1962, 45). Whereas in Trinidad emancipated Africans were able to work on the burgeoning cocoa estates, in Guyana the pressure on land was much more intense and Africans had nowhere to turn for viable independent cultivation (Cross 1978, 45).

These historical tensions were exploited during the period of nationalism in Guyana and led to an explosion of racial violence in Guyana during the 1950s and 1960s. The suspension of the constitution in 1953, the split between the Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham factions of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) two years later and unequal distribution of state resources are among the factors that Newman (1962) privileges in his account of this period of Guyanese history. Ethnic tensions were so inflamed that the People's National Congress (PNC) Sidney King proposed the partition of Guyana into three parts – one for Indians, one for Africans and one for those who wished to live with other races (Newman 1962, 42). Tensions culminated in the Wismar Riots of 1964. By August when the riots ended, inter-ethnic violence had claimed 176 lives, 920 people were injured, about 15,000 people were forced to move from their villages and settle in communities of their own ethnic group, more than 1,400 homes were destroyed by fire, and damage to property was estimated at $4.3 million (Jagan 1967, 361).

This state-threatening racial violence is one salient feature of the history of Indian/African relations in Guyana that differentiates it from Trinidad. Although there have been periods of intense racial antagonism between Indians and Africans in Trinidad, the relationship has never deteriorated into protracted violent conflict. Trinidad's uniqueness in this regard is observable in political exchanges during the 1930s, the 1950s and 60s, and the 1970s. Prior to the 1930s violent confrontations between Indians and Africans during indentureship were extremely rare (Brereton 1981, 113). Brereton notes that at the end of the nineteenth century the two groups despised each other and each held unfavourable stereotypes about the other, but neither felt their existence was threatened by the other or that the other's way of living was dangerous or oppressive to its own (1985, 30).

The period referred to in Caribbean history as the 1930s in fact collapses a period of labour agitation that stretches from 1919 through to the 1930s. In Trinidad this was a period of remarkable Indian/African working class solidarity enabled by the anti-imperialist politics of socialism. Trinidad historian Brinsley Samaroo adds that the experiences of Indians and Africans during the First World War set the stage for the co-operation of both groups in the period following the war up to the labour riots of 1937; both groups had served in the non-white British West Indian Regiment (BWIR) and both shared the experience of racial discrimination (1985, 82). Following the war there was noticeable Indian support for strikes which began under the Workingmen's Association (WMA) (Samaroo 1985, 82). In 1919, for example, when the stevedores in the Port of Spain docks went on strike, they were joined by predominantly Indian sweepers and scavengers employed by the Port of Spain City Council (Samaroo 1985, 82). When Tobago carpenters went on strike, Indian workers in Couva, Cunupia and Chaguanas in Trinidad also downed tools (Samaroo 1985, 82). This cautious co-operation grew slowly in the following years, and Samaroo credits Captain Arthur Cipriani for gaining the confidence of both groups of workers in the struggle for better working conditions for all workers (1985, 83). Indian leaders such as Timothy Roodal, F.E.M. Hosein and Adrian Cola Rienzi are among those who helped bridge the gap between Indian and African workers, advocating analyses of the society that emphasised class and decentred race/ethnicity (Samaroo 1985, 83-86).

In publications such as The Beacon and The People, Rienzi advocated Indian/African co-operation on the labour front as the only guarantee of a better standard of living (Samaroo 1985, 84). Malcolm Cross adds that C.B. Mathura, editor of the East Indian Weekly which was published in Port of Spain during the 1930s, 'was staunchly opposed to all references to Indian communalism and thus the conservative East Indian National Congress and the East Indian Association' and consistently called for a united Indian/African opposition to colonialism (1978, 46). Samaroo argues that the wide variety of political questions raised by people like Roodal and Hosein, the fact that these and other Indians were seen supporting African candidates in local government elections, and a climate of increasing economic hardship led to the greatest demonstration of Indian/African solidarity that ever took place in Trinidad (1985, 86). Samaroo believes that labour leader, Tubal Uriah Buzz Butler, who led

the strikes and riots of 1937, was able to attract substantial Indian support because of his alliance with Rienzi and that the combination of African and Indian leadership gave direction to the general dissatisfaction in the society (1985, 87). The disturbances started in the oil industry (in south Trinidad, employing mainly African workers) and quickly spread to the sugar belt (in central Trinidad where mainly Indians were employed). Samaroo recounts that it was almost three months before normal work resumed and this was only after Butler had been detained and a British warship and a troop of white soldiers made their presence felt (Samaroo 1985, 87). The 1937 uprising did not succeed in overthrowing the system of exploitation that existed but it achieved significant changes within the system, such as the decrease in the number of South Africans employed in managerial positions in the oil industry, improved social welfare provisions, and exposure to participation in group politics that led to the increasing role that labour associations played in national politics (Samaroo 1985, 87). However, this co-operation between Indians and Africans did not last, and the 1944 debate over the grant of universal adult franchise disrupted inter-ethnic solidarity (Samaroo 1985, 90).[4]

THE 1950s AND 1960s

Sociologist Rhoda Reddock describes the period of the late 1950s and 1960s as a period of the worst ethnic tensions between Indians and Africans in Trinidad (1994b, 99). It was the period of nationalism and, as Britain started to disengage from her colonies after the Second World War, political actors started to make their claim for leadership. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was formed by Bhadase Sagan Maraj in 1953. Maraj was also president general of the sugar workers union which represented mainly Indian workers, and president of the Hindu theocratic organisation, the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS). In other words, the PDP was the political arm of the Hindu community (Brereton 1981, 232). When the People's National Movement (PNM) started to define itself around Dr Eric Williams in 1954, the PDP was identified as its major political opponent (Brereton 1981, 236). By 1958, the year of the

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[4] The debate over universal adult franchise grew heated when European and African representatives in the local franchise committee supported an English language test as a prerequisite for voter eligibility. Rienzi argued that this caveat would exclude many Indians. The fact that the legislature had to be forced to remove this restriction had a considerable negative effect on African/Indian solidarity. See Samaroo (1985).

first federal election, the PDP had joined with two other parties to form the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and was able to field a formidable slate of candidates (Brereton 1981, 238). The result was a stunning victory for the DLP, winning six out of ten seats (Brereton 1981; Ryan 1972). Political leader of the PNM, Dr Eric Williams, reacted to the PNM defeat with what was described by journalist Raoul Pantin as 'one of the most intemperate speeches in his political career' (1990, 10). In a post-election public meeting in Woodford Square, Williams attacked the Indian community as 'a hostile and recalcitrant minority' (Brereton 1981, 239) and established the tone for the relationship between the Indian community and creole nationalism.[5]

Brereton analyses that Williams's speech was in effect an appeal to the African population for counter-mobilisation and it reflected the longstanding fear of the black middle class that the Indian political elite might seize power (1981, 239). This fear of an Indian political takeover was no doubt fuelled by Indians' economic advancement which was already visible by this time (Trotman 1991, 387). The 'Indians taking over' syndrome became an obsession for many Africans during this period. It was memorialised in calypsoes such as Killer's 'Indian Politicians' (1951) in which Indian political power is represented as contrary to the national interest – 'We going to all have the privilege/Trinidadians to speak the Indian language/Population are growing so rapidly/Election time they win already/As soon as they vote an Indian governor/Well the flag of India will be flying here' (in Constance 1991, 25). This fear resurfaced repeatedly in the following decades. In 1985 young calypsonian Natasha Wilson warned that 'soon an East Indian will become our new President/And Panday and them will be forming the government' (in Constance 1991, 25). By 1998, when Panday did indeed become Prime Minister and the mainly Indian UNC had been installed in government, the same representation appeared in the song 'A Vision of TnT in 2010' which won the prestigious National Calypso Monarch competition. In it, calypsonian Mystic Prowler works through a list of institutions, symbols and activities which he fears will be Indianised – 'No more Red House in Port of Spain/In yellow it now prevail/If you say Amen when you

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[5] The full context text of Williams's outburst is contained in Brereton – 'Williams denounced the DLP for using race and religion to obtain votes and defeat his party...he castigated appeals to race as the work of a hostile and recalcitrant minority of the West Indian nation masquerading as "the Indian nation" and prostituting the name of India for its selfish and reactionary political ends' (1981, 239).

prayer/You could make a jail/Church communion is no bread and wine/Is dhal and poulourie and yuh sign/With a chutney hymn'.[6]

In a climate of heightened racial tension about the possibility of an Indian political takeover, the nationalist project of the Williams era constructed a cultural nationalism that privileged African creole culture and represented Indian culture as discrete and inimical to the national interest. Professor Gordon Rohlehr traces how culture in the immediate post-Independence period 'became a manipulable lever in an elaborate machinery of patronage on the part of the controlling elite and clientelism on the part of the common folk' (1998, 868). He argues that such manipulation of the grass roots by the political directorate exacerbated rather than healed ethnic divisions (Rohlehr 1998, 868). State support for the cultural triad - the steelband, calypso, Carnival – ensured their metonymic relationship with national identity. Meanwhile, it was widely believed that Indians would inevitably lose their distinct cultural identity and melt into the larger creole population. After all, this was the trend with the smaller Indian populations in the islands of St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada and Jamaica. The melting pot theory of social fusion, advocated in the United States as a form of racial and cultural unity, was in vogue. Haracksingh remarks that Morton Klass's 1961 publication East Indians in Trinidad: A Study of Cultural Persistence attracted the ire of Dr Eric Williams: 'The simple reason was that persistence did not fit the general picture. Moreover, it raised troublesome questions which integration and assimilation could not handle...So resilience was misunderstood as the preserve of those who knew no better but to cling to old ways' (1988, 115). This representation of Indian culture as tenacious and persistent is often used to compare Indian and African histories of colonial oppression and remains today a major reason for mistrust. In one of her critical essays, 'The Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago', Trinidadian novelist Merle Hodge remarks that 'the total disruption of the African's culture has left him pliable, given him a chameleon nature, made him a man without fixed values. So that the Indian who remains stubbornly Indian is an opaqueness with which he cannot cope, an unknown quantity he cannot reckon with' (1975, 36).

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[6] The calypso was sung by Mystic Prowler but written by Gregory Ballantyne. It precipitated sustained debate in Trinidad over its representation of Indians but what has not emerged is the remarkable similarity between this song and 1987 calypso by Barbadian FacFingall entited *2009* (in Hanoomansingh 1996, 323). MacFingall's song was contextualised by the 1987 coup in Fiji and prophesied the Indianisation of Barbados.

Given the fact that the nationalist project contributed so significantly to Indian/African antagonism, it is interesting that Dr Eric Williams makes no mention of these events in his salute to the PNM in an article discussing 'Race Relations in Caribbean Society' (1960, 54-60). There, he describes the PNM as having 'a deliberately inter-racial programme' from the outset and he painstakingly illustrates the inter-ethnic orientation of the party by numbering the Indians, Europeans and Chinese in his government (Williams 1960, 59). He concludes with the conviction that only a nationalist movement that transcends race can contain and ultimately eliminate ethnic tension in Trinidad (Williams 1960, 60). This article is one of several utterances in which Williams privileges the cultural diversity of Trinidad society. Rohlehr refers to Williams' 1979 address to the Twenty-First Annual Convention of the PNM in which Williams charged the delegates with a mandate for the next twenty-five years – "Build the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Bring in all dem races, acknowledging all dem contribution" - and suggests that this was always Williams's text – 'it was only the performance, the enactment of such a phenomenal script, that had proven difficult' (1998, 886). The fact that Williams's inspired articulations of a national identity in which, according to the National Anthem, 'every creed and race have an equal place', exist alongside his planned cultural nationalism which privileged creole culture and represented the Indian community as 'hostile and recalcitrant,' explain contestations over the place that Willliams and nationalism have secured in national accounts.

In 1961 Williams led the PNM into an election that Brereton describes as the toughest and most racialist in Trinidad's history (1981, 245). The PNM asserted the right of the black nationalists to govern and the DLP responded with desperate rhetoric (Brereton 1981, 246). DLP meetings in non-Indian areas were disrupted by PNM supporters; DLP party leaders accused the black police of doing nothing, and eventually a state of emergency was declared in several areas of majority Indian voters (Brereton 1981, 246). The PNM fought with aggressive determination and the DLP reacted desperately with Indian leaders calling on supporters to break up PNM meetings, to march on Whitehall, and to arm themselves (Brereton 1981, 246). There were scattered incidents violence in San Juan and Pasea in North Trinidad and in Couva in Central Trinidad, but Williams diverted major ethnic confrontation when, in what Brereton describes as 'a statesman-like move', he agreed to compromise with the DLP and begin discussions on how best to reduce racial tension (1981, 248).

The nationalist period however had already set the tone for Indian/African relations

through its representations of Indian and African cultural and national identity and the institutionalisation of tribal voting patterns. In the first instance, nationalist discourses drew attention to Indian economic advancement and political organisation, privileged African creole culture and positioned it in opposition to Indian culture. In the second instance, and as a corollary to the first, nationalism institutionalised the pattern of voting by ethnicity.

THE 1970s

The 1970s is the third significant period that contextualises Indian/African relations in Trinidad. By the time of the Black Power upheavals, both Eric Williams and Bhadase Maraj had identified and mobilised the African and Indian communities against each other. Williams continued as Prime Minister and leader of the PNM while Maraj continued to represent the Hindu orthodoxy as President of the SDMS. Raoul Pantin suggests that the two also deliberately mobilised racial division (1990, 61), a suggestion flatly denied by the SDMS:

> Bhadase was further accused of conspiring with Dr Eric Williams to produce a separation of Afro and Indo-Trinidadians. The beneficiaries of course being the capitalists, the multinationals and the black bureaucracy. These wild charges have never been substantiated and quite a few are malicious figments of individual imagination. Some of the charges border on the frivolous and the ridiculous and are vehemently denied by close personal relatives and associates (1991, 51).

The success or failure of the movement towards African/Indian solidarity during this period is still contested in Trinidad; the defining March on Caroni on March 12, 1970 crystallises some of the contentions. Journalist Raoul Pantin who covered the 1970 revolution for the Trinidad Guardian newspaper, thought that the March on Caroni was a calculated move to head off the mounting criticism that Black Power was against Indians – 'By marching through Caroni, NJAC [National Joint Action Committee] would demonstrate its solidarity with its "Indian brothers and sisters" and would bring to life the slogan borne by some NJAC flags: "Indians and Africans Unite". It would suggest the creation of a mass movement' (Pantin 1990, 61). Indeed, the dramatically conceived march came one week after the first major Black Power demonstration during which windows of downtown stores, including three belonging to Indian families, were smashed by demonstrators (Nicholls 1971, 449). The March on Caroni was

declared to be a demonstration of solidarity by young, urban Africans with Indian sugar workers (Nicholls 1971, 449).

Maraj's response to the march occasions an enduring representation of him as a stumbling block to Indian/African solidarity during this period. In a posthumous defence of him, the SDMS explains that 'during the Black Power demonstrations, Bhadase declared that if anything happened to the people in the Indian areas, he would ensure that the marchers were disciplined. He was a firm believer in revolution through the democratic process - not otherwise. He also mistrusted the Black Power leaders' (1991, 47). This account erases a significant image in the memory of Trinidadians. When the marchers reached Champs Fleurs where Bhadase lived, Pantin recalls:

> and there, on his open front lawn stood Maraj, a revolver gleaming from his waistband, a shotgun lying at his feet on the grass. Two police officers stood, askance, outside the gate...But Maraj stood his ground, loudly defying the demonstrators as they marched in silence past his house to encroach on his property and uttering veiled warnings about what they would encounter when they entered Caroni (1990, 64).

But the march was uneventful. Nicholls records that on the day prior to the march, a number of Indian students from the University of the West Indies had visited the villages through which the marchers were to pass in an attempt to convince them that the demonstrators had no hostile intention towards them:

> They found that many of the villagers genuinely feared that the marchers intended to do mischief. Not all the students who went out on this mission were in favour of the demonstration, but they felt that, if it were going to take place, then the best thing to do would be for Indians to quieten the fears of the villagers and also themselves to join the procession, in order to avoid the appearance of a racial confrontation between predominantly African demonstrators and a largely Indian population (Nicholls 1971, 450).

When the march reached Caroni, Pantin describes:

> On the outskirts of some Caroni villages, a scattering of mostly young Indian men and women stood at the side of the road to welcome the demonstrators with applause and shouts of

> encouragement. As they actually marched through some villages, again young men and women cheered and offered water and orange juice to the thirsty people from Port of Spain. Indian elders, though, were more aloof, keeping a watchful and wary distance. (One of the pre-march rumours spread in Caroni that black men were coming to rape Indian women!)...In spite of all the tension...the march through Caroni had been completed peacefully, without incident (1990, 68).

Although the march proved that violent confrontation between Indians and Africans would not materialise, it also showed that the protesters could expect no substantial Indian support (Bennett 1989, 139).

It is clear that Black Power leaders tried to take ideological account of Indian ethnic identity during the upheavals. David Nicholls notes that Black Power ideology in other locations had earlier tried to broaden the political meaning of blackness – in the mid-1960s Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture) and those associated with him were keen to link the movement to other radical movements in the Third World; and activists associated with the NAACP and the Urban League had associated African struggle with the world-wide battle against oppression (1971, 443). Although in the United States the movement remained necessarily Afro-centred (Nicholls 1971, 444), in Trinidad, there were attempts to modify the concept of blackness to convey the image of common Indian/African oppression under colonial rule and, by implication, a common destiny. Nicholls believes that leaders of the Black Power movement in Trinidad were unanimous in their expressed desire to include Indians as full partners in the movement (1971, 445). But he also found evidence of slippages into an equation of blackness with African (Nicholls 1971, 445). In this regard he cites Walter Rodney's The Groundings With My Brothers and several speeches and pamphlets of the period which 'slip into using the term [Black] to refer to Africans alone' (Nicholls 1971, 445), thereby alienating Indians from the struggle.

Nicholls believes that the Black Power leaders underestimated the importance of the suspicion between the two groups and therefore failed to do the groundwork necessary for Indian/African solidarity; he also points out that the movement grew so fast among the young Africans in Port of Spain that there was little time to do the slow and painstaking work necessary in Indian villages (1971, 446). As a consequence, Indian participation in the movement was limited. Indeed Nicholls found that less than one per cent of those who attended marches and demonstrations during February to April 1970 were Indian, and that of

the fifty or so people detained under the state of emergency that effectively stalled the movement, only two people were of predominantly Indian origin (1971, 447). Makandal Daaga, formerly Geddes Granger, who led the Black Power Movement in Trinidad, himself reflected that black power ideology underestimated the cultural divergences rooted in history, economics and views of life between Indians and Africans (in La Guerre 1985, xvii).

Researchers and activists continue to debate the extent and significance of Indian/African solidarity during this period. Nicholls believes that the March on Caroni made an impression on Indian opinion and there was the real possibility of future alliances (1971, 456). John La Guerre concentrates on how the movement towards Indian/African solidarity collapsed because of mutual ignorance by Indians and Africans about each other (1985, xvii). Samaroo argues that by the end of the decade of the 1970s Trinidad had reversed itself into racial compartments (1985, 91); Singh writes about the 1970s as a period during which the 'Negro' middle class forcefully made demands for a greater share of the economic rewards of independence; he makes no mention of Indian involvement (1985, 56-91). To Kevin Yelvington the movement tended to alienate East Indians because it used 'African' symbols and referred to the politically and economically disadvantaged as 'black', because its leadership was mostly black, and because it tended to concentrate its activities in urban areas (1993, 13). At the close of the decade Trinidadian novelist Samuel Selvon commented that 'when Black Power came into vogue, it widened the gulf [between Indians and Africans] and emphasised the displacement of the Indian. Black Power was never for the 'coloured' races as such. It was for the black man only. Like the White Bogey, we now had the Black Bogey to contend with' (1979, 18).

Among those who witnessed and/or participated in the 1970s upheavals, former NJAC member Khafra Kambon and journalist Alfred Aguiton insist that Indian/African unity was tangible and provides much cause for optimism about future relations between both groups (interviews with author, 1999). Conservative commentators from the Indian community, drawing on orthodox Hindu representations of Black Power and recalling anti-Indian constructions of Trinidadian national identity (Jagessar 1974; Harradan 1970), continue to argue that Indian/African unity was confined to banners carried by the marchers (Smith 2000). Both views were prominent in 1995 when, for the first time, the anniversary of the Black Power Revolution was commemorated with a national television debate. The programme involved major actors from the 1970s and the issue of Indian/African solidarity was again

hotly contested. In April 2000, the same commentators expressed the same views in newspaper articles in Trinidad (Smith 2000).

One interesting facet of the March on Caroni was the image of Indian/African relations as a threatening African male sexuality encroaching on a chaste Indian womanhood. This was contained in the pre-march rumour that African men were going to Caroni to rape Indian virgins. This representation is continuous with colonial constructions of Indian feminine identity during the indentureship period as well as the Indian community's construction of Indian female identity in the post-indentureship period. This particular gendered configuration of Indian/African relations recurs in Trinidad history and remains one of the most ubiquitous representations of Indian/African relations. It surfaces at critical political and historical moments; the 1970 March on Caroni was one such formative moment.

THE 1990s

In 1990s Trinidad, Indians and Africans continue to comprise the majority of the population; the Indian population however has grown and is now equal in number to the traditionally larger African group. The 1990 census recorded that of the 1.25 million people, 39.6 per cent were Africans, 40.3 per cent were Indians; the small number of Chinese, Portuguese, Syrians, Lebanese, and local whites, along with the mixtures of these groups, account for 18.4 per cent.

Visible economic growth among the Indian population has traditionally been a source of racial conflict; a common saying in Trinidad is that Indians had land and money while Africans had political power. In November 1995, tribal voting patterns established during the 1950s and 1960s climaxed with 17 of Trinidad's 36 electoral seats being won by the UNC, 17 being won by PNM candidates, and the two Tobago electoral constituencies voting for the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR). The UNC brokered an agreement with the two Tobago representatives and assumed office. The installation of the mainly-Indian UNC in 1995 was seen by Indians as their coming of age politically, signalled in comments such as 'is Indian time now' which can be seen inscribed on buildings throughout Trinidad. Africans perceive Indian ascension to political office as a shift in the power structure -- now Indians have money, land **and** political power. During the 2000 Carnival season calypsonian Gypsy articulated the feeling of political dispossession among Africans. In 'Be Conscious (Be African)' he sings:

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Indians control land and business

Syrians control the money

Africans used to have strength and politics

Today we eh control any…

Africans control something again (Gypsy 2000).

Meanwhile Indian challenges to African cultural hegemony indicate that Indians continue to feel culturally marginalised. Representations of Indian political, economic and cultural identity in nationalist discourses are resuscitated in the present period to explain the high number of Indians who sought entry to Canada as refugees in the 1980s and Indian support for visiting Indian and Pakistani cricket teams playing against the West Indies. These representations continue to circulate in Trinidad today and help explain Reddock's observation that Indians continue to feel insecure about their rights of citizenship (Reddock 1999, 576). The next general election is scheduled for December 2000.

This chapter broadly addressed some aspects of the historical encounter between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean. More specifically, it focused on salient political and historical differences between the two groups that inform Indian/African relations in Trinidad at strategic points in history. Of the factors that shape Indian/African relations in Trinidad, I have identified female identity and gender relations among both Indians and Africans for critical scrutiny. I will continue to elaborate on this in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

Dougla and Douglarisation: The Cultural Encounter Between Indians and Africans in Trinidad

The terms dougla and douglarisation are being used in this dissertation to explore Indian/Africans relations in Trinidad and as a way of drawing attention to the gendered configuration of that relationship. These two objectives connect with Caribbean discourses on cultural identity, both popular and theoretical, and with Caribbean feminist theories respectively. Both terms - dougla and douglarisation- describe Indian/African relations. The one crucial difference between them derives from the fact that douglarisation entered the Trinidad creole lexicon much later than dougla and in a social context that privileged purist constructions of Indian ethnic identity and conservative constructions of Indian womanhood. In this chapter I outline the lexical, demographical, cultural and disciplinary contexts of the terms with specific emphasis on how Indian female identity is constructed and positioned in discourses on Indian/African relations.

Dougla is a Hindi word that is used in parts of India to describe the offspring of inter-religious or inter-caste sexual unions. In many parts of the English-speaking Caribbean it identifies the children of Indian and African parents; the mixed race child is referred to as a dougla. In Jamaica, where there is a small community of Indians, the word was not used until recently. During the early 1900s, the offspring of these unions were referred to as Indian coloureds (Shepherd 1993, 209). Some Jamaicans remember that the term 'coolie royale' was also used to describe Indian/African unions, in the same way that 'Chinee royale' was used to describe the children of African and Chinese parentage.[1] Recently, however, dougla has entered the Jamaican vocabulary via Trinidad and Guyana and now has more current usage there. Dougla also describes the children of mixed Indian and African ancestry in St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent. It is likely that in these countries the word was also imported from

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[1] I found no reference to 'coolie royale' in the literature reviewed for this dissertation and indeed many Jamaicans I have interviewed were not familiar with the term. But at least three Jamaicans did know it; they were however unable to elaborate on its origin and application.

Trinidad and Guyana where it was brought during indentureship as part of the cultural vocabulary of Indian immigrants.

Rhoda Reddock traces the word to the Sankshipt Hindi <u>Shabdasagar</u> (literally a shortened or abridged Hindi Ocean of Words/Dictionary) where she finds the word 'dogla' referring in the first instance to the 'progeny of inter-varna marriage', and acquiring the connotation of 'bastard', meaning illegitimate son of a prostitute, in a secondary sense (1994b, 101). She notes that 'this is not a widely popular usage however and is probably limited to certain sections of North India' (1994b, 101). My own enquiries about the usage of the word in modern India suggest that it may have lost its currency there. No Hindi-speakers I interviewed recognised the word although they recognised others Hindi words such as *hubshi, kala, kala bhoot,* and *koray* which are used to describe Africans. Dougla, in its transplanted usage in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, refers to persons of mixed African and Indian descent (usually first generation) and in its origin had a decidedly negative connotation derived, no doubt, from what Reddock describes as 'its semantic emergence within the context of the Hindu caste system where inter-caste/inter-varna and inter-religious unions were for the most part taboo' (Reddock 1994b, 101).

Dougla surfaced in pre-Independence Trinidad as part of a system of 'racial accounting', according to anthropologist Daniel Segal (1993, 81-115). Elaborating this practice, which had developed in Trinidad and Tobago and other parts of the region to explain people's ethnic ancestry, Segal finds that the process begins with the assumption that all 'races' are pure prior to entry to Trinidad and Tobago and that it is here that mixing takes place (1993, 82). He explains that the three denominations of European, African and East Indian were races 'identified in terms of ancestral territory, that is, a delimited area belonging to and occupied by its own "race" ' (1993, 82). These definitions of Indian, African and European as naturalised, essentialised racial categories were certainly consistent with the prevailing theories of the pre-1960 period to which Segal is referring; it was not until the 1960s that researchers began to recognise 'the general constructedness of the modern world' (Sollors 1989, x).

The shift in the social sciences to the study of race and ethnicity in the Caribbean as dynamic, historically and socially constructed phenomena, of which Segal's study is a part, is reflected in investigations by Orlando Patterson (1975), Malcolm Cross (1978), and Kelvin Yelvington (1993), all of which seek to overturn the view of race and ethnicity in the

Caribbean as essential, timeless categories. This shift has also enabled the recent attempts to examine the conceptual malleability of dougla in Trinidad. Recent work on dougla identity, which will be addressed later, explores some of its conceptual possibilities - it is being discussed, not solely as the result of biological unions between Indians and Africans, but also as an elaboration of cross-cultural dynamics; while its demographical significance continues to be interrogated, there is also increasing attention to its gendered foundation.

Segal finds that the identification dougla was not lasting and often disappeared after one generation dependent on the unions entered into and the resulting progeny (1993, 97). Reddock exemplifies this last finding of Segal's when she points out that Trinidad does not have a lexicon of half douglas or quarter douglas (1994b, 105). Indeed the only reference I have found to the percentages that comprise dougla racial identity is in Merle Hodge's novel For The Life of Laetita (1993), when the schoolteacher Miss, in an attempt to resolve a racial incident, asked all the douglas in the class to stand up. Here Miss defines dougla as 'one parent of Indian descent and the other of African descent', leaving Marlon Peters to jokingly assert that he was half-dougla because his grandfather was Indian (1993, 96). Marlon Peters' rejoinder, though humorous, articulates the erasure of Indian/African mixtures that do not result from the 50/50 definition of dougla.

Interestingly, although the popular biological definition of dougla is half African and half Indian, percentages are less important in defining what is culturally dougla. Dougla music, for example, is generally described as any musical product that fuses Indian and African rhythms, instruments, English and Hindi vocabularies, or the act of an Indian being involved in activities perceived as African and vice versa. Journalist Kim Johnson's definition of dougla music includes Indian musicians who have experimented with African forms such as the Mootoo Brothers who backed up calypsonians in the 1950s; Bobby Mohammed and Jit Samaroo who have been central to the development of steelband music; and Indian Prince who is a calypsonian (1999, 2). It also includes African musicians Johnson Blackwell and Roy Cooper who were involved in Indian classical singing (Johnson 1999, 2). A Trinidadian radio deejay, after playing vocalist Rhoma Spencer's 'Maladay' during the 1999 Carnival season, described the song as dougla music. 'Maladay' is a rapso chant about Muslim Hosay celebrations in St. James, the venue of the largest Hosay celebrations in Trinidad, and its chorus refers to *chutney* and Orisha, Yoruba and *jahaaji bhai* as symbols of an African/Indian rhythm connection. In relation to cultural forms then the term dougla is deployed in

considerably more elastic ways and is more malleable than the category used to identify individuals' ethnic ancestry.

Rosanne Kanhai, feminist and literary critic, observes that the dougla is of mixed race but without the privilege that accompanies mixed race categories that are inclusive of European blood (1999a). This observation helps to explain anthropologist Aisha Khan's finding about usage of the word dougla among Indians in the semi-rural area of Trinidad that she studied from 1984 to 1989 (1993). Khan finds that the category dougla is at times a tacitly avoided and, to a certain extent, disapproved, identification (Khan 1993, 190). The description 'Spanish' is used at times in place of dougla to represent a diluted or ambiguous African element (Khan 1993, 198). One of Khan's respondents, for example, described her mixed African and Indian boyfriend as Spanish because he has grey eyes and 'soft' hair. If he had dark eyes and 'hard' hair, she says, she would then refer to him as dougla (Khan 1993, 198). The diluted or ambiguous African element in his biological ancestry is described as Spanish. Khan concludes that this respondent tags dougla as a less preferable identity whose greater association with ostensibly non-white qualities (dark eyes and hard hair) would mean downward social mobility for her (Khan 1993, 199). The negative connotations of dougla identity are further illustrated in an interview with a bankteller who is mixed Indian and African. He considers himself Indian because his father is Indian, and rejects dougla because, he says, "it's a kind of negative" (in Khan 1993, 204). Khan's study suggests that for her respondents, one way of upgrading the social value of dougla identity is to denote light-skinned douglas as 'Spanish'.

The categorisation of 'Spanish' is not arbitrarily chosen from among the parade of European ethnicities - French, Spanish, Portuguese - that are common in Trinidad. Data collected by American anthropologist Kevin Birth during a study in eastern Trinidad in 1989 reveals that of the fifteen Indian/African unions in the village that he sampled, one partner in each of these unions was described as 'Spanish creole' (1997, 592). The original Spanish creoles, he suggests, are of Venezuelan origin and he cites the growing Venezuelan middle class who developed the cocoa sector following the end of indentureship in 1917 (Wood 1968) as historical support for his suggestion (1997, 587). The designation 'Spanish' not only upgrades the social value of dougla identity, but it also renders unions between Africans and Indians more acceptable to some members of the Indian community; whereas Indian/African unions are strongly disapproved of, Indian/Spanish creole unions carry no stigma (Nevadomsky 1983,

128). Indeed both in Guyana and Trinidad dougla identity has often been described in terms of what is subtracted in the ethnic mixture. The designation 'no nation', for example, was commonly used to describe douglas in both Trinidad and Guyana well into the late twentieth century. In Guyana, Brackette Williams found that the term is used to describe the group who, in a situation where everybody is forced to leave Guyana, would have no place to go (1991, 129). Morton Klass suggested that in the village of Amity in Trinidad, which he studied, 'nation' was the English translation of *jat* which derived primarily from the names of Indian castes (and in a few cases from Indian localities such as Madrass and Bengal) and every Hindu in Amity belonged to a nation (1961, 55-56). In this context the dougla belonged to 'no nation', that is, no caste (Klass, 1961:56). Echoed in references such as 'neither here nor there' (Harradan 1970, 6) and 'neither one nor the other' (Mighty Dougla 1961), the designation 'no nation' focuses on absence, on what douglas are **not**, and aid in the 'production of a domain of unthinkability and unnameability' (Butler 1993, 20). Drawing on Judith Butler's analysis in Bodies That Matter (1993), 'no nation' in the context of Indian/African relations refers to the racially abject, un-viable (Butler 1993) dougla subject. The dougla in the first half of the twentieth century would have confused racial categories to the extent of producing what American academics Omi and Winant describe as a momentary 'crisis of racial meaning' (1986, 62). In this context, the dougla, perceived as having no definite racial identity, was seen as being in danger of having 'no identity' (Omi and Winant 1986, 62). It is worth noting that research on the designation 'no nation' has so far identified the description as emerging from Indian (specifically Hindu) culture. But research by Trinidadian historian/linguist Maureen Warner-Lewis points out that Africans in nineteenth century Trinidad also described their tribal groupings as 'nations' (1991, 15), a word that has since been incorporated into the Shango/Orisha religion. I think it will be worth investigating whether the definition of dougla as belonging to 'no nation' also has echoes from this context.

These representations of dougla identity account for Reddock's finding that the African community uses dougla as a neutral descriptive noun and that douglas themselves resent being so called (1999, 108). One of her respondents, the male offspring of an Indian father and African mother, objected to the nomenclature – "I find it an obscene word. To me it is distasteful, not the word itself because what is a word? Anyone can make a word...but the connotation dougla means a hybrid, mongrel...you are not pure breed" (in Reddock 1999, 118). But Reddock does not address the comments of some of her other respondents in her

work which appear to complicate her conclusion. One man whose mother is Indian and whose father Reddock describes vaguely as 'mixed' did not like being called a dougla, not because of the negative connotation of the word, but because he did not think he qualified as a dougla in the strict sense because his father was not African but 'mixed' – "I do not like to be called 'dougla'. I do not see myself as being mixed. I have more straight hair than some Indians" (in Reddock 1999, 119). And other respondents further complicate her conclusion by suggesting that they have no problems with the identification dougla – "I don't like Creole. I feel dem bitches too bad. But I is a dougla, I cannot change that, and I don't feel anything when people call me dougla. Everybody knows me by dougla" (in Reddock 1999, 119). One dougla respondent said he was resentfully treated, not by Indians, but by Africans – "Most of the racial part used to be not from the Indian side, more on the negro. Everything, if you walk out the house without a slipper on: is only coolie people does do that, get a slipper and put it on yuh foot. If you eating something wid yuh hand: 'is only coolie people does eat like that'. So they started, because we were living wid meh negro, on meh father side..." (in Reddock 1999, 121-122). Reddock's conclusions about usage of the word therefore – that douglas do not like being so called because of the word's negative connotation and her explanation that this is because Indians and douglas 'know the meaning and connotations of the term more intimately than creole Trinidadians and Tobagonians will ever know' (1999, 108) - cannot be taken as a final explanation. Also, I do not think many Trinidadians, Indians or Africans, are familiar with the original connotation of the word.[2] Clearly more research is required about the usage of the word within different communities.

The population of douglas in the Caribbean is small and countries with smaller populations of Indians, such as St. Lucia, Jamaica and Grenada, have larger per capita populations of douglas.[3] In Trinidad, which is my main focus in this dissertation, there is no census category for douglas but it is believed that the number is also small (Bagenstose Green 1964; Abdulah 1988). Douglas are accounted for among the 'mixed' population which decreased between 1960 and 1970 by about 40,000 (Abdulah 1988). This was consistent with an increase in the size of the African grouping during the same period (Abdulah 1988).

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[2] I grew up in an Indian village in Trinidad and lived there until I was eighteen and I did not know the origins of the word until a few years ago. I have presented excerpts of this thesis in India and in the Caribbean and have been surprised at the number of people who were also unfamiliar with the connotations of the word.

[3] The extent to which the smaller Indian populations in the Caribbean are biologically mixed often determine researchers' conclusions about the extent to which these populations are 'assimilated' or 'creolised'.

Abdulah explains this demographic shift through reference to the Black Power movement and Black consciousness during this period when notions of 'pure' ancestry were mobilised. For this reason she believes that it is probable that the population of douglas also decreased during this period. While this suggestion is useful, there is nothing in the available literature that explores whether the size of the dougla group actually decreased or whether people self-identified as Indians or Africans because of these notions of 'pure' ancestry.

The small size of the dougla population in Trinidad is not surprising and is consistent with the fact that biological/sexual unions between Indians and Africans do not have a long history. Although a severe shortage of Indian immigrant women characterised Indian indentureship to Trinidad, Brereton found that Indian men generally chose to compete for the available Indian women rather than have relationships with African women (1981, 109). As late as 1871, according to Brereton, the Protector of Immigrants thought that "there is not probably at this moment a single instance of an indentured immigrant who cohabits with one of the negro race" (in Brereton 1981, 109). She suggests that up to 1900, sexual unions between Indians and Africans remained extremely rare and there were no known cases of legal marriages (Brereton 1979, 183).

Although historical evidence suggests that Indian/African sexual unions were rare, Reddock finds that at the start of the 1900s inter-racial relationships, including relationships between Indians and Africans, were invoked by one Mohammed Orfy to plead the case of destitute Indian men (1994a, 44). Orfy, writing on behalf of destitute Indian men in 1916, referred to women being "enticed, seduced and frightened into becoming concubines and paramours to satisfy the greed and lust of the male section of a quite different race to theirs" (in Reddock 1994a, 44). In a later letter, Orfy identified the different races as being Europeans, Africans, Americans and Chinese (Reddock 1994a, 44). At this point, then, whether sexual contact between Indians and Africans was real or imagined, and although that contact was not named, it was configured as physical, sexual relationships between Indian women and African men and identified as unacceptable behaviour on the part of Indian women that contributed to the destitution of Indian men.

This particular, gendered configuration of Indian/African relations has its origins in the indentureship and post-indentureship periods and remains pervasive in Trinidad today. As I noted in chapter one, the indentureship system itself drew attention to Indian women's gendered subjectivity by legislating on feminine identity and on Indian men's control over

Indian women's sexuality during the wife murders of the 1870s. Orfy's letter suggests that by the end of indentureship gender relations within the Indian community were already being defined **in relation** to Africans. This process continued into the post-indentureship period when, according to Pat Mohammed, the Indian community reconstituted a system of gender relations based on the classic patriarchy from which they had emerged, and that this reconstituted system was a means by which the Indian community differentiated itself from other groups in the society (1998a). Several important factors contextualised the reconstitution of gender relations among Indians during this period. First, Mohammed argues that it was important for Indian men, emasculated in part by the demeaning experience of indentureship, to re-establish a system of power relations between the sexes that clearly reinforced the old patriarchal order of male dominance and female subservience (1998a, 397). Further, the proximity of Africans whose system of gender relations allowed women greater sexual freedom was perceived as a threat to the Indian patriarchy (Mohammed 1998a, 398). Cultural studies critic, Shalini Puri, adds that the Indian community, in its efforts to establish a national cultural identity in Trinidad, drew on discourses that historically gendered the home as feminine and constructed a Mother Culture that placed an immense ideological load on Indian women (1997, 120). I will comment further on Mohammed's and Puri's feminist analyses of Indian women's identity later. I want to focus here on how the preservation of a pure, cohesive Indian cultural identity relies on the construction of chaste Indian womanhood and vice versa. In this way Indian women's sexuality is established as a cultural border and African male sexuality as a simultaneous threat to chaste Indian womanhood and Indian cultural identity. Colonial representation in the post-emancipation period had othered African women as 'ex-slave, the urban jamette of Carnival ...vulgar, promiscuous, loud and disruptive' (Niranjana 1996, 14). Tejaswini Niranjana, cultural studies scholar and senior fellow at India's Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS), suggests that this representation of African women was used to contrast with representations of Indian women as monogamous, obedient, dutiful and long-suffering.[4]

This gendered representational matrix, in which Indian women are chaste and pure; African women are vulgar and promiscuous; and African male sexuality is avaricious and threatening, is strategically deployed by conservative sections of both the Indian and African populations in Trinidad. As I pointed out in the last chapter, this image circulated as a pre-

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[4] Niranjana's paper was presented in draft at a conference on Rethinking the Third World held in

march rumour that African protestors were marching to Caroni to rape Indian women during the 1970 February Revolution. Although there is no evidence that Bhadase Maraj and his organisation, the Hindu theocratic Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS), were responsible for starting the rumour, it no doubt served their political agenda. During the same period, conservative constructions of Indian racial and cultural identity identified sexual unions between Indian women and African men, and the dougla product of these unions, as among the enemies of the Indian community (Harradan 1970, 6; Jagessar 1974, 16). In 1980, some sections of the Indian community protested the involvement of Drupatee Ramgoonai, the lone Indian female calypsonian, in the calypso arena which is regarded as a male African enclave. The SDMS and the Sandesh newspaper led the criticisms of her. Sandesh published an article by a male Indian writer, Mahabir Maharaj, who complained "for an Indian girl to throw her high upbringing and culture to mix with vulgar music, sex and alcohol in Carnival tents tells me that something is radically wrong with her psyche. Drupatee Ramgoonai has chosen to worship the Gods of sex, wine and easy money" (in Constance 1991, 66).

The conservatism of these accounts is unmasked by objections to either biological or cultural blending in any form and in the ways they seek to control Indian women's sexuality. Drupatee was repudiated because of her involvement in calypso and Carnival - low cultural forms - and because she took public delight in her sexuality through sexually-charged calypsoes such as 'Mr Bissessar' (1988) and 'Lick Down Meh Nanny' (1989). The SDMS repudiates *chutney* music, a re-energised form of Indian folk music which involves sexually suggestive dancing by Indian women, for the same reasons; it is not perceived as consistent with high Indian culture and it facilitates Indian women's expression of their sexual identity (Baksh-Soodeen 1999, 194-198). This conservatism is privileged in the SDMS's warning against douglarisation.

The SDMS coined the term in 1993 during what has become known as the douglarisation debate. Four years into the term of the NAR government, a national service programme for young people was being considered. The SDMS, in free association with what was then the opposition and now the ruling UNC, resisted the programme claiming that the government was out to "creolise the Indian youth" (in Sampath 1993, 241).[5] One reaction to this opposition by Indian leaders was a statement by both Anglican and Roman Catholic

Jamaica in 1996. It is cited here with special permission from the author.

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archbishops in Trinidad that they had no problems with Indian/African inter-ethnic marriages. Their comment was reported in the Express newspaper (1990) under the headline 'Let There Be Douglas'. The SDMS responded with a full-page advertisement in the competing daily, The Trinidad Guardian newspaper, entitled 'Mahasabha Answers Back. Debate: Douglarisation or Pluralism'. In a reading of the SDMS advertisement, Shalini Puri notes that the SDMS resist douglarisation as it resists creolisation, on the basis that both advocate the assimilation of the Indian population into the African population (1997, 130). In other words, both douglarisation and creolisation are translated as the Africanisation of Indians. The organisation preferred integration, which it translated into a separate-but-equal co-existence of African and Indian cultures. Puri argues that 'for the Indian orthodoxy, *any* hybridisation of Indian and Indian identities threatens to compromise its construction of Indianness; it thus considers douglarisation and creolisation equally in the contamination and dilution of Indianness' (1997, 130-131).

A reading of a 1998 SDMS-authored newspaper column headlined 'And Now, Extinction by Douglarisation' is even more explicit on the organisation's definition of douglarisation. Douglarisation here is a sinister PNM policy to forcibly assimilate Indian cultural identity and the SDMS again represents African political and cultural hegemony as an African male sexuality forcing itself on chaste Indian womanhood. The SDMS suggests that:

> the abundance of junior secondary and school places for secondary education in the East/West corridor, compared to the relatively poor supply in Caroni and other regions where Indo-Trinidadians concentrate, may not be accidental. It appears to be capricious and racist, and manifests an unstated policy to 'douglarise' the population (1998, 7).

The 'East/West corridor', a term coined by political commentator Lloyd Best to refer to the electoral constituencies from North East Trinidad to North West Trinidad, here encodes Africans, just as Caroni in Central Trinidad encodes Indians. The SDMS is suggesting that the comparatively few government schools in Caroni meant that Indians had to attend schools along the East/West corridor; this in turn means that Indians were being pressured into

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[5] The SDMS's response to the National Service programme was related to the political cynicism towards Indians with which the African-dominated PNC introduced a similar programme in Guyana in the 1960s.

situations of contact with Africans which, it believes, leads to douglarisation.[6] And it furthers this point by focussing on Indian women, in particular '12-year-old Indian girls' who:

> found themselves forcibly mixed in alien environments far away from home and familiar circumstances. Perhaps it was intended that 'douglarisation' would result from the culture shock in the transition from village primary school to East West corridor junior or secondary school (SDMS 1998, 7).

The image of twelve-year-old schoolgirls being 'forced' into 'alien environments' evokes rape and recalls the representation of Indian/Afrrican relations as African men raping Indian women.

The SDMS's coinage and definition of douglarisation, occurring as recently as the 1990s in a climate of inflamed Indian/African tension threatens to suppress the ethical possibilities of dougla identity that are prevalent in Trinidad. Indeed the lexical and ideological continuities between the SDMS's discourse on douglarisation and white supremacist discourse are too explicit to be coincidental. The title of the Maha Sabha's column, 'Extinction by Douglarisation', overtly reworks the 'Murder by Miscegenation' headlines that Abbey Ferber observed in racist right wing publications such as the New Order, National Vanguard, White Power and The Thunderbolt (1997, 199). The SDMS's perception of douglarisation as 'the final solution' cynically attempted by a culturally and politically hegemonic PNM (1998, 7) echoes the white supremacist view that the deadliest of all approaches is intermarriage because 'even a global war in which the Jews were victorious would leave a few whites to breed back the race. Their final solution is MONGRELISATION. A mongrel can only breed more mongrels' (in Ferber 1997, 200). These lexical connections mirror ideological link. Like white supremacists, conservative Indian organisations and individuals in Trinidad view separation and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries as crucial to their project of creating stable, 'racial' categories that are arranged in a hierarchy with Indians above Africans. Douglas threaten this project because they signify the instability of the self/other opposition and of the cultural and racial hierarchy. For this reason, the SDMS and others obsessively police racial and cultural borders in particular Indian female sexuality

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[6] Government schools here refer to primary and secondary schools run solely on government funding. Primary, secondary, and up to 1990 even tertiary education, is free in Trinidad and Tobago. Free secondary education is seen as one of the greatest achievements of the PNM during the tenure of first Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams.

which they regard as vulnerable to the 'indefatigable' African male sexuality and thus the border confusion and chaos that douglas signify. Noor Kumar Mahabir (1987) invokes this inflection of douglarisation in his social science enquiry into the Indian community in St. Lucia to conclude that whereas Indians in Trinidad and Guyana are likely to retain their cultural identity, Indians from St. Lucia, Grenada and Jamaica are on the road towards total racial assimilation and have therefore lost the possibility of making a distinct cultural contribution to St Lucian society.

These conservative definitions of douglarisation among Indian commentators are not without echoes in the African community. The popular cultural form of calypso contains numerous representations that mirror similarly conservative African representations of Indian/African relations. This form is significantly African in its origin. In his study of 'Images of Men and Women in 1930's Calypso', Professor Gordon Rohlehr (1988) identifies gender and ethnic conflict as two of the main roots of the emerging comic tradition in the Trinidad calypso. Indian women fulfil both agendas. Moreover, calypso was and remains a predominantly male arena and calypsonians pride themselves on their avaricious sexuality and record their conquests, both real and imagined, in song. Given these factors and the subservient position of Indian women within a classic, though reconstituted Indian patriarchy (Mohammed 1998a) as well as the often violent resistance of Indian men to sexual relations between Indian women and African men, the calypsonians' gendered focus on the Indian community becomes clearer. Rohlehr alludes to this last factor when he notes that the African calypsonian's stereotype of Indians was of:

> a people who wanted to preserve ethnic purity, and were totally against its violation, particularly via the marriage or sexual cohabitation of Indian woman and Creole man. Long before the 1930s the stereotype had emerged of the jealous Indian man-father, brother or husband - defending with sharp cutlass the honour of daughter, sister or wife, or saving face after having been cuckolded by chopping up his woman and her lover (1988, 280).

Rohlehr identifies the 1930s as the historical moment when the calypsonian's gaze first recognised the Indian presence in Trinidad. He notes that calypsonians used real or imagined affairs between African men and Indian women in order stage Indian/African ethnic confrontation, so that the calypsoes said very little about the women and:

much more about the open or secret confrontation between the two ethoses. The women don't really exist as persons, but rather as omens of the neurosis which surrounds the idea of inter-racial contact; a neurosis which involved on the one hand fear of violation and on the other fear of violent reprisal (1988, 284).

He gives as an example Invader's 'Marajh Daughter' (1939), originally titled 'My Ambition is Luxury', which is thematically concerned with the Indian woman but provides no portrait of her (Rohlehr 1988, 278). He concludes that what Invader wants is the Indian woman's money, not her Indianness and that this is made clear by the calypsonian's complete rejection of Indian food (Rohlehr, 1988, 278). Rohlehr also examples the Duke of Normandy's 1930 song about his affair with an Indian woman in a calypso of which calypsonian Beginner could remember only two lines: "After she gave me parata/She had me cooraja" (in Rohlehr 1988, 278). Rohlehr argues that from the time of this song, the Indian woman was generally presented against the background of the Indian feast, and during this period many calypsoes in which Indian women appear are not really about the women at all, 'but about masked inter-racial conflict, in which the feast becomes a point of, or arena of, ethnic confrontation' (1988, 278).

In 1939 Atilla attempted a portrait of the Indian woman in his 'Dookanii' (Rohlehr 1988, 278). Here the Indian woman 'is presented as an exotic- ideal, lovable but unattainable' (Rohlehr 1988, 279). The audience is told that the relationship ends 'dramatically' but is not told why. The calypsonian kisses Dookanii; they part; and she remains in his heart (Rohlehr 1988, 279). Executor's 'My Indian Girl Love' (1939), is also named Dookanii (Rohlehr 1988, 280). He meets her while singing in a calypso tent in Caroni during Hosay. She is little more than a feature of the exotic scene:

> Dookanii's speech, which is stereotypically East Indian pidgin, establishes her identity as an unsophisticated rural maiden and would probably have evoked laughter from Executor's audience. The rapid arrangement of marriage in which, in contravention of all codes, Dookanii proposes, secures a signed contract of agreement and then tells her father, would also have struck Executor's audience as absurd (Rohlehr 1988, 280).

From the 1930s onwards calypso composers have persisted with this gendered configuration of Indian/African relations. My research suggests that Rohlehr's argument holds true for later periods also. A 1961 calypso, 'Election War Zone', by the Mighty Christo is a fine illustration of this. On the eve of Independence, The Mighty Christo images Africans as the male – 'Whip them PNM whip them/You wearing the pants'– and Indians as the subordinate female who should not be allowed to 'get on top'. A 1979 calypso by Gypsy is an irrefutable example of the representational violation of Indian women that is also a feature of conservative African representations of Indian women. The song humorously recounts the rape of an Indian woman by a gang of young men. The humour derives from the pun on 'Ramit', the name of her husband:

> Some young boys attack she couldn't escape
>
> Cause you know when them make up they mind to rape
>
> She try to fight back but couldn't get away at all
>
> So for she husband Ramit she started to call
>
> "Oh Lord, Ramit, Oh Lord"
>
> Them young boys and them was so excited
>
> That they had Ma Ramjit walking crooked
>
> Them young boys was at they leisure
>
> Because they thought she was having great pleasure
>
> She cringe up she face because she in pain
>
> And "Ramit, beta" she call out again. (Gypsy 1979).

Gendered representations of Indian/African relations, in various forms, stubbornly reappear in calypsoes that I surveyed during 1995 to 2000. Iwer George's 'Bottom in the Road' (1997) sparked a national controversy when the calypsonian sang about an Indian woman whose wish was 'to get a creole Trini'. She meets resistance from the male members of her family – 'De brother say she talking foolishness'- but she retorts – 'She tell de brother stay out ah meh business'. Iwer George thus stages the contest between Indian and African male sexuality on the Indian woman's body. The Indian woman's challenge to her brother is welcomed by the calypsonian because it increases the likelihood of a prized sexual conquest:

Ah had dougla

Ah had Chinee

Ah had Syrian

Ah date African

Ah date white woman

But ah never date an Indian (Iwer George 1997)

The same year, calypsonian Sugar Aloes, a self-identified PNM supporter and brutal critic of first the NAR and now the UNC, interrogated UNC calls for national unity by bluntly referring to the Secretary General of the SDMS, Sat Maharaj, and his resistance to relations between Indian women and African men:

He little daughter could date a Chinee

A Syrian or a white man

But if she ever date an African

He will never have grandchildren (Sugar Aloes 1997).

Chalkdust echoed these sentiments in 'Enough Is Enough':

If your daughter is an Indian

And she fall for an African

And you want to disown she for this

Stop your damn foolishness (Chalkdust 1998).

Allrounder's project is also to test the sincerity of calls for national unity in his humorous 'Why me'. Here too, a sexual relationship between an Indian woman and an African man is a metonym for Indian/African relations:

I was born in Laventille

Live years in Caroni

And my girlfriend name Sumatee

Don't try to fool me and talk about unity

I know 'bout that already. (Allrounder 1998).

While Chalkdust and Allrounder are more creative in their representations – Chalkdust's song recognises and challenges the stranglehold on Indian women's sexuality and Allrounder's reference to Sumatee is deliberately mischievous – Iwer George and Sugar Aloes uncritically replicate conservative representations of Indian women, African male sexuality and Indian/African relations.

These gendered configurations of Indian/African relations are ubiquitous in calypso where they are prompted by the Indian male's resistance to relations between Indian women and African men; they are used to test the sincerity of calls for national unity; and they allow for the fetishisation of Indian women by African male calypsonians. The effect of these public articulations is predictable – they invariably strike a nerve among conservative Indians – and so they are used both to goad Indians and also as demagogic overtures by calypsonians who function in an increasingly competitive arena. Indeed, debates about Indian/African relations mediated through this particular matrix appear to be both circular and self-sustaining – the more the representation of Indian women as sexually desirable is used by calypsonians, the more adamantly the resistance to it is articulated by orthodox Indians, mainly the SDMS, and the more adamant the resistance, the more often and strongly it is used by calypsonians.

The crucial observation about this configuration of Indian/African relations is how Indian women function within it. The Indian woman is presumed to be voiceless, without agency and reduced to functioning as a commodity to be exchanged or not exchanged between Indian and African men. Debates about Indian/African relations through this popular matrix _ images the Indian woman being pulled on one hand by the Indian community which extrapolates its cultural integrity from her racial endogamy, and on the other by the African community which utilises her as a final test of the depth of the Indian community's wish to be truly Trinidadian, that is, creole. In this model, she is reduced to her sexuality and the battle between Indians and Africans takes place on her body. The real question posed by this face-off between some African male calypsonians and the orthodox Hindu community therefore is not whether the Indian woman should be exploited or not, but **who** has the **right** to exploit her. African male calypsonians claim that right because of the myth of their conquering sexual ego and orthodox Hindu commentators claim the right on the basis of ethnic ownership. The SDMS, even while ostensibly defending Indian women against the

violation in calypso, discursively exploits Indian women's sexuality by continuously representing Indian/African relations only in terms of the male African violation of Indian womanhood.

The particular configuration of Indian/African relations that are sexual unions between Indian women and African men can be challenged in a number of ways. First, available demographic data cited by Reddock suggests that the 1931 census recorded 115,705 Indians resident in the colony not born in India (1994b, 104). Of this, 1,713 were of Indian fathers only and 805 of Indian mothers only (Reddock 1994b, 104). Although this data does not indicate what percentage of the mixed children were of Indian and African parentage, it does challenge the notion that contact with the Indian community at that time occurred primarily through Indian women. Secondly, Reddock finds that Hinduism's varna/caste ideology can be interpreted as being less resistant to unions between Indian men and African women than the other way around:

> In the few instances where exogamy is allowed, these unions have to be hypergamous unions, that is they must be between a woman and a man of higher caste, but not vice versa. In the hierarchy constructed in Trinidad and Tobago therefore, marriage of Indian men to Creole women (of lower nation) would be slightly more acceptable than the other way around...the opposite, however, "prathiloma" or hypogamous marriage is considered taboo as the woman takes on the lower caste of her husband and her children are also of that lower caste. In this context, therefore it is not surprising that although varna endogamy is preferred for both sexes, the sanctions for going against it are greater for females than for males. This could also explain the greater denunciation of female violation of the rules of endogamy than for males in the Trinidad and Tobago context (1994b, 117).

One popular challenge to dominant configurations of Indian/African relations in terms of sexual relations between Indian women and African men is the number of douglas with Indian last names. The logic of this is that because children often take the surnames of their fathers and because many douglas have Indian surnames, then it follows that there are significant instances of sexual unions between Indian men and African women. Although this argument holds sway among many people, its empirical worth is debatable. The reality of Caribbean

societies is that many children take their mother's surnames. My last name for example, is my mother's because she registered my birth. My two sisters also carry our mother's last name. My two brothers, however, were registered by my father and carry his last name. Also, I have one stepsister from a sexual union between my father and an African woman but she cannot be identified as dougla from her name because she carries her mother's last name. Another point, which complicates this popular view, is that not all Indians have identifiably Indian-sounding last names.

A necessary addendum to this point, for the purposes of this dissertation, is the noticeable number of literary representations of Indian/African unions occurring through sexual unions between Indian men and African women. In Michael Anthony's <u>Green Days by the River</u> (1967) Rosalie is the daughter of an Indian man and an African woman, so is Singh in Shiva Naipaul's <u>The Chip-Chip Gatherers</u> (1973). Louis Caballo's 'Boodram' (1948) tells of a budding romance between an Indian man and an African woman; Boysie has an African girlfriend in Samuel Selvon's <u>A Brighter Sun</u> (1952); Jason Ranjitsingh has a relationship with Judy St. Clair in Peter Ramkeesoon's <u>Sunday Morning Coming Down</u> (1975); the Indian cart-man, Koden, has a creole wife, Rose in Freddie Kissoon's <u>Doo Doo</u> (1966); and Ram almost marries an African girl in Mustapha Matura's <u>As Time Goes By</u> (1970). This representation appears in the fiction of Indian, African and other authors.

Douglarisation and Dougla Feminism

Feminist scholars seeking to cite ethical forms of Indian/African cross-cultural interaction have traded on the cultural elasticity of the term dougla, as well as the academic shift in the social sciences referred to earlier, to begin analyses of dougla feminism. Shalini Puri advocates a dougla poetics as a means of articulating progressive cultural identities (1997, 119-163). She argues that in the context of Trinidad where ethnic stereotypes and a vocabulary of us and them are unusually prominent, dougla identity is a 'disallowed identity' in both Indian and African cultural nationalist discourses (1997, 156). She advocates a dougla poetics as an alternative to opposing stereotypes:

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[7] This point was raised by Helen Pyne-Timothy following my presentation of a draft of this chapter at the 1998 Caribbean Women Writers Conference in Grenada.

Keeping in mind, then, that the original meaning of the word "dougla" was "bastard" or "illegitimate", I suggest that one might think of a dougla poetics as a means for articulating progressive cultural identities de-legitimised by both the dominant culture and the Mother Culture. First, against purist racial discourse, the figure of the dougla draws attention to the reality of inter-racial contact; it *names* a contact that already exists. Second, the dougla could provide a richly symbolic resource for inter-racial unity...To break the stranglehold racial politics of the PNM and the UNC, any egalitarian politics clearly needs to emphasise the shared histories of oppression of Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians, just as it needs to articulate their economic advancement in nonexclusive racial terms...A dougla poetics, thus, offers a vocabulary for a *political* identity, not just a biological one (Puri 1997, 156-157).

Puri is careful to disclaim advocating a 'dougla poetics' as a paradigm for Trinidadian aesthetics, and neither does she suggest a dougla identity as a model of West Indianness. She makes 'a relatively circumscribed claim that elaborations of a dougla poetics and the figure of the dougla could provide a vocabulary for disallowed Indian identities; furthermore, they could offer ways of reframing the problematics of black-Indian party politics, and race and gender relations' (1997, 156).

Puri illustrates her analysis with a reading of Drupatee Ramgoonai's 1989 calypso 'Lick Down Me Nani' and Ramabai Espinet's short story 'Barred: Trinidad 1987' (1990b). She describes Drupatee's calypso (and also the *chutney-soca* genre to which it belongs) as participating in a dougla poetics because the musical form and instruments hybridise Indian and African musical traditions; the song intervenes in the historically African space of the calypso tent rather than in a separate Indian space; and the song can be read as articulating a de-legitimised or disallowed Indian and/or female identity (1997, 143-144). She reads Espinet's short story as a parallel effort in the field of literature 'to expand a certain kind of 'Indian' space in order to interrogate the possibilities of "dougla space" ' (1997, 144). She suggests that Espinet is here writing a dougla feminism, the elements of which include the effort to articulate an Indian identity that makes room for women; the story's assault on stereotypes about Indians and its attempts to re-write existing discourses on Indianness; the intimation of the possibility of an interracial community of working-class women; and the

formal ambivalence of the narrative technique, including the ambivalent identity of the intruder from whom the narrator must protect herself (Puri 1997, 144-153).

Rhoda Reddock buttresses Puri's concept of dougla poetics with interpretations of two calypsoes that she believes illustrate an emerging dougla poetics in Trinidad (1999, 569-601). Reddock interprets dougla poetics as the politics of biological dougla identity and in the service of this she explores two calypsoes from the 1996 Carnival season, 'Jahaaji Bhai' by Brother Marvin (Selwyn Demming) and 'Chutney Bacchanal' by Chris Garcia, both of whom are biological douglas and claim dougla identities. Reddock's analysis of Brother Marvin's 1996 calypso 'Jahaaji Bhai' provides the most useful analysis for the purposes of this dissertation. Brother Marvin wrote 'Jahaaji Bhai' in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians to Trinidad and Tobago. This was not his first attempt to address the progressive promise of dougla identity. In 1993 he wrote a song called 'Confused' for his young daughter Sparkle that contains echoes of The Mighty Dougla's 1961 'Split Me In Two':

> Some want to go back India
> Some back to Africa
> So wey dey doing with this lil dougla
> I am a living example of racial unity
> Just look at Mammy and Daddy (Sparkle 1993).

Both 'Jahaaji Bhai' and 'Confused' derived from Brother Marvin's experiences as a child belonging to both Indian and African parents and trying to intervene in school yard brawls between Indian and African children. He tells Reddock that he often 'found himself in the school principal's office for defending children from racial attacks of other children' (1999, 581).

While Reddock's reading of 'Jahaaji Bhai' and her interview with Brother Marvin elaborate the potential of dougla identity as an alternative to opposing stereotypes as identified by Puri, Rosanne Kanhai, feminist and literary critic, tries to extend Puri's suggestion of a dougla feminism (1999a). During a seminar presentation at the Gender and Development Studies Unit at UWI in Trinidad, Kanhai, like Puri, elaborated dougla feminism as a project that draws on grassroots Indian and African Caribbean cultures. She adds that dougla feminism also calls on Caribbean women to be accountable to and for each other across ethnic

boundaries. Dougla feminism, according to Kanhai, draws on the figure of the dougla as one that blurs the boundaries between African and Indian in the Caribbean. She outlines the qualities of dougla feminism as: a validation of 'the Afro- and Indo-centric' that requires Caribbean feminists to look into their grassroots cultures for inspiration and role models; the beginnings of a political vision that calls for Indian and African women to learn from each other and to take on each other's issues as if they were their own; a refusal to support male-dominated racial politics, either openly or tacitly, in the Caribbean region and to make space for gender issues; and a denunciation of sexist behaviour from male members of all ethnic communities (Kanhai 1999a). She adds that a dougla feminism means that women do not compare or prioritise each other's oppressions, do not ignore each other's attempts at feminist activism even when the forms of such activism are culturally unfamiliar, and it urges women to research their ethnic histories for strengths and strategies which Caribbean women share with each other in their feminist theorising and activism (Kanhai 1999a). Just as the dougla is forced to inhabit both Indian and African worlds at all times, so too, according to Kanhai, the dougla feminist will inhabit both worlds (1999a).

The emergence of the word douglarisation within the SDMS discourse on Indian/African relations has so ensured its circulation as a reactionary politics that opposes Indian/African sexual and cultural interaction that Kanhai, while elaborating a dougla feminism, deliberately distinguishes dougla from douglarisation and recuperates the first but not the latter (1999a). I confront the word here. I suggest that there is sufficient optimism in the dougla signifier to recuperate douglarisation from its biological moorings in Indian conservative discourses. Dougla names the encounter between Indians and Africans in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Jamaica. The Caribbean lexicon, as far as I am aware, has no other word that describes exchanges between Indians and Africans, be those exchanges biological or cultural.[8] Indeed, Segal notes that while several words emerged in the Caribbean to describe African/European unions, dougla is the only word that emerged to describe Indian/African unions (1993, 97). It is remarkable that Caribbean creole languages, despite their considerable range, and in spite of the fact that Indians and Africans have been sharing the same space in the Caribbean for a century and a half, have offered only one word that speaks to the relations between these two groups. One explanation

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[8] The word 'boviander', first used to describe the children of Dutch and Amerindian ancestry in Guyana, was later used to describe the offspring of Indian and African parents but the word does not have the same currency as dougla (Reddock 1999, 595).

could be that the interaction between the groups was limited, but this does not explain why in countries like St. Lucia, where the Indian population is biologically and culturally assimilated into the larger African grouping, no other terms have emerged that describe Indian/African contact. An alternative interpretation is that the word dougla is extremely involved and carries the full weight of the complex dynamics of the biological and cultural encounter between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean in such a way as to dispense with the need for supplementary or rival terms. It is no accident that conservative discourses on Indian/African relations (Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha 1993 and 1998; Kumar Mahabir 1987; Harradan 1970; Jagessar 1974) invariably enclose dougla and douglarisation within quotation marks, as if to prevent their co-option into the Trinidad creole lexicon and thereby impede their free circulation. In this regard it is instructive to note that a dictionary of common Trinidad Hindi, published in 1990 and co-researched by Noor Kumar Mahabir, who extrapolated the most conservative elements of the word douglarisation three years earlier in his 1987 article on Indians of St. Lucia, does not include the two words. But these words have already entered the creole lexicon and their erasure from the <u>Dictionary of Common Trinidad Hindi</u> (1990) has not prevented or impeded their circulation. Linguist Lise Winer tells us that speakers rarely have a linguistically accurate perception of their own speech and it is not uncommon for Trinidadians to deny that they are speaking creole while speaking it (1993, 60). In this regard a letter writer to the <u>Trinidad Express</u> in 1986 challenged the validity of Trinidad creole and celebrated Oxford English, the language 'in which all West Indians scholars excel' (in Winer 1993, 59) To reinforce his point, he asked "Do you want to make a dougla of that great language?" (in Winer, 11993, 59). Dougla is constituent of Trinidad creole and this letter writer challenges the validity of Trinidad creole in the language of Trinidad creole. The conservatism of this challenge to creole language refracts the conservatism of the letter-writer's definition of dougla identity as illegitimate. Yet narratives of dougla identity and douglarisation in the music, fiction, religion and politics of Trinidad society continue to demonstrate the conceptual potential of the two terms. My investigation further suggests that representations of the ethical inflections of douglarisation are coincident with moments of inflamed racial debates.

The earliest such expression in calypso is the Mighty Dougla's 1961 calypso 'Split Me In Two' which called attention to the erasure of douglas in the then inflamed PNM/DLP discourse. The Mighty Dougla, himself a dougla, identified his positioning in the debates:

Because they sending Indians to India

And the Negroes back to Africa

Can somebody just tell me

Where they sending poor me

I am neither one nor the other

Six of one, half a dozen of the other

If they serious about sending people back for true

They got to split me in two (The Mighty Dougla 1961).

The 1970s, another period of inflamed racial antagonism in Trinidad, was also the period during which the very form of calypso was changed by the Indian cultural influence in Trinidad. This Indian cultural influence accounts for the development of calypso to soca. According to calypsonian Shorty, who is credited with the invention of soca:

> I grew up between Barrackpore and Princess Town and just hearing the names you could understand the East Indian influence…I was looking for new avenues to improve the music…I felt I needed something brand new to hit everybody like a thunderbolt. I knew what I was doing was incorporating soul with calypso, but I didn't want to say soul calypso or calypsoul. So I came up with the name soca…And I never spelt it s-o-c-a. It was S-O-K-A-H to reflect the East Indian influence in the music (in Constance 1991, 63).

Shorty experimented with this new form with 'Indrani' in 1973 and 'Kee Lo Gee Bul Bul' in 1974. The mandolin and the dholak, both Indian musical instruments, were used in the latter song (Constance 1991, 62). A related aspect of the douglarised influence in calypso was the fact that Indian singers too were beginning to refer to their music as Indian soca (Constance 1991, 64).

Calypso historian Zeno Constance notes that as calypsonians quarrelled about the origins of sokah, and as they sought to acknowledge Black American soul music, which also influenced the calypso, the definition of sokah as a fusion between traditional calypso and Indian music was overtaken by this acknowledgment of the North American soul influence (1991, 64). During this time, the spelling was changed from sokah to soca (Constance 1991,

64). But, he says, if the Indian presence in soca of the 1970s was debatable, by the 1980s it was unequivocal (Constance 1991, 66). Among the Indian musical influences in calypso that he identifies is the way the musical notes and the traditional stanza and chorus alignment of the calypso started to change into a new two line/three line chorus following a one or two line stanza (Constance 1991, 65). He points out that the local Indian songs, which were so instrumental in creating this new calypso structure, were themselves influenced by the calypsoes of the day (Constance 1991, 65) reflecting an already interactive cultural matrix. Among the exponents of this calypso-influenced Indian music was the late Sundar Popo, an Indian taxi driver from South Trinidad, whose 'Scorpion Girl' was one of his most popular compositions. The chorus of that calypso 'tell me the number of your plane, meh darling/When we go meet up again meh darling' was reworked as recently as 1997 by Iwer George in his now famously controversial 'Bottom in De Road'. Later, according to Constance, the already douglarised soca incorporated *khimta* or *chutney* music (1991, 66).

I can add to Constance's finding that in the 1970s environment of experimentation, Andre Tanker also began his tinkering with Indian/African fusion music. Tanker is among the most innovative of Trinidad musicians. In an interview for this dissertation Tanker, who grew up in West Trinidad close to St. James, which is the venue for Trinidad's largest Hosay festival, says he experienced the Indian community not only through Hosay but through Indian music he heard on the radio:

> There were Indians living on the same street where I grew up but
> I never had anything explained to me until much later. I first
> encountered Indians through music. Music was always around.
> As a child I would sit under the radio and destroy all the furniture
> by beating rhythms on them. The osmosis was happening from a
> very young age. I have an innate thing that allowed me to connect
> (interview with author, 1999).

Tanker's experiment with dougla music started with the soundtrack of the local movie, 'Bim' which incorporated Indian and African musical forms and instruments (interview with author 1999). Titles on the soundtrack included 'Love Mantra' and 'Afro Indian Rap'. In the mid-1980s Tanker coined the metaphor of the Ganges and the Nile in his 'Dougla Dancer':

> undulating…stimulating…
>
> child of Africa

child of the East

child of the West Indies

child of one soul

universal is your total.

Sweet Caroni…

river water…

where the Ganges meet the Nile *(Andre Tanker 1980s)*

that reappeared in David Rudder's call for Indian/African unity in 1999, 'The Ganges and the Nile'.[9] Rudder's song asserted, again in response to Indian/African tension, that despite assertions of separate identities, 'the Ganges done meet the Nile' (David Rudder 1999).

Along with the douglarisation of the musical form of calypso during the 1970s, calypso lyrics interrogated the Indian/African opposition and celebrated Indian/African fusion made visible in the dougla. In 1971 Hindu Prince, one of the few Indian calypsonians, said 'Goodbye to India' because, among other things, "in India you cyah make dougla children" (in Constance 1991, 11). And the legendary Maestro observed in his 1974 'Mr Trinidadian' how the dougla subverted conservative politics – "Indian Trinidadian, naïve as ever/That is why they form the Maha Sabha/They conservative only talking race/Yet you see so much dougla all round the place" (in Constance 1991, 36).

These assertions of dougla identity as a way of breaking the circularity of inflamed political debates recurred in the 1980s as political rifts within the ruling NAR took on the same racial overtones that most hoped had ended with the coalition that formed the NAR. In an interesting representation, calypsonian Delamo assumed a dougla identity as a way of distancing himself from the Indian/African conflict in his 1989 'Soca Chutney' – "Now who come out to divide and rule/Eh go use we as a tool/Anytime they coming racial/I dougla, I staying neutral" (in Constance 1991, 43). His song, while noticing the culturally interactive potential of dougla identity, invests this identity with a utopian and inherent capacity to resist ethnic division, unlike The Mighty Dougla's 'Split Me In Two'. Bally's 1989 'Dougla' is a fine rendition of the creative potential of dougla identification. This song traces the histories of Indians and Africans, their shared oppression, the enriching cultural fusion of the 1970s, and images the dougla as a symbol of unity. It reinforces dougla identity, not only in its lyrics,

but also in its structure. This song is often referred to in current explorations of dougla identity (see Puri 1997). I reproduce the song here for the first time with kind permission from the singer:

> From Africa they forced me to go overseas
>
> In chains to the West Indies
>
> Mother India
>
> I have said bye bye to you
>
> Is the West Indies I going to
>
> Two souls, two worlds, two goals, one destiny
>
> To live, to love to build
>
> La Trinity
>
> Father please
>
> Now we need your guiding hand
>
> Help we use we culture
>
> To build a bridge together
>
> Drive dem racists out we land
>
> *1st chorus*
>
> Dougla
>
> A loyal bond, eternal blend, symbols of unity
>
> Dougla
>
> The hope for him
>
> The hope for her
>
> The hope for you and me
>
> The tassa when they talk
>
> Rhythm makes me blood run cold
>
> I does feel it deep inside meh soul
>
> Bongo so sweet
>
> It does put me in a daze

---

[9] Tanker's 'Dougla Dancer' was never recorded and Tanker himself was unable to remember what

A boom boom and all meh pores raise

Two drums, two songs, one melody

With soul, they cajole, and roll in harmony

Take a hand

We are being judged from above

Touch your Afro brother

Hug your Indian neighbour

Let's start practising true love

2nd chorus

Dougla

A test of love

A show of faith

Symbol of unity

Dougla…

Sitar so smooth

With a soothing sound

Its magic keeps me so spellbound

Steelband music fine

Now known the world wide

A people's joy, a people's pride

Two hands, two bands, one rhapsody

That play and sway

Away all misery

Let's unite

Divided we sure to sink

For we need each other

Now more than ever

As our nation is on the brink

---

year he wrote and performed the song.

3rd chorus

Dougla

A mutual link

Absolute bond

Symbol of unity

Dougla

Children of India

Shake the bogey from your mind

For too long it kept you blind

People...Africans

To love yourself you better learn

If you want love in return

Two breeds, two creeds, two needs

But just one dream

To make this plan

We share a world so free

Walk the road

The road of tolerance and care

And as we tread these paces

Let's embrace all races

With this knowledge we now share

4th Chorus

Dougla

A guiding light

A shining light

Symbol of unity

Dougla (Bally 1989).

My investigation of calypsoes from 1995 to 2000 identifies similar expressions as some calypsonians again seek to intervene in the same Indian/African debate which this time issues

from the 1995 ascension of the UNC to government. Ajala invoked an old Indian film song to form an infectious melody in 'So Nani' (1996). Sonny Mann, an Indian, joined forces with Denise Belfon and dub/calypsonian General Grant to release a new version of his popular 'Lotalay' (1996); General Grant also released his own single titled 'Mi Dulahin' (1996). In 1997, Leon Coldero fused Indian and African rhythms to background his call for inter-ethnic unity. In this calypso, intimacy between an Indian woman, Indra, and the calypsonian is the song's controlling metaphor for closer cross-cultural relations:

> Chutney soca…Indian melody enjoyed by you and me
>
> Eat it with roti
>
> Mix it with talcarry
>
> Both me and Indra
>
> Take a rhythm from India
>
> And some from Africa
>
> *CHORUS*
>
> Join them together
>
> One with the other
>
> And squeeze them a little tighter
>
> Closer and closer
>
> And call it chutney soca. (Leon Coldero 1997).

These expressions, while formulaically similar to other calypsoes quoted in this chapter in their representation of Indian women as a cultural border, depart from those offerings in their optimism about Indian/African relations and their structural, musical and lyrical creativity. Expressions such as these and others noted in this section are examples of ethical considerations of Indian/African relations that have emerged outside of feminist scholarship and have perhaps compensated for the absence of Indian women's voices in these debates. They could also conceivably help to explain why Indian women's interventions have been so late in emerging.

Newspaper columnist Keith Smith, respected for his insights on Trinidad culture, has consistently celebrated the progressive potential of douglarisation. In a 1998 article he briefly

alluded to the continuing process of cultural douglarisation which he believes would render biological douglarisation irrelevant (Smith 1998, 9). In 2000 he elaborates that orthodox definitions of douglarisation that suppress cross-cultural currents engage in 'an imagined separateness' of Indians and Africans in Trinidad. Smith believes that the separateness is imagined because:

> the tribes continue to be influenced by each other, and there is more and more a mixing, a growing commonality almost, and that 400 or 150 years down the road we may very well find that a third race is in the majority- whatever the understandable fears of the two now prevailing- and in the full knowledge that to envisage this is not to countenance the disappearance of either (Smith 2000).

And he releases douglarisation from biology where it is moored in conservative discourses:

> Moreover, I think what marks the advance is not so much a biological but a cultural mixing that takes place slowly, imperceptibly almost, over time and generations so that the day comes when the future historian searching to understand a transported nation find himself seeking out what came from where and when, who or what made the difference, what was the intervention that redressed this or that imbalance (Smith 2000).

One can extrapolate the political potential of douglarisation from a national debate in 1996, just months into the UNC term of office. Brother Marvin's 1996 calypso 'Jahaaji Bhai' was first warmly received by audiences until Africanist Pearl Eintou Springer precipitated a national controversy by pointing to the third verse of the song:

> For those who playing ignorant
>
> Talking 'bout true African descendent
>
> If yuh want to know the truth
>
> Take a trip back to your roots
>
> And somewhere on that journey
>
> You will see a man in a dhoti
>
> Saying he prayers in front of a jhandi *(Brother Marvin 1996)*

and asserted that her ancestry was African and not Indian as the song suggested. In Springer's words, 'nowhere in my African past would I find anyone praying in front of a Jhandi' (1996, 8). In the ensuing debate which involved the inevitable confrontation between the SDMS and some African organisations and individual Africanists, Iyaorisha Molly Ahye, first female spiritual head of the Shango/Orisha religion, intervened in the inflamed debate and asserted the common spiritual heritage of Indians and Africans and the prehistoric fusion of the Asian and African continents. Both daily newspapers carried her commentary:

> The custom of planting prayer flags, outdoor shrines (jhandi) and so many others is shared by Africa, India, Tibet and many other Ancient civilisations...Hindu divinities such as mais Lakshmi, Ganga, Durga, baba Shiva, Ganesh and others manifest privately as well as during the Orisha rituals. They have their archetypal counterparts in the Orisha pantheon and claim their sacred space in the construct of the Orisha system. We who experience the loving enfoldment of these Divine beings understand about the all encompassing embrace of the Almighty (Ahye 1996, 10).

Ahye's declaration subverted representations of the Shango/Orisha religion as a discrete marker of African identity, just as Hinduism is constructed as a marker of Indian identity. The Shango/Orisha religion syncretises elements of Yoruba, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religions; sometime around the middle of the twentieth century it also syncretised elements of Hinduism. James Houk (1993) finds a significant Indian presence in the religion, manifested in the incorporation of selected Hindu Gods and rituals and accompanied by the influx of Indians into the religion. Houk was puzzled by 'this curious association involving Indian and African culture' because 'we are dealing with two groups who do not and did not share a common historical or ethnic heritage but did practise religions that were similar in some respects' (1993, 174). Based on comments from his respondents, he concluded that the Indian presence in the Shango/Orisha religion most likely dates to sometime after 1950; his respondents noted that they began to notice Hindu elements in Shango/Orisha compounds around 1960 (Houk 1993, 174). I found a short story by Trinidadian fiction writer Seepersad Naipaul, read on the BBC Caribbean Voices Programme in 1950, which mentioned Hindu elements of the Baptist religion. This suggests that the Orisha/Hindu encounter occurred earlier than Houk concludes.

The significance of this Orisha/Hindu syncretism and Ayorisha Molly Ahye's intervention in 1996 is that they undermine conservative African discourses that encourage the Africanisation of Indians, and it also undermines the conservative Indian separate-but-equal model of cultural interaction. In other words, this Indian/African encounter in the Orisha religion suggests a model of cultural interaction in which both Indian and African elements retain their individual identity but fuse to produce something new that is meaningful to both communities. This is significant both as a cultural phenomenon and for the political promise that it frames. It is also promising that a pre-election poll conducted by Professor Selwyn Ryan in 2000, the election year in Trinidad found that 'douglas seem to be the only group whose voting behaviour is not unequivocally based on race' (2000).

Caribbean Theories of Hybridity: Douglarisation and Creolisation

Douglarisation is a historically and culturally specific modality of Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity (1994). Douglarisation, by addressing cultural interactions between groups which have been similarly colonised, whose co-existence is the result of colonial economic and political domination and exploitation and whose perceptions of each other are grounded in colonial racialism, is comfortably post-colonial in its theoretical trajectory. My attention to the material context which frames this discussion of douglarisation intertexts with numerous critiques of Bhabha's hybridity that focus on the universalising tendency in his exposition on the hybrid colonial subject (Loomba 1998; Shohat 1993; Nixon 1994; Parry 1994; Dirlik 1994). In Ania Loomba's words, Bhabha's 'split, ambivalent, hybrid colonial subject…is, in fact, curiously universal and homogenous - that is to say, he could exist anywhere in the colonial world…He is internally split and agonistic, but undifferentiated by gender, class or location' (1998, 178). These critics suggest that the usefulness of hybridity can best be realised by attention to the historical specificities and nuances of the cultures that create diverse hybridities. Loomba calls for 'dense contextualisation' (1998, 181), Shohat for discrimination 'between the diverse modalities of hybridity' (1993, 110), Nixon for attention to the 'unavoidably local and immensely variable' possibilities of hybridity (1994, 24-25), Dirlik for reference to 'the ideological and institutional structures in which they [the conditions of in-betweeness and hybridity] are housed' (1994, 342), and Fink for teasing out 'the precise contours, lost

languages, buried histories from which hybridity emerges' (1999, 250). Douglarisation is one answer to these calls; it is a historically, geographically and culturally specific concept that speaks to the specific histories and interactions between Indians and Africans in Trinidad. Dougla is a mixed race identity and therefore occupies a generic in-between space along with other mixed race identities that destabilise discourses that construct and perpetuate discrete, exclusive racial identities (Ferber 1997; Omi and Winant 1986; Nakashima 1992). But dougla identity is historically and culturally situated and is a specific modality of hybridity.

Creolisation is the most regionally relevant model of cultural interaction with which douglarisation converses. Since the 1970s, creolisation has been the primary theoretical lens through which regional cultural identity has been understood. This model has been so influential and has become so naturalised as the explanatory narrative of cross-cultural interaction in the English-speaking Caribbean, and its assumptions about the Indian cultural presence in the Caribbean are so critical, that it demands very careful and detailed analysis. Creolisation, elaborated by Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1971; 1974), the celebrated Barbadian cultural historian, understands cross-racial and cross-cultural dynamics in the Caribbean as the process by which the relationships between coloniser and colonised, in this case Europeans and Africans, inter-culturated to form a new mode that is the synthesis of elements of both. Brathwaite explains 'Creole society' as the result of:

> a complex situation where a colonial polity reacts, as a whole, to external metropolitan pressures and at the same time to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and labour, white and non-white, Europe and colony, European and African (mulatto creole), European and Amerindian (mestizo creole), in a culturally heterogeneous relationship (Brathwaite 1974, 10-11).

Creolisation is defined as a specialised version of acculturation and interculturation (Brathwaite 1974, 11). The creolisation process, Brathwaite proposes, started first with the culturation of whites and blacks to the Caribbean environment, and at the same time, with the acculturation of black people to white norms (1974, 11). He believes that there was, moreover, significant 'interculturation' between these two elements and that emancipation slowed/halted/altered the process (Brathwaite 1974, 11). By the time Indians and other groups entered the society, Brathwaite observes, a creole synthesis already existed and the new groups had to adjust themselves to this (1974, 11).

Creolisation has considerable implications for this study of douglarisation. Brathwaite first developed his creole society thesis based on a study of Jamaican society between 1770 and 1820 (1971) and although he later footnoted the geographical limitation of the work (1974), he does propose a generalised and homogenised Caribbean' experience. He certainly homogenises the diverse experiences of Indians in Jamaica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Guyana to support his dismissal of the Indian cultural contributions to creolisation.

Brathwaite recognised that Indians 'contributed to new configurations of creole' and pointed to some Jamaican cults where worshippers are possessed by 'Indian' gods (the Shango/Orisha religion in Trinidad is another example of this that I cited earlier); the Muslim Hosay festival which he believes has become integrated into the creole imagination; Indian participation in Carnival and cricket; and he refers to a study by renowned Caribbean historian J. D. Elder who found that in Gasparillo in South Trinidad Indians had been absorbed into the lifestyle of the surrounding black (Yoruba) groups. He does acknowledge that his conclusions are geographically specific and in his often neglected first endnote in Contradictory Omens he cautions: 'I would go further and say that this monograph, conceived and written in Jamaica, would probably have had a different shape/selection (aesthetic) if written say in Trinidad or Guyana: less simply black/white oriented cultures' (Brathwaite 1974, 66). Nevertheless Brathwaite does invoke Trinidad, Guyana and several other locations in the Caribbean in order to dismiss the possibility of meaningful Indian contribution to the celebrated creole culture that results from creolisation.

In one instance Brathwaite explains his dismissal on the basis of an analysis of Indians' 'selective creolization'. Brathwaite suggests that whereas Africans imitated Euro-American norms because they had no core culture from which to adapt, Indians opted instead for 'selective creolization' in which 'the Indian relates his own notion of cultural norms to the master-culture of Euro-America, and selects/adapts in order to modernize' (1974, 54). This modernisation, according to Brathwaite, takes places in an endogamous and exclusive manner, 'in– rather than inter- culturation' and he concludes that 'despite his apparent disadvantages, it is the Caribbean black who has been most innovative and "radical"' (1974, 54). This description of selective creolisation is an aspect of the Indian experience in Jamaica that is investigated in a later work by Verene Shepherd (1993). Shepherd describes selective creolisation in post-indentureship Jamaican society as the process of conforming to the norms of creole society in order to be accepted and move up the social ladder (1993, 206-211). This

process, she found, caused the abandonment of Indian cultural traditions by younger Indians, and she further links it to a deliberate government policy of assimilation (Shepherd 1993, 206). She found that the planter oligarchy in post-indentureship Jamaica tolerated differences in food, language, dress, music, dance, and domestic rites and customs among Indians, but objected to pluralism in areas that threatened to change basic English legal customs (Shepherd 1993, 212-213). In this instance Brathwaite's dismissal of Indian involvement in creole culture rests on the experience of 'selective creolization' among Indians, specifically in Jamaica, which he collapses with the racial endogamy evident among Indians in St. Vincent, Trinidad and Guyana despite the fact that by 1970, the time of Brathwaite's creolisation thesis, the small Indian community in Jamaica was already well-assimilated, culturally and racially (Shepherd 1993, 16), unlike Indians in St Vincent, Trinidad and Guyana.

In his discussion of 'lateral creolization' which he defines as 'the "leakage" between, say poor whites and coloureds…between blacks and East Indians and between East Indians and others', Brathwaite concludes that none of the laterals involved is in a position to initiate cultural confrontation; blacks 'because incomplete creolization has left them uncertain and ambivalent; the Indians, because their immigrant equipment is so geared for materialism that their spiritual imputs are/were ritualistic rather than dynamic – a factor which the nature of Indian culture itself must have something to account for' (1974, 63). Brathwaite's observation about Indian materialism is again less relevant to Jamaica where Indians have always been part of the rural and urban lower class populations (Shepherd 1993, 118-149). It seems anchored instead to the nationalist politics of the immediate pre- and post-independence periods in Trinidad and Guyana which traded on the stereotype of Indians as grasping, miserly and single-minded towards money and represented Indian economic advancement as hostile to the national interest. By the time of Brathwaite's creolisation thesis this stereotype of Indians was so secure that Trinidadian novelist Merle Hodge pointed to the fact that a new character has slipped into Trinidad folklore: Ram the barefoot Indian selling penny packets of channa outside the school, and his penny-channa miraculously building in a few years into an island-wide empire (1975, 36). Hodge suggests that this folklore represents the African's alarm at what he regards as the phenomenal progress of Indians, as well as self-chastisement for his lack of business sense, for his slackness in letting the 'coolie' creep up on him (1975, 36).

It is crucial here to point to creolisation's limitations and partialities in terms of geographical location; creolisation has become such a powerful analytical tool in relation to

readings of Caribbean cultures more generally that its geographical contours are not the most obvious facts to emerge. The application of creolisation to Trinidad society is further complicated by aspects of cultural translation. As early as 1967 Philip Singer and Enrique Araneta Jr noticed that the word creole was used contemptuously by rural Indians in Guyana in relation to Africans and not Europeans (1967, 226). I have heard the word used by Indians in Trinidad both as a neutral descriptive noun and as a derogatory term. I have heard the word used in both ways by different communities of Indians and I have also heard it used both ways by the same community of Indians. The word creole among Indians in Trinidad also recalls creole nationalism of the Williams' era when creole folk culture was valorised to the exclusion of Indian cultural representation.

It is equally important to point to the collage of diverse experiences among Indians in the Caribbean that Brathwaite occludes. His construction of a generalised Indian identity is dismissible because it is, in his terms, culturally static, materially acquisitive, socially exclusive and racially endogamous. This representation drives Brathwaite's conclusion that:

> the basis of culture lies in the folk, and that by folk we mean not
> in-culturated, static groups, giving little; but a people who, from
> the centre of an oppressive system have been able to survive,
> adapt, recreate; have devised means of protecting what has been
> so gained (miraculous, precarious maronage) and who begin to
> offer to return some of this experience and vision (1974, 64).

Creolisation then, as formulated by Brathwaite in his seminal work, is problematic as a totalising model for Caribbean society. In particular, the social history and demographical composition of Trinidad society complicate the processes and theorisations of creolisation. Douglarisation intervenes to elaborate this footnote in creolisation.

Brathwaite's dismissal of an Indian contribution to creolisation echoes in the creolité model of Caribbean identity crafted in the Francophone Caribbean. The authors of Elóge de la Creolité proclaim the distinction between creolité and creolisation and view creolité as an evolutionary superior model to creolisation:

> Altogether different is the process of Creolization...Generally
> resting upon a plantation economy, *these populations are called*
> *to invent the new cultural designs allowing for a relative*
> *cohabitation between them.* These designs are the result of a
> nonharmonious (and unfinished therefore nonreductionist)

> mix…of the different people in question…Creoleness is the fact
> of belonging to an original human entity which comes out of
> these processes in due time (Bernabe, Chamoiseau, Confiant
> 1989, 92).

And unlike Brathwaite's creolisation, at the very start of their thesis the framers of creolité include Indians – 'Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles' (Bernabe et al 1989, 75). But the 'Asians' to whom they refer are the small populations of Indians in Martinique and other Francophone Caribbean countries such as Guadeloupe and St. Lucia. Trinidad Indians, who remain culturally distinct, are said to illustrate 'migrant' culture, existing in 'splendid isolation' (Bernabe et al 1989, 91-92). The various ways in which the Trinidad Indian community 'adapted their new culture to new realities without completely modifying them' are examples of their *'Americanness'*, not creoleness (Bernabe et al 1989: 92).

A sustained exploration of douglarisation intervenes with an analysis of Indian/African cross-cultural interaction that belies the dismissals contained in both creolité and creolisation. In this regard douglarisation is closer to Caribbean poet/playwright Derek Walcott's interpretation of mulatto identity. Walcott's attempts to understand Caribbean identity through his own shabine (red-nigger, mulatto) identity overlap in many ways with the creolité project. Walcott excitedly receives Elóge de la Creolité and describes Martiniquan Patrick Chamoiseau's novel Texaco (1992) as 'a vast epiphany of what he [Chamoiseau] proposed in a *Creolité* manifesto, calling for a new Caribbean literature' (1997, 215). Where Walcott's project differs is in his attention to the Indian community, particularly in Trinidad. Biography is important here to explain Walcott's divergence from both creolisation and creolité. Walcott spent much of his time in Trinidad; he founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in 1959, when he was only twenty-nine, and has written expansively about Trinidad in his poetry. His 'Saddhu of Couva' (Walcott 1980, 33-35) is a compassionate poem set in the heart of a rural, Indian sugar-cane community and is evidence of Walcott's ability to see them as a integrated presence in Trinidad's cultural landscape.

Walcott's attention to the Indianness of Trinidad had its finest rendition in his 'Fragment of the Antilles' (1992) with which he accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature. This essay contains Walcott's most sustained focus on the Indian cultural presence in Trinidad and, unlike the crafters of creolité, he delights in the cultural distinctiveness of the Indians in the Central Trinidad village of Felicity, while recognising that the villagers' re-enactment of the

epic Ramayana was 'like a dialect, a branch of its original language, an abridgement of it, not a distortion or even a reduction of its epic scale' (1992, 69). In this essay Walcott also extends his vision of mulatto identity. Whereas in 1970, as the 'mulatto of style', he is the 'third' writer 'dedicated to purifying the language of the tribe' (Walcott 1970, 8-9), in 1992, swept up in the plural ferment of Trinidad society, he is 'one-eighth the writer I could have been had I contained all the fragmented languages of Trinidad' (1992, 69). His celebration of Caribbean language now includes Hindi, Chinese and Arabic and his mongrel identity is now further enriched by all the cultures of the world which are represented in Port of Spain - the Asiatic, the Mediterranean, the European, the African (Walcott 1992, 74-79).

In 1998, six years after his 'Fragment of the Antilles' and three years into the racial tensions in Trinidad precipitated by the UNC entry into government, Walcott remained certain that reconciliation would be restored. In response to a question as to whether he remained optimistic about Indian/African relations in Trinidad, Walcott replies that he trusts that the proximity and friendship that exists between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean would survive political manipulation of prejudices (1998b). But he seemed to struggle in locating his vision of a celebratory polyglot Caribbean society within the specific, material context of renewed Indian/African antagonism in Trinidad. I transcribe Walcott's response at some length here because I think it suggests considerably less certainty than his earlier observations:

What I'm optimistic about is not the politics- that's superficial, that's ephemeral, that passes. What I'm optimistic about is the reality of what a Trinidadian *feels*. Indian, African, Chinese…that's my optimism. It's not an optimism, it's a reality. The conduct that we judge men by is part of history…I don't think that unless you find a situation that is so absolute that someone can virtually take over the island- there are possibilities, things can happen, you can have an overthrow of the government as was attempted before and that's possible in any society- but I don't see it. I don't feel it. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't feel that hatred is possible. I don't think there is a beginning influence, and the obvious one to develop is Muslim/Hindu, right? I mean you could use that, that's a standard thing from elsewhere. That's not exploited. Other things are exploited. I know exactly what you mean. For example, the crime in the Caribbean is very high…I won't call it optimism. I won't even call it faith. It's something that has to do with…the profundity of it is a belief that the experience the Caribbean has gone through in terms of slavery and indenture and in terms of the reality of the proximity and friendship that exists between…people get irritated about

> politicians trying to manipulate prejudices and the hope in that is
> that that will be recognised by other people, the press, or by just
> people considering it to be stupid. I believe that's strong. I believe
> that's there. That's the kind of trust I have. It doesn't matter what
> incidents happen, those things are really unimportant. To
> me…what gets restored in human conduct is very profound, in the
> same way that hatred is continuous in a sense. But the restoration
> of reconciliation happens. I don't see a division that deep
> happening and up to now I think people are aware of the kind of
> stupidity that lies behind that kind of division even if it appears to
> be economically explicable or historically explicable or racially
> whatever. I don't go by those things. To me those are short term
> images of any kind of conflict and this includes the holocaust.
> One would think that you couldn't come around out of that, but
> we have, and Jews have (Walcott 1998b).

The promise of progressive relations between Indians and Africans contained in ethical inflections of douglarisation shares in the promise of Walcott's (1992, 71) vision of a polyglot, mongrel Caribbean identity.

In attending to historical and cultural specificities douglarisation becomes a way of **remembering** a community that guards against 'imagined separateness' (Smith 2000). Stuart Hall reminds us that the Caribbean is the signifier of migration itself and that diaspora in the context of the New World is **defined** by hybridity (1994, 401-402). To boldly paraphrase him, Caribbean identity has always been marked by a self-conscious recognition of, and negotiation with, diversity. In relation to Trinidad, the interaction between Indians and Africans over the past one hundred and fifty years has been a crucial aspect of this. In the present climate of intense political rivalry between Indians and Africans, there is a tendency for Africans to become Africanised and of Indians to become Indianised. James Houk (1993) notes the move towards Africanisation of the already douglarised Shango/Orisha religion and Reddock (1999) points to the efforts to effectively silence dougla expressions in calypso. Both moves are occurring as a result of pressures from Indian and African communities to consolidate ethnic exclusivity and are examples of what Hall - referring to then Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga's attempt in 1983-1984 to change the representation on the national coat of arms from Arawak figures - calls an invitation to remember by first forgetting something else:

> There can be few political statements which so eloquently testify
> to the complexities entailed in the process of trying to represent
> a diverse people with a diverse history through a single,

hegemonic "identity". Fortunately Mr Seaga's invitation to the Jamaican people, who are overwhelmingly of African descent, to start their remembering by first "forgetting" something else, got the comeuppance it so richly deserved (Hall 1994, 401).

In the Trinidad context, the 'something else' that conservative elements in both Indian and African communities are inviting their members to forget is their douglarised cultural identity. Keith Smith (2000) describes the basis of these calls as an 'imagined separateness' of Indians and Africans in Trinidad. In this way, douglarisation is a way of **remembering** a douglarised community that guards against this 'imagined separateness'.

Douglarisation also intervenes to further an understanding of one of the most under-examined cultural relationships in the post-colonial world. India and Africa were two populous locations for European imperialism; moreover colonialism was also responsible for bringing peoples from those two locations to co-exist in a wholly new place. Broadening its theoretical scope further, douglarisation provides a probable basis for understanding diasporic Caribbean identity. It belies the creolite dismissal of Indian cultural distinction as existing in splendid isolation and it reinforces Walcott's acknowledgment of the enriching Indianness of Trinidad culture while asserting the need to materially situate the dynamics of cross cultural interaction that produce 'the reality of what a Trinidadian **feels**' (Walcott 1998b).

CHAPTER THREE

Politics and Representation: The Dougla in Trinidad Literature

This chapter looks at fictional representations of the dougla. It is my aim to draw upon fictional material that has not previously been critically attended to in the context of douglarisation in order to both broaden and sharpen the debates around this figure. To date Jeremy Poynting is the only other scholar who has paid critical attention to literary representations of the dougla.[1] In a related project in 1986 in which he looked at fiction from Trinidad and Guyana, he concluded that in creole fiction 'the dougla, usually a girl, is portrayed as the object of special physical attraction' whereas in fiction by Indians, the portrayal of the dougla touches on 'Indian abhorrence of racial mixing' (1986, 18).[2] With regard to the first, he examples Michael Anthony's Green Days By The River (1967) and with regard to the second, Shiva Naipaul's The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1973). In the more extensive work within his PhD thesis, Poynting tries to extrapolate a 'dougla sensibility' in order to discuss the dilemmas of identity for people of Indian/African and Indian/European ethnic mixtures (Poynting 1985, 546). Poynting uses his concept of a dougla sensibility as a broad formulation in order to explain the destabilised identities that derive from Indian mixtures with both Africans and Europeans. He takes the concept further as an analytical tool in order to read Samuel Selvon's I Hear Thunder (1963) as a novel which illustrates that the dougla despair of being between cultures is part of a more general despair common to a generation of Caribbean writers who, through education, have become alienated from their cultures of origin (Poynting 1985, 584-585). For such broad applications, however, it is surprising that Poynting offers only a preliminary analysis of the complex politics of dougla identity in Trinidad and Guyana that provide the basis of this dougla sensibility.

This absence of close attention to context as well as to text can perhaps be attributed to two major factors. The first is that Poynting's exploration of dougla sensibility is one aspect of an enormous project that investigates Indians in the context of Caribbean literature (including at times literature about the Caribbean) from 1838-1985; the second is that fifteen

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[1] Although Kenneth Ramchand (1985) has also offered some analyses of representations of the dougla, Poynting's work is more extensive.

[2] This article is gleaned from Poynting's PhD enquiry the previous year. Poynting uses the word creole here to mean African creole writers.

years have passed since Poynting's project and critical awareness and a politics of reading are now much more commonly informed by the relationships between literature, history, culture and politics. In addition, more historical and sociological data on dougla identity are now available. There is another possible reading of Poynting's particular construction of dougla sensibility which relates to his analysis of the mulatto in Caribbean literature. He opens his chapter on dougla sensibility with reference to the 'social and fictional image of the mulatto' as an 'unstable person at ease neither with white nor black' before posing the question: 'What then of the identity of the much smaller groups of mixed Indian and African or Indian and European parentage?' (Poynting 1985, 546). There are obvious continuities between dougla and mulatto identities, both of which are hybrid identities that subvert discourses reliant on 'pure' notions of ethnic/racial origin. Indeed this generic similarity allows Poynting to posit a dougla sensibility in relation to both Indian/African and Indian/European mixtures. However, it is possible to argue that his attention to conclusions about representations of the mulatto in Caribbean fiction overdetermine his analyses of representations of the dougla. He references Kenneth Ramchand's finding that two stereotypes of the mulatto - unstable (usually male) and highly sexed and sensuous (usually female) - appear in Caribbean fiction (1983, 41) and then arrives at the same conclusions in relation to representations of the dougla. In his analysis, Singh in The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1973) is the unstable male dougla and Rosalie in Green Days by the River (1967) is the sensuous female dougla (1986, 18). My examination of literary representations of the dougla suggests that there are significant interstices left by Poynting's conclusions. By paying attention to the material and historical contexts of these representations of the dougla, and by exploring the ethical extrapolations of douglarisation, within a cultural as well as literary context, I aim to work with the nuances that are constitutive of the Trinidad experience of Indian/African relations in order to extend scholarship in this field.

Dramatisations of both Indian and African rejection of the dougla appear in Shiva Naipaul's The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1982 [1973]) and C.L.R. James's Minty Alley (1936).[3] The dougla Singh in The Chip-Chip Gatherers is the offspring of the odious and malevolent Egbert Ramsaran and an unnamed, unknown African woman. Poynting describes Naipaul's portrayal of Singh as 'hysterical and melodramatic', but nevertheless an honest expression of 'evidently deeply rooted anxieties' that derive from 'the Indian abhorrence of racial mixing' (1986, 18). There are remarkable similarities between Naipaul's portrayal of the dougla Singh

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[3] The Chip-Chip Gatherers was first published in 1973. All page references to this text are taken from the 1982 Longman Drumbeat edition.

and portrayals of the male mulatto, for example, Jean Rhys' portrayal of the mulatto Daniel Cosway in <u>Wide Sargasso Sea</u> (1966). Like Daniel Cosway, Singh lives in the woods, is bitter about his ancestry and his father's repudiation of him, and functions as a disruptive figure lurking on the fringes of the text. But unlike Daniel Cosway, Singh is also the subject of conflicting pulls in this novel and Naipaul seems to struggle in his presentation of him. Just as Singh is half-Indian and half-African, he is portrayed in halves – half-mad and half-human. To this end he is animalised, malevolent, threatening and ugly. Yet a close reading of the novel shows that the brief glimpses of Singh's internal being that we are allowed make him morally superior to most of the characters in the world of this novel. My reading of the novel is an attempt to unpack the ways in which the process of giving subjectivity to a cultural other, which Naipaul attempts in his characterisation of Singh, is influenced and even compromised by the wider conceptual norms and imperatives of cultural discourse which frame the figure of the dougla in Trinidad at this time.

Singh is presented as one of the effects of urbanisation on Indians – he was conceived in Port of Spain during Egbert's sojourn there. He is banished to his father's country estate where he lives mostly alone, repudiated by his father, and making only monthly trips to his father's home in Victoria to bring bags of fruits from the estate and to receive his $20 allowance:

> It was common knowledge too that he [Egbert Ramsaran] had an illegitimate son, Singh (the product of one of his fleeting liaisons in Port of Spain in the early days), and about whom little was known for certain except that he was of mixed blood and lived by himself on an estate Egbert Ramsaran had bought in Central Trinidad – some said for the sole purpose of getting rid of Singh (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 31).

Just as Singh is exiled to the country, so too he lives on the fringes of the text; his visits to his father are the main occasions when he walks into the novel. Otherwise, he is seen only three times, first when young Wilbert, his half-brother, visits with him on the estate, second at Rani's funeral, and then again when the married Wilbert takes his honeymoon at the beachhouse where Singh was relocated by his father.

Singh, in his mid-twenties, is portrayed as dark, ugly and threatening. The representation of his physical being is clearly coded and the narrative suggests that his identity can also be read from his body. He is described as:

very dark and stockily built and his face had not rid itself of the ravages of adolescence. It was scarred and pitted with craters. When he laughed his gums were exposed and one saw his crooked, yellowing teeth, like those of an old man. Singh laughed a great deal but there was something mocking and furtive in his laughter. It did not inspire trust. His laughter was just a shade too loud, too ringing and too ready; and it was interspersed with those briefly glimpsed flashes of ferocity – instantly suppressed and converted into brittle merriment – when the blood darkened his rough face and he bit hard on his twitching lower lip (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 39).

Singh's dougla wife, Myna, is described with similar repugnance; she is dirty and ugly and here physical distaste is explicitly linked to racial mixing - 'She was a plump, dark-skinned woman of uncertain race – probably Indian and Negro. Her hair cascaded in untidy coils over a crude, heavy-jowled face' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 53).

The estate on which Singh is exiled has been overtaken by decay and abandonment. It is described as 'disordered, untended wasteland. It was a blot on conscience' and this 'enclave given over to abandonment and decay, deadened in the heat of midafternoon' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 42-43). Again, we are encouraged to read the landscape as morally indicative of Singh himself. Practically imprisoned amid decadence, Singh is animalised in the novel. He lives in a raised hut; to enter he has to climb swaying stairs, like an animal living in a tree - 'In one corner of the room there was a rusting, two-burner kerosene stove…smoke blackened shelves…a low, extremely narrow camp bed…It looked uninviting and uncomfortable. There was a solitary chair in the room' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 46). He has infrequent contact with the world outside his solitary hut; he has no radio, there are no newspapers, he drinks dirty rainwater from a barrel, and sleeps and wakes with chickens. There are mosquitoes inside and frogs croaking outside. He is uneducated, without manners, always a threatening presence, always shrouded in darkness, carrying a gun or cutlass, speaking of ghosts and injustice and revenge – 'Singh's dark, unsmiling face was hovering above him [Wilbert]' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 45). When he laughs it is a 'deranged, mocking laughter' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 59).

Naipaul's portrayal of Singh draws on racialist theories of mixed race, 'half-caste' subjects which always emphasise what is menacing, lost or debased in the mixed race subject. Tracing the history of the concept of hybridity to describe the products of inter-ethnic sexual unions, Robert Young looks at the polygenist species argument, the amalgamation thesis, the decomposition thesis and what he describes as 'the negative version of the amalgamation thesis' which is the 'idea that miscegenation produces a mongrel group that makes up a

"raceless chaos", merely a corruption of the originals, degenerate and degraded, threatening the subvert the vigour and virtue of the pure races with which they come into contact' (1995, 18). Shiva Naipaul represents Singh in these terms. Singh is the undisguised 'half-caste', the outcast dougla, and the ugly mutant whose humanity is questioned because he is not racially 'pure'. Naipaul's demonisation of this character and his resort to Singh's body as final and irrefutable evidence of his inhumanity - Singh is an 'ugly head' leering at Wilbert, 'thick lipped' and 'with eyes like holes' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 49) – would seem to support Poynting's analysis of this novel as a melodramatic and hysterical account of Indian rejection of the dougla. However I would want to argue that Singh is not represented in such crudely negative and racialised terms simply because he is 'half-caste' and mixing in itself is seen as culturally abhorrent with the Indian community, but rather because he represents a racial mixture **with Africans**.

Singh is dehumanised, animalised, associated with darkness and lack of refinement and manners, taunted as a gorilla, all of which derive from his racial mixture **with Africans**. All of these particular representational strategies can be traced to nineteenth century racial discourse about Africans and inter-racial 'hybrids' in which Africans are characterised as backward, savage, barbarian, and at the bottom of the evolutionary hierarchy (Young 1995; Omi and Winant 1986). Singh himself is represented as being partial to his Indian ancestry, which he tries to retain by naming his daughter Indra, and as despising the Africanness that is constitutive of his dougla ethnic identity. While Poynting's reading of the novel de-emphasises this specific relationality between Indians and Africans because he collapses Indian/African and Indian/European mixtures in his analytical approach, I would want to stress that the cultural specificity of these representations is crucial to an understanding of the politics of cross-cultural representation within the context of Trinidad. Also, because Poynting's reading de-emphasises relationality with Africans, it blinds us to the ways in which Naipaul's representation of the dougla Singh, far from being a unidimensional and transparent testament to the Indian community's abhorrence of racial mixing, also illustrates the conflicts and ambiguities generated by the fact of Singh's existence and his subjectivity.

There is sufficient evidence in the text to suggest these ambiguities. We are told that Singh regularly brought stamps for Rani, the abused and long-suffering wife of Egbert Ramsaran, to add to her collection. When Rani dies, Singh stands over her coffin and tears up the stamps he had saved for her. He is gentle with the faint Wilbert. On the otherwise overgrown estate where he is banished, Singh is seen as establishing an ethical relationship with the natural world. He keeps a neatly fenced-in enclosure where he grows vegetables:

'This was the only cultivated spot in the estate and Singh was clearly proud of it. The banked beds were well-watered and weeded' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 55). At the beachhouse where he is relocated, he extends compassion to a stray bitch and her starving pups, declaring to Wilbert: 'They have a right to live. Don't matter that they mangy and have fleas. They have as much right to live as you have!' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 318). And the author allows him dreams of a better life -. 'You know what I would do if this place was mine?...I would make it into a flower garden. I would plant all kinds of flowers and trees people never hear of before. Orchids especially. They is the prettiest kind of flower...' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 58). These glimpses of Singh's humanity associate him with the two other characters, Sita and Wilbert, whom Naipaul sympathetically presents as examples of struggling and ultimately defeated, humanity. Indeed, in a novel peopled by the heartless and malevolent Egbert, the conniving Basdai, the self-serving Sushila, the grasping and snobbish Mrs Bholai and her children, and the feckless and inert Mr Bholai, these snatches of Singh's humanity provide the few examples of compassion and generosity.

Naipaul's portrayal of Singh as essentially sub-human, as a figure whose disfigured body can be read as a script of his identity, appears in this novel alongside utterances in which the author allows Singh to deny that his subjectivity is corrupted. Despite raging against his African ancestry, he is aware of his orphaned status and longs for his African mother: ' "Whatever happen to my nigger mother? I never see she face. I would like to see she face. Just once. I would like to see the face of my nigger mother." The ugly head leered at Wilbert, thick lipped, with eyes like holes. "...No pity for Singh at all who never see his nigger mother..."' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 48-49). As a father, Singh, conscious of his own misfortune, worries about his daughter's future – "Look at my daughter. What she have to hope for except to be somebody servant one day? Is not a fair world at all" (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 54). And he asks Wilbert – "You ever ask yourself why it is I does have to make do with that dirty rainwater which even a dog shouldn't have to drink? You think is because I have a different kind of stomach from other people..." (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 48). The narrating sensibility also interjects:

> He had been set down in this place to run wild– like a pig. And, like a pig, he had run wild. The heat and the vegetation had washed in torrents over him and drowned him. "I would like to go somewhere cold" he said. "Somewhere very cold. Somewhere with ice and snow. Go to Greenland and live with the Eskimos and forget about all this" (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 62).

On the rare occasions that Singh is given voice in the novel, he articulates complicated and tortured emotional responses to his dougla identity and to the indignities that he suffers as a result of that identity. The narrating voice reinforces Singh's humanity by pointing out the social neglect and inhuman conditions that help account for the resentment and threat that are always associated with him. My argument here is that this novel represents a complex matrix of Indian/African relations made visible both through the representation of the dougla Singh and through Naipaul's difficulty in writing him. These nuances emerge from attention to the specificities of Indian/African relations and to an already established discourse for representing cultural others in acutely racialised terms.

Naipaul's portrait of Singh appeared in the early 1970s, the Black Power era, during which notions of 'pure' ancestry were mobilised, in order to evoke a positive politics of identity through Africanity, but despite the significance of this historical context, a similar perception of the dougla as racially suspect, this time from the African community, appeared in C.L.R. James's Minty Alley as early as 1936.[4] Whereas Singh is regarded by the Indian community as racially contaminated in The Chip-Chip Gatherers, the dougla Benoit is considered 'racially diluted' (Nakashima 1992, 165) by the African community in Minty Alley. The obeah man, who provides Ma Rouse with spiritual counsel, explains Benoit's ill treatment of her by saying that 'my blood and coolie blood doh take…He say I have nothing to expect from coolie blood but treachery. I ask him how me and Mr Benoit keep together so long. He say is because Mr Benoit was only half coolie' (James 1936, 240). Yet Ma Rouse's most faithful, honest, and hardworking friend at No. 2 Minty Alley is the Indian woman, Philomen. Ma Rouse, overtaken by her love for Benoit, obeys the obeah man's instructions and sacrifices Philomen 'the good, the faithful, and the true' (James 1936, 194). In this way the Indian half of Benoit, the reinforcement of his Indianness or coolieness, is erased from Ma Rouse's surroundings. Unlike Naipaul, however, James, in allowing Ma Rouse to recognise Philomen's service and unassailable friendship, in appointing the charlatan obeah man to issue the 'racially diluted' definition of the dougla, and in his wholehearted sympathy for Philomen, unequivocally undermines this representation of the dougla. Again there is a certain tension between the representation itself as it circulates in the text and the attempt to offer some other perspective on dougla identity.

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[4] See Shalini Puri for a passing reference to James's treatment of the dougla in this novel (1997, 159).

Benoit is James's second attempt to address the figure of the dougla in his fiction and is one of several dougla characters that appear in the literature of the 1930s.[5] As far as I am aware, the earliest appearance of the dougla is recorded in the fiction of this period. As I outlined in chapter one, the 1930s was a period of remarkable Indian/African solidarity, mobilised through anti-imperialist and early nationalist politics. This was also a period during which Trinidad experienced a cultural renaissance. Led by Albert Gomes, Alfred Mendes, R.A.C. de Boissiere and C.L.R. James, a group of writers and intellectuals started meeting to discuss art, literature and politics. The magazine Trinidad started between 1929-1930; The Beacon appeared between 1931 and 1933. The Beacon group explored the problems of West Indian identity and published frank articles on race relations. It also included a regular 'India section' with news of India and the nationalist struggle that would lead India to its independence from Britain in 1947 (Brereton 1981, 176; Ramchand 1983, 65-68). This section is significant in pointing to a cultural inclusiveness that was not in conflict with either political or cultural nationalist projects at this time. The writers of this period were also the pioneers of a new social realism in Trinidad fiction and were among the inventors of what is described as 'the literature of the yard' (Ramchand 1983, 65). James's Minty Alley is an example of yard literature, works that were attentive and sympathetic to the struggles of ordinary people who inhabited the slums in and around Port of Spain and whose experiences provided stories of human triumphs and revealed the emergence of what began to be regarded as Caribbean folk culture by the 1950s (Rohlehr 1992, 52-85). This is the period of James's attention to the dougla Benoit and his representation of the dougla Mamitz in his short story 'Triumph' (1999 [1929]).[6] It was also the period that produced C. A. Thomasos's 'The Dougla' (1978 [1933]).[7]

Thomasos's short story is set in the barrackyard on a Saturday when men received their pay and when men and women 'indulge in the Bacchanalian propensities of the barrack-yard' (1978, 137). Among the inhabitants of the yard are Ketura 'the stout negress' whose man was a meat vendor; Anna, a 'slim, brown woman of Spanish descent' who was involved with the Chinese, Lee Sing, until he was jailed (Thomasos 1978, 138). Among this parade of

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[5] Alfred Mendes's Pitch Lake (1934) was the first West Indian novel published in England, followed by his second novel, Black Fauns (1935) and then Minty Alley (1936).

[6] 'Triumph' was first published in the 1929 Christmas edition of Trinidad. It is reproduced in The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories eds. Stewart Brown and John Wickham (England: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp 35-49. Page references to this story are taken from the anthology.

[7] This story was first published in The Beacon II (10) April 1933. It is reproduced in From Trinidad : An Anthology of Early West Indian Writing edited by Reinhard W Sander with the assistance of Peter K Ayers, (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978) pp. 137–142. Page references to this story are taken from the anthology.

ethnicities that are all constitutive of Trinidad identity is 'dat dougla gerl' Elaine (Thomasos 1978, 138). There is an anthropological didacticism in the way Elaine and other dougla figures in early Trinidad literature are represented. The title of Thomasos's short story, for instance, deliberately draws attention to dougla ethnicity and the story presents all its characters through their ethnicity as if subjectivity is contained therein. Further we are told that 'Elaine was Afro-Indian- what is known as a *dougla*' (Thomasos 1978, 138) as if the story might act as a handbook for terms and identities in a classificatory way. Indeed, there are other such representations which may be read either as narrowly anthropological or as enabling gestures towards self naming. The dougla Popo Green in Earnest A Carr's 1947 'The Snake Charmer' is described as 'an upstanding youth of Negro and Indian blood, 'the dougla' as the offspring of this mixture is called in Trinidad'; the Englishman in E. M. Roach's 1949 'The Portrait' notices 'here and there the Doogla. He wondered how the word was spelt'; and the dougla Rosalie in Michael Anthony's <u>Green Days By The River</u> (1973 [1967]) is referred to as a dougla more often than she is referred to by name.[8]

Elaine is represented as exotic and irresistible and her body inscribes her gendered and ethnic difference. Thomasos describes her as: 'black and elegant. All men liked her company. She was always merry, always laughing at the top of her voice. She was feline and vicious' (1978, 138). This description of Elaine as an irresistible, exotic, sought-after woman recurs in the story – 'Elaine possessed a grace that intoxicated them. Her seductive charm drove some mad. They all admired her exuberance of spirit' (Thomasos 1978, 139). And Thomasos's characterisation of her as irresistible persists although, contradictorily, we are informed that after one year, Tony's fascination with her had waned and he left her for a Spanish girl named Rosa. Elaine is going to a dance with Freddy and this allows for another representation of her irresistible sexuality: 'Her dress was brilliant red in colour. It fitted her tightly and displayed to advantage the perfect symmetry of her body. Her large eyes rolled, her white teeth sparkled, her curly black hair glistened. All eyes were turned to her' (Thomasos 1978, 140). Tony, Elaine's ex-man, and the bartender see her at the dance with Freddy and provide even further endorsements of her sexuality. Taffy the bartender says 'de dougla at it again' and Tony replies 'Dat's de way wit' dem' (Thomasos 1978, 141). Tony eventually intervenes and the next morning he and Elaine are reunited, the ultimate proof of her irresistible sexuality. The lack of interest in Elaine's subjectivity and the constant foregrounding of her body are

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[8] <u>Green Days By the River</u> was first published in London in 1967 by Andre Deutsch. All page references to this novel are taken from the 1973 edition published by Heinemann.

suggestive of a 'biology as destiny' ideology in which racialised discourses (often highly gendered) encode all other character traits.

The female body is similarly the site of difference in James's short story 'Triumph'. Here Mamitz is 'a black woman, too black to be pure Negro, probably with some Madrasi Indian blood in her, a suspicion which was made a certainty by the long thick plaits of her plentiful hair' (James 1999, 36). She is described as 'voluptuously developed' and a woman who 'saw to it when she moved that you missed none of her charms' (James 1999, 36). This representation reappears in 1949 in 'The Portrait' by E. M. Roach. John Robertson, ex-commando captain from England, is appointed manager of an estate in Trinidad. Roach registers the Englishman's social and cultural distance from Trinidad society by reporting Robertson's impressions of Trinidad in indirect speech. The foreigner's gaze serves another function; it allows Roach to explore an anthropological fascination with the dougla. Robertson, for example, regards the dougla with sufficient fascination that he thinks to himself that he should write his sister, June, in Surrey and tell her something about these people. Here too, the dougla is a sensuous woman: 'She was the prettiest little creature he had ever seen...She looked so young and fragile...that he had pitied her' (Roach 1949). Her imperfections are 'a smooth deft grace' and 'it seemed that the girl's eyes were luminous in the dusk and that she had been given some extraordinary unearthly beauty...She was splendid' (Roach 1949).

What detains me in these portrayals is not only that the douglas are all female characters and are all stereotypically portrayed as exotic and sexually irresistible and indefatigable, although these factors link them to the sexually irrepressible mulatto women in Caribbean fiction (Mohammed 2000; Spear 1995; Arnold 1995; Ramchand 1983). More interesting is that these dougla figures appear as part of the wider community's attention to the Indian presence in Trinidad. By the 1930s, with the early stirrings of nationalism, the movement of Indians from rural areas into towns, their movement into non-traditional professions, and the remarkable Indian/African solidarity during the labour disputes of that decade, the Indian presence in Trinidad was certainly unavoidable. Moreover, acknowledgment of the Indian presence meant that Indian/African relations was also an unavoidable issue. The appearance of the dougla is coincident with this political awareness. This suggests that in its earliest appearances in Trinidad fiction, the dougla was deliberately identified as a symbol of Indian/African relations.

This figure appears in fiction at the same time that calypsonians started to focus on the Indian community (Rohlehr 1988, 235-320). As I discussed in chapter two, calypsonians

during this period acknowledged Indians by mockery and stereotypes. Fiction rendered its acknowledgment of the Indian presence through the figure of the dougla. The persistent sexualisation of these early dougla characters as well as the marked reliance on physical description rather than more substantive characterisation, may have allowed writers to mask their lack of knowledge of the Indian community. It is possible that the non-Indian writers during the 1930s who wanted to explore the Indian community in their work found the dougla a more accessible figure, more accessible perhaps than Indians.

Michael Anthony's <u>Green Days By The River</u> is a longer, more developed work that helps to elaborate this interpretation. Anthony began his engagement with the Indian community eight years earlier in his 1959 short story 'Enchanted Alley'. Here Anthony renders a heart-warming encounter between a young schoolboy in San Fernando and a community of Indian traders. The view of the Indian traders is external and Anthony was unable to add depth to his Indian characters, but there is a romantic fascination with the community that the story registers through the schoolboy's enchantment with the strange language of the Indians and various items of Indian dress and food. The boy sees 'bearded Indians in loin cloths spreading rugs on the pavement. There would be Indian women also, with veils thrown over their shoulders, setting up their stalls and chatting in a strange sweet tongue' (Anthony 1959, 54). The women 'wore bracelets around their ankles and around their sun-browned arms' (Anthony 1959, 54). Their 'garments…were full and many-coloured and very exciting…The Indians sold ground-nuts, paratha and penny channa, wet with plenty pepper' (Anthony 1959, 55-57). The encounter is friendly and the young boy walked on 'with my heart full inside me' (Anthony 1959, 57). There is a sense that that the relationship between the boy and the Indian traders will continue as he 'looked back to wave to my friends' (Anthony 1959, 58) but there is no real sense of cross-cultural interaction beyond the fascination and charm of their difference.

In <u>Green Days By the River</u> Anthony continues his engagement with the Indian community but by the time of writing the novel he was still unable to add depth to his representation of the Indian community, probably lacking the access to people and cultural resources that may have enabled a more intimate and sustained encounter and mode of representation. The dougla girl, Rosalie, is his point of entry into this community. Although Rosalie's father, Mr Gidharee, is Indian, Anthony cannot enter the Indian community through him because in order to establish the credibility of a marriage between Mr Gidharee and an African woman, Anthony makes Mr Gidharee 'perfectly creolised' (Anthony 1973, 120) which in this instance means that Mr Gidharee is securely attached to African creole culture

and detached from Indian culture, and thereby the more difficult issue of cultural difference -
'From the time you heard the calypso, *Hold your hand, Madame Khan*, it was the Gidharees
playing it. They played it so often I almost knew the words by heart' (Anthony 1973, 127). So
Anthony instead tries to engage with the Indian community through Rosalie. But whereas he
is able to write the creole cultural context that is constitutive of her ancestry, he is unable to
enter the Indian experience, which is equally significant to her identity formation. He resorts
to overt sexualisation, fetishising the young Rosalie as a 'first-class little dougla Jane'
(Anthony 1973, 13), the object of all the adolescent boys' sexual attention. There is a clear
fascination with her in the novel; she is referred to as dougla more often than by her name as
in Lennard's proclamation 'I don't know, but I like dougla people bad…I like dougla people
bad, boy' (Anthony 1973, 18). Like the female dougla characters in the literature of the 1930s
and 1940s, Rosalie is the exotic dougla who cannot be represented beyond the established
tropes of difference - she 'had something like allure, something like temptation, and yet there
was a quiet innocent charm' (Anthony 1973, 130).

Anthony's effort to engage with the Indian experience in this novel disappointingly
fizzles out into stereotypes. He has Mr Gidharee force Shell to marry Rosalie because Shell
has fooled around with her. Thus far nothing in the text - no cultural expression, no
vocabulary, no aspect of social relations – suggests that Mr Gidharee is tied to Indian or
Hindu culture. Indeed, Anthony does much to create the opposite impression of a 'perfectly
creolised' (Anthony 1973, 120) Mr Gidharee. Yet a late reference to an Indian man named
Ramdat - who 'say if any man play the fool round Sonia he'll *have* to married she, else he'll
chop him up in fine pieces' - and an unexpected declaration by Mr Gidharee – 'I like *creole*
people…and I mean we is all the same people- *creole* and Indian. But one ting about *creole*,
boy…they play around but they don't like to get married' (Anthony 1973, 175) – are fitted
into the novel in order for Anthony to set up the marriage between Shell and Rosalie.
Although there has hitherto been no indication that Mr Gidharee remains attached to Indian
culture, he insists on the marriage, causing Shell a heartbreaking separation from Joan whom
he loves, and then, even more astonishingly, forecasts a Hindu engagement. It seems that
Anthony **wants** to write the Indian community, but he cannot technically or culturally manage
the task of cross-cultural representation successfully.

The sexualisation of female dougla characters as a narrative technique that masks the
writers' lack of knowledge of the Indian community would help to explain why, when writers
represent the conflicts and ambiguities of dougla identification, they do so through **male**
douglas. I am drawing here on recent scholarship on sexual politics and literary

representations in Anglophone Caribbean writing (Chin 1997) as well as Francophone Caribbean writing (Spear 1995; Arnold 1995) which interrogate the heterosexist tradition in Caribbean literary production. James Arnold explains how the erotics of colonialism helped to shape this tradition:

> In terms of the erotics of colonialism…only two positions are available to the West Indian male: that of the passive homosexual…or the super-male, since the position of real man is already occupied by the other of colonial domination. Analysing this model of the erotics of colonialism puts us in a better position to understand why and, more importantly, how the figure of the (male) Maroon has emerged as the absent but necessary hero of West Indian history. He is necessary precisely because he has been absent. He will be represented as the super-male, more masculine than the other, because the erotics of male heterosexual desire permits no other representation. The heroic Maroon, as the archetypal figure of a masculinist West Indian literary imagination is, therefore, a logical necessity…(1995, 27).

In the logic of Caribbean discourses on sexuality which have naturalised heterosexuality and in so doing marginalised female (and homosexual) identities, I am suggesting that writers can more 'naturally' sexualise and fetishise female douglas than male douglas and are, as a result, better able to represent some of the conflicts of dougla identification through male characters. Clem Maharaj's The Dispossessed (1992) is an example of this.

The two douglas in Clem Maharaj's The Dispossessed are male and when given voice, they, like Singh in The Chip-Chip Gatherers, reflect on the crisis of identity that derives from their mixed Indian/African heritage. In this way Maharaj's portrayals of Eddie and Vernon recall the Mighty Dougla's 1961 calypso 'Split Me In Two', Brother Marvin's 1996 'Jahaaji Bhai' and his daughter Sparkle's 1993 'Confused', all of which contain similar attention to the dilemmas of dougla identity in Trinidad.

Eddie is unemployed and gambles to survive. We are told that he was brought up by his Indian mother and learned about Indian culture but that 'although he hardly knew his father, he adopted Creole practices because he assumed them to be stronger and it was more fashionable to do so. He was taught one set of values and copied another' (Maharaj 1992, 76). He has little contact with his mother, who remarried into the Indian community, and Eddie's sadness is evident when he relates this to the other dougla, Vernon. His bitterness is also evident; In the only other scene in which Eddie acknowledges his connection with the Indian community, he does so tentatively and reluctantly as a way of protecting Suraji from Sankar's violence - 'Listen, let me tell someting, is bess you know now. Suraji is me modder family. If

yuh touch she, yuh is a dead men, yuh hear what ah telling yuh?' (Maharaj 1992, 91). Eddie is also one of the characters through whom Maharaj advocates working class, inter-ethnic solidarity - 'It mek no difference whedder you is Creole or Indian living on dis estate, we all have one same cross to bear' (Maharaj 1992, 15). Vernon meanwhile is the young bachelor hairdresser whose hair is described as 'wavy', a well-known dougla signifier.[9] Vernon cares for his Indian mother, the village madwoman, but he too is ashamed of his Indian heritage. He tells Eddie that he hates 'coolie people' and that he feels ashamed for them 'coming into town and getting drunk and mekking an ass of themselves, dressing up in funny clothes' (Maharaj 1992, 41).

Both Vernon and Eddie live as Africans on the margins of this Indian cane-cutting village. They both choose to identify as Africans and to encounter the Indian villagers from that location. The image of Eddie pumping his Primus stove every morning is a refrain throughout the text that provides continuity in this episodic novel, but despite the centrality of this action, he is a quiet and observant outsider, acknowledging his insider status infrequently and reluctantly. Outside the village, the two face other risks. The risk of exposing their Indian heritage among Africans is illustrated as Eddie, Tex and Calvin enter town in Madan's funeral procession:

> As they passed through the town, some onlookers laughed and scoffed at them, calling out to others, 'All yuh, come an see a cheap coolie funeral'... the non-Indians were called out : 'Wha all yuh doing dey? Since when all yuh turn coolie?' Tex, Eddie and Calvin just stared back at the caller, disgusted by his attitude (Maharaj 1992, 110).

In Ernest A Carr's 'The Snake Charmer' (1947), the dougla Popo Green is represented as the beautiful mixed-raced man, one of the most persistent and common stereotypes of the mixed race person. Cynthia Nakashima, writing about the creation and denial of mixed-race people in America, points out that this seemingly "positive" representation is actually very complex:

> There were a minority of scientists who considered the possibility of "hybrid vigour", that is, that multiracial people might inherit the best qualities of their parent groups and actually be healthier, smarter, and better looking than monoracial people. This sentiment is disturbing in its own way, as there is no objective basis for determining what is "best" and

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[9] There is a suggestion of homoeroticism also in the way Vernon is described.

what is "worst" about any particular racial or cultural group. Also, the image of the "best of both worlds" is just as "otherworldly" as the hybrid degeneracy "worst of both worlds", leaving people of mixed race as the perpetual "other" (1992, 171).

Carr describes Popo Green as 'tall and stalwart...the ends of his close-curled, black hair formed a glistening arc across his forehead'. Popo Green is invested with all the qualities of a romantic hero. He is handsome, a hard worker, he is in love, he rescues the helpless, fourteen-year-old, orphaned Doocanee from the village villain who is holding her against her will, and he triumphs over the villain in the end.[10] This is the only text in which the dougla has heroic stature and the dougla is a male figure. Unlike Maharaj, Carr comes no closer to taking us 'on the inside of Indian life' (Lamming 1966, 69) and indeed avoids writing the Indian element of Popo Green's dougla identity. But the fact that Popo Green is a male character prevents his overt sexualisation and the masculinist tradition of Caribbean literature facilitates his heroic stature in this short story. This is the only text in Trinidad fiction in which the hero is a dougla.

The dougla is a visible, physical reminder of Indian/African inter-racial sex. Nakashima speculates that one reason for the common stereotype of mulatto women as extremely passionate and sexually promiscuous could be that multiracial people are physical reminders of the biological nature of sex and love:

> No stories about storks delivering babies can explain how a "Black-looking" baby can have a White or Asian mommy, or how a Eurasian can look like an Asian person with blond hair and blue eyes. The genetics of reproduction are, as they say, written all over the faces of mixed-race people (1992, 168).

The dougla is similarly positioned in the discourse on Indian/African relations in Trinidad. Abbey Ferber suggests that if in racialist discourses subjects only become culturally intelligible if they become racialised, then 'mixed race people cannot be granted subject status; they symbolise the realm of the unlivable...' (1997, 198). In S.K. Ragbir's short story 'Aftermath' (1982a) the absent dougla child simultaneously calls attention to inter-racial sex and occupies that realm of the unlivable. Ragbir's story, published in The Indian Review, well-known in Trinidad for its conservative racial politics, is a fictional endorsement of chaste

Indian womanhood, and, consistent with the conservative Indian politics in which it participates, it regards inter-racial sex between an Indian woman and an African man, and the potential of a dougla offspring, as the ultimate threat to Indian racial and ethnic borders. Although in the story the race of the man with whom Chandra sleeps is uncertain – 'She couldn't remember what the man looked like, or **even what race he was'** (Ragbir 1982a, 11 my emphasis) - but the possibility that he may have been African is generated by the location of the story's action in Port of Spain during Carnival. Carnival has its origins in African creole resistance and is viewed by orthodox members of the Indian community as a showcase of vulgarity and promiscuity. This perception of Carnival drives the criticisms of Indian female calypsonian, Drupatee, that I referred to in chapter two. Fictional accounts engage variously with these views - in Lakshmi Persaud's Sastra (1993), Sati uses Carnival as a metonym for Africans; in Earl Lovelace's Salt (1996) a young Indian man is shown to be moving away from his Indian community's traditional culture by organising a Carnival band with half-naked Indian women.

Ragbir's story creates suspense over the race of the child, allowing the **possibility** of a dougla child, but not the **realisation** of that possibility; Chandra has the baby but we are never told the race of the child. In other words, the dougla child is the unlivable and cannot be realised in the conservative racial discourse within which this story operates. The possibility just hangs in the air as the ultimate fear, the thing that would make Chandra's future entirely irrecoverable. Chandra's reward for maintaining those boundaries is the possibility that she would meet a handsome man who would sweep her off her feet, marry her and with whom she would live happily ever after. This is the dream that, in the logic of the story, she forfeits by becoming pregnant. Interestingly, though, the story does not suggest that Chandra chooses to forfeit that dream. Ragbir portrays her having an out of body experience; Carnival causes her to abandon agency – 'She was tired but her body refused to stop moving. The music of the steelband had reached out to some primaeval instinct deep within her hours ago and her body had become like a puppet, and the music was the puppeteer' (1982a, 11). In this way he avoids writing a consensual inter-racial sexual encounter and invokes instead conservative constructions of douglarisation as African male violation of Indian womanhood. Ironically, the suspense created over the dougla child renders him/her even more powerful in his/her absence.

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[10] Gordon Rohlehr observes that in calypsoes of the 1930s, Indian women were repeatedly named Dookani and that that name seemed to have emerged to represent Indian women in the same way that the name Dorothy came to represent African women in calypso (1988, 279).

So far, only two women have explicitly addressed the dougla in Trinidad literature but in these two works, one by an African woman and the other an Indian, the portrayal of the dougla builds on the ethical aspects of Indian/African relations that douglarisation has the potential to address. In the male-authored works looked at so far, the dougla has a fairly stable representational currency as a threat, in male terms; as an irresistible woman; and when given voice, articulates the dilemma of ethnic identification. The two works by women push the boundaries of those representations. In Merle Hodge's For the Life of Laetitia (1993), the dougla child, Charlene, is an explicit symbol of the promise of racial unity. In this novel of childhood, Maharajin, Tara and Charlene represent three generations of Indian womanhood. Maharajin is kept at a distance from the text but we are told that she strongly resisted the inter-racial relationship between Tara and Uncle Leroy that resulted in Charlene. She put Tara out of the house yet when Tara managed to get a job in town, Maharajin refused to let her take Charlene with her. Ma's summing up of the situation is telling:

> First she want to give up the ghost because the daughter making creole child- or kilwal child, according to she- and she want to throw the two of them in the road. Now you nearly have to full-out application form to get the kilwal child. Eh-eh!…she must be have grands till she forget they name! I can't understand why she must be so stingy with mine (Hodge 1993, 146).

At first repudiated by Maharajin, and then embraced, the dougla child represents an explicit vision of racial unity for the first time in Trinidad literature.

Equally significant in the context of this dissertation is Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen's poem 'Coolie Girl Lives for Her Bastard Dougla Child' (1997b, 31-34), the title of which announces its deconstructive tone. This poem confronts the construction of the dougla as unlivable, as well as the discourse on Indian/African relations in which that representation participates, and reconstructs the dougla as a symbol of reawakening. The dougla child is represented as the perfume of sprinkled dew, cack-cackles of laughter; the cock crowing is the hope of day and the optimism that the child brings. At the moment of realisation:

> She looks down at her abandoned
>
> half-breed, sees the tree
>
> tickle his cheeks like any other child's with dropped
>
> red almond leaves, hears the distant cock
>
> sound the hope of day.

The love of child-a print of the divine.

She cannot leave him there

perhaps to die.

Life's new purpose

pedals her feet down the tree.

And she bundles her ostracism and her bastard

in her orhni wrap

and flees. (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 33).

Significantly, in confronting conservative representations of the dougla, the poem also confronts the representation of the Indian woman as the chaste and violated maiden, a representation upon which conservative disavowals of cultural and racial mixing depend. The Indian woman in the poem is imprisoned in her father's hut and burdened by her Indianness - 'her silvers heavy as irons…her *kaaras* bind her ankles to the mud floor' (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 32). As she contemplates self-immolation, her Indianness - now represented by her orhini - contributes to her dehumanisation - it hangs from her rump like a tail downed - and is also an agent of her self-immolation - she uses it to make a noose. At the moment of reawakening, Ramkissoon-Chen seems to redefine the Indian woman's Indianness as she uses the orhni to 'bundle her ostracism and her bastard' (1997b, 33). The reconsideration of Indian women's ethnic identity that this reading suggests takes place in concert with a reconsideration of the Indian woman's gendered subjectivity. The Indian woman has defied her community's construction of her gendered ethnic identity and is repudiated by her family and village community – 'Her father's voice shrieks from the belly/of his pain. He hears the sniggers of the village/sneak up his heels' (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 32). His daughter has brought shame on him and he must now 'walk/with head bowed low' (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 32). There is a suggestion of violent death as the Indian woman 'espies the gilpin in its corner/ever-honed, ever-ready' (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 32).

This poem, in its portrayal of an Indian woman who challenges 'society's more rigid and unwritten' (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 31), and its portrayal of the dougla infant as the source of optimism that enables the Indian woman's survival, is rewriting the discourse on dougla identity. A critical aspect of Ramkissoon-Chen's poem is how she rewrites the Indian woman's relationality with Africans. The poem opens and closes with refrains that the poet invokes ironically:

Nigger man limin

round the kerb with he cuatro

he play music so sweet

the leaves an all fall

to listen at his feet.

He no see the rain comin'

down on him./

Nigger man, cuatro man

run for shelter, run.

 Nigger man, dey lazy

dey don look for wuk to do

But when the day done

dey make love sweet

sweet to you (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997b, 31-34)

The second refrain which ends the poem is described as 'the Coolie woman's song in her grand/mother-years'; the ambiguity of 'grand/mother-years', looking forward and back, and the folkoric quality of the refrain suggesting a historical continuity in the ethical elements of IndianAfrican relations that the poem explores.

In this chapter I have traced the representation of the dougla in Trinidad fiction. Both Naipaul and James mobilise the view of the dougla as racially corrupted, as half of a whole, but their novels are not unqualified condemnations of the dougla. Indeed, I have argued that James deliberately and assuredly subverts that view while Naipaul's portrayal offers ambiguities and conflicts that prevent his complete disavowal of Singh. I have also shown the sexualisation and fetishisation of the dougla woman in early representations of this figure but my attention to the historical contexts of these portrayals support my argument that in its earliest appearances the dougla was used as a metonym for Indian/African relations and that the sexualisation of dougla women can be read as a narrative technique that reflects a **desire** to engage with the Indian community and with Indian/African relations. My reading of Green Days By the River elaborates this point by pointing to representations of the cultural interface as attractive and yet unknown. I have also located dougla voices in the fiction under consideration and have shown how dilemmas of dougla identity are similarly articulated in

fiction. Attention to the sexual politics of Indian/African relations is crucial to this dissertation. My reading of Ragbir's 'Aftermath' (1982a) addresses this question. Hodge's For The Life of Laetitia (1993) and Ramkissoon-Chen's 'Coolie Girl Lives for her Bastard Dougla Child' (1997b) are used here to begin an argument, which I elaborate in the second part of this dissertation, that Indian women are confronting conservative representations of their relationality with Africans and Africanness and are rewriting those representations.

It should be acknowledged that Merle Hodge's involvement in this project is unique. She is the only African Caribbean female writer who has consistently and substantially engaged with Indian/African relations both in her fiction and non-fiction. Her location within the women's movement and the socialist politics of Caribbean cultural sovereignty provide the framework with which she considers Indian/African relations in Trinidad. I look at her work in some detail in the next chapter to suggest its continuities with the dougla feminism being elaborated by Indian women.

CHAPTER FOUR

Class Solidarity and the Sexual Politics of Indian/African Relations

Douglarisation necessitates considerations of how gender, race/ethnicity and class intersect. In this chapter I examine the politics of working class solidarity, which remains the primary theoretical proposition for Indian/African solidarity in Trinidad, in order to demonstrate how inattention to gender as a fundamental aspect of Indian/African relations inevitably results in discourses that, although well-intentioned, obscure the defining gendered configuration of Indian/African relations in Trinidad. Trinidad politics during much of the last century has been an engagement with various socialist models of political organisation and theory. Internationally, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was a climactic moment in critiques of imperialism. It provided an ideological framework for anti-colonial struggle throughout Europe's empires; the Soviet Union later became an alternative economic as well as ideological partner. In Trinidad during the 1900s, socialist theorising provided the main framework during the labour disturbances from 1919 to 1937, and the politics of the trade union movement thereafter; for the nationalist movement; and again during the 1970s Black Power movement. This politics of working class solidarity has been mobilised to reach across Indian and African ethnic differences. In particular, the politics of the 1930s, inspired by anti-imperialist struggles in other locations - including India and Africa - emphasised the shared oppression of Indians and Africans under British imperialism. The success of Indian/African working class solidarity during this period continues to be celebrated in national accounts (Samaroo 1985; Brereton 1981; Reddock 1994b). Its significance grows when one considers that the Labour Riots, which affected the entire English-speaking Caribbean, precipitated racial division and violence in Jamaica (Shepherd 1988) but had an opposite impact in Trinidad (Samaroo 1985). In Guyana, although there is evidence that Indians and Africans both supported trade union leader Herbert Critchlow in the struggle for better wages, improved working conditions and an eight-hour day in the period 1906 to the 1920s, as I explained in chapter one, the situation there was always marked by greater inter-ethnic tension (Jagan 1967; Cross 1978).

This theme of working class Indian/African solidarity has been represented throughout various periods of Trinidad's literary history; certainly much of the 1930s Yard literature, most of Samuel Selvon's works and representations by other Caribbean writers, such as George Lamming in Of Age and Innocence (1958), provide fictional elaborations of this politics. My archival research has uncovered two lesser known texts in Trinidad fiction that represent this politics of Indian/African working class solidarity.

Louis Caballo's 1948 short story 'Boodram', published in Trinidad in the Guardian Weekly Magazine, recounts a developing romantic relationship between the Indian man, Boodram, and an African maid, Leonora. Leonora and Becky, the Barbadian cook, are employed by the Paynters. Leonora meets Boodram at a dance. She describes him to Becky as having 'only gold teeth! When he smile so you think you in a gold mine. He from San Fernando. He belong to one ah dem rich Indian family down there' (Caballo 1948). Leonora relates that Boodram wants to carry her off with him. They danced every set at the party, she says, and 'he say he don't mind I is a creole, but he like me all' (Caballo 1948). They had gone for a walk and was 'romance for so' (Caballo 1948). To Leonora, this 'was the most important event since Creation' (Caballo 1948).

Leonora, in love with Boodram and aware of his wealth, is ashamed to tell him where she works; she wonders what he would do with 'a poor servant girl' like her. Boodram, it turns out, is no more than a rubbish cart owner who travels through Port of Spain pushing his cart and cleaning debris off the streets of Port of Spain. The story ends with Leonora's discovery that just as she masqueraded, so did Boodram. They are both similarly ashamed of their working class status and both lie to impress the other. Race is remarkable in the story - Leonora acknowledges that Boodram is Indian; Boodram we are told, acknowledges and dismisses the fact that Leonora is African; and a feeling among Indians that they were somehow superior in class to lowly Africans help to create the dramatic climax of Boodram's true occupation. But Caballo's focus is on the self-consciousness of the working class figures and how this self-consciousness results in deception by both parties, man and woman, Indian and African.

The story is very short and, apart from the action of walking to the market and the discovery about Boodram's true class status, Leonora relates everything else. We do not know whether Boodram believed her story as she believed his, or what motivated his interest in her. She obviously felt privileged to be courted by Boodram, not because of his Indianness, but because of his supposed wealth and the higher-class status that attends his wealth. Caballo does not explore the intrigue of this inter-ethnic romantic interest, nor is he especially

interested in the intrigue and deception about class-consciousness. The story is basically about the trickster being tricked, but in fulfilling that purpose, Caballo focuses on class, and uses race to help create an intrigue about class.

The self-consciousness about class common to both Leonora and Boodram transforms into an infant politics of Indian/African solidarity against the white colonial elite in 'The Obeah Man' by Ack Ack (an alias for Samuel Selvon), also published in 1948 in the Guardian Weekly Magazine. This story is one of Selvon's earliest pieces of fiction; he started publishing his work just two years before, in 1946 (Nasta 1988). This short story is an early instalment in Selvon's celebration of folk culture which he developed later in better known and longer works such as A Brighter Sun (1952), Turn Again Tiger (1958), Ways of Sunlight (1957), The Lonely Londoners (1956), and The Plains of Caroni (1970). Here, a charlatan, anansi-styled Indian obeahman named Ramlal is summoned by a wealthy white woman, Mrs Bellflent, who, despite an assortment of medical remedies, is persistently unwell. Despite the fact that she enlists his help, Mrs Belflent insists that she does not believe in superstition and remains aloof and contemptuous of Ramlal. In this way she maintains her social distance from him, her inferior, and from his practices which are features of his inferior social status.

Ramlal's first encounter at the house is with 'the dark servant girl'. Her initial response to him is "what yuh want hear, coolie?...Dis is wite people house. You better go away from hear" (Selvon 1948b). When he introduces himself as Ramlal from Fly Village, the servant girl says, "oh ho. Is I that tell she about you. Pass round in de back" (Selvon 1948b). The 'dark servant girl' identifies him first as a coolie, an unwelcome visitor to the white home, but his coolieness is quickly obscured by his profession. Her attempt to shoo away Ramlal, and so protect the white home from his lower class intrusion, is evidently disingenuous; she later accepts two shillings from Ramlal in return for personal information on Mrs Bellflent that Ramlal uses to extort money from the white woman. Ramlal uses the information provided by the 'dark servant girl' to first establish his trustworthiness with Mrs Bellflent, and then to authoritatively 'order' Mrs Bellflent to get off the bench on which she is sitting under the mango tree. This is the only way that Ramlal, a lower-class Indian in colonial society, can establish authority over a white woman. Ramlal and the 'dark servant girl' collaborate against their common enemy, the white Mrs Bellflent. There is a clear alliance between them; both are in the service of the aloof white elite and both understand that they are positioned at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy of colonial society. Again, as in Caballo's 'Boodram', the emphasis is on class commonality rather than ethnic difference.

Both 'Boodram' and 'The Obeah Man' were published in 1948 and take ideological direction and optimism from the experience of Indian/African working class solidarity during the Labour Riots. These stories, published a decade or so later, sustain the optimism of that period while located in an increasingly tense political environment. Trinidad historian Brinsley Samaroo (1985) suggests that relations between Indians and Africans were already deteriorating by the end of the 1930s. He quotes Adrian Cola Rienzi, Indian labour leader who was instrumental in the Labour Riots - and who, at twenty-one, had addressed a cable to the President of the Soviet Union congratulating the Russians on their achievement of ten years successful government and pledging the support of Trinidad workers for world socialism – as saying 'he was finding it increasingly difficult to fight against the growing separatist black consciousness in the trade union movement' (Samaroo 1985, 89). Samaroo recounts the renewed black consciousness of the period following the First World War and its effects on Indian/African relations in Trinidad:

> The Pan-African movement of which the Trinidad lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams was a founder, had started the search for a black (African identity); then there was Marcus Garvey's powerful 'back to Africa' movement of the immediate post-World War One era...In the 1930s African consciousness was encourage by the Beacon Group which spoke of the role of the black man and conducted debates on the alleged inferiority of the African. This was a time, finally, when men like CLR James and Learie Constantine were proving that Black men were no less equal than white. In this heady black upsurge a good deal was said and written which, in the general situation of mutual mistrust forced the East Indian deeper into himself and reinforced the fears of dominance that minority groups generally develop (1985: 88-89).

Samaroo further identifies the 1946 debate over universal adult franchise as the fault along which Indian/African relations deteriorated (1985, 90). The European and African majority on the local Franchise Committee, supported by the Legislative Council, insisted on an English language qualification that incensed Indian leaders (Samaroo 1985, 90). The qualification was later removed but Samaroo, based on interviews with Rienzi and others, believes that the fact that the legislature had to be forced to remove the qualification had unfortunate consequences for Indian/African solidarity (1985, 90). As I outlined in chapter one, Indian/African relations deteriorated further during the 1950s, leading up to independence in 1962, when it seemed that violent confrontation was inevitable.

By the 1970s there were noticeable efforts to draw on the experience of Indian/African working-class co-operation four decades earlier, to advocate the ways in which Indians and Africans could unite across ethnic divides on the basis of their common blackness and common oppression. As I have said elsewhere, there is still no consensus on Indian/African co-operation during this period but I have located some texts by young Indian and African writers which register explicit support for the working-class ideology favoured by some Black Power leaders. In manifesto-like poems that circulated in students' publications at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Trinidad campus - one of the main centres of political ferment during the 1970s - writers stressed the similar exploitation experienced by indentured Indian and enslaved African workers. The 1973 poem 'Lil Sister' by N. Singh is an address by an Indian man to his African sister in struggle. It points to the fact of forced Indian and African immigration to Trinidad under colonialism and asks:

> so what we fighting for?
> It's enough that we have to scratch like corbeau in the labasse to make we
>   living
> We real ketching we ass
> isn't that fighting enough that we have to fight between weselves too?
> (Singh 1973a, 78).

The Indian poet is cut when 'you say I racial and I don't like you because your hair crinkly and mine straight' (Singh 1973a, 78), because he believes that both Indian and Africans suffer the same class oppression under the same white oppressor. The poet emphasises the similarities in the histories of both groups, similarities that derive from their origins in Trinidad as labourers in an exploitative colonial system. One year later, Hemraj Muniram's 'I am coolie, you are black...' expressed the same sentiments in the Guyanese context. This poem reinforces the 1970s politics that:

> Both crawled under the white man's whip
> Both sacrificed our wives for the White man's pleasure
> (Muniram 1974, 12).

It endorses universal brotherhood:

I am coolie

You are black

So what?

Same germ

Same earth

Same nine months embryo

Before we were born.

To rass with enmity

I want unanimity

To fashion a common destiny

A shackless fraternity

A steel-like dignity (Muniram 1974, 12).

The poem recalls the 1960s race riots in Guyana:

we once pounded each other with savage revenge

We did churn each other's blood in comic delight

We burnt each other's house

We raped each other's spouse (Muniram 1974, 12).

But still the poet asserts that 'we both suffered at the hands of the white man', identifying a common enemy. These thinly disguised political sentiments of the period also echo in Malik's 1971 'Africindia' and Lansana Kwesi's 'my brother is an indian' (1975).

The representation of Indian/African relations as a romantic relationship between an African man and an Indian woman in Wayne Davis's 1975 poem 'First Meeting With Salina', published in Trinidad's <u>New Voices</u> in 1975, will return us substantively to the purpose of this chapter:

In the heat and flame of '70

Salina

You looked past sandals, beard

dashiki

and saw a man.

The cold winds of hatred, doubt

and race

Fanned your face,

But could not

Cool the ardour in your eyes.

'The Indian Iceberg'

Melted quietly

In the noonday clamour

Of heat, dust, crowds and sun

For suddenly,

The Revolution of Love

Has made us one.

I looked too Salina

Looked past the raging glare and swirl

Of suspicious faces

De brudder's faces

And saw you come towards me.

And I knew

That I loved the Revolution

Even as I loved you.

(Davis 1975, 23).

The representation of Salina as 'the Indian Iceberg' is drawn from the title of an article by an Indian writer, Ramdath Jagessar, in Tapia November 16th, 1969, which suggested that the Indian population was removed from the fervour of growing Black Power radicalism. In 1974, one year before the publication of Davis's poem, another article by Jagessar on Indian and African cultural nationalisms, 'Fight Racism and Negro Chauvinism', was published in a university magazine. In it, Jagessar is contemptuous of 'low' African culture and argues for a pure and discrete Indian cultural identity – 'Indian and "creole" culture operate from different bases and cannot be mixed as some simpletons feel' (1974, 17). Here cultural identity is conflated with biology so that Indian/African cultural interaction is a metonym for sexual interaction specifically between Indian women and African men. Davis stages his poem in opposition to that conservatism and actually sees love as a revolutionary force which can draw Indians and Africans closer. His representation of Indian/African relations calls attention

to the gendered configuration of Indian/African ethnic relations by measuring the potential of the revolution to mobilise Indian/African solidarity by the possibility of a romantic union between an African man and an Indian woman, Salina. I do not mean to occlude the optimism about Indian/African solidarity that is generated by the poem, but I want to draw attention to the poem's discursive echoing of a gendered configuration of Indian/African relations that, by the 1970s, was established in both Indian and African conservative discourses on cultural nationalism.

Political theorising in Trinidad – from 1919 to the 1930s, during nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s, and again during the Black Power movement in the 1970s – had failed to address issues of gender to the extent that feminist recovery projects since the late 1980s repeatedly focus on these deficiencies (Reddock 1994b; Wiltshire-Brodber 1988; Henderson 1988; Patrick 1988; Reddock 1988; Rajack Talley 1999). Wiltshire-Brodber's analysis of approaches to political mobilisation in the Caribbean is instructive. She suggests that class and race emerged as 'the principal organising forces for resistance and change' because class and race have traditionally ordered Caribbean systems of domination (Wiltshire-Brodber 1988, 144). She suggests further that this, added to the fact that in the Caribbean race, class and colour often cut squarely across gender, 'deprived the issue of gender relations in themselves of any force for radicalism and change' (Wiltshire-Brodber 1988, 144-145). In a similar feminist recovery project, Reddock finds that in Trinidad there were significant efforts at women's mobilisation during the period between 1919 and 1930, facilitated in part by the broad applications of the concepts of labour and worker (1994b, 160-161). She suggests, however, that the introduction of official trade unionism based on the British model confined the broad application of these concepts and resulted in reducing the degree of women's participation in the labour movement (Reddock 1994b, 160-161). Nesta Patrick, who has been involved in women's organisations in Trinidad from the 1940s through to the present, recalls that:

> Men were never ready with sympathy or understanding of us attending meetings. If your husband did not ridicule you he got advice from his friends about how to deal with you (and that can mean anything). There was constant abuse from even calypsonians. I remember Lord Melody writing 'I don want me women to do this', or in many other ways they made a mockery of our involvement. I remember very vividly my days as a young woman going out with the League of Women Voters. We were jeered at and missiles thrown at us in addition to the vile abuse...Men were not ready to accept us as partners who could

> think and then speak...Many of us have stories of spouses' anger
> and family discomforts because we continued to be involved'
> (1988, 363).

Trinidad feminist and trade union activist, Thelma Henderson, who served as Education and Research officer with the Transport and Industrial Workers Union (TIWU) until her death in 1998, commented from her own experiences in the union that at times the women's arm of the union played the traditional role of women's auxiliaries to unions, swelling the picket lines whenever the union was involved in industrial dispute (1988, 373). Also heavily involved in the Black Power movement, Henderson noted that utterances on women's rights from NJAC - which led the Black Power movement in Trinidad in the 1970s – were so masculinist as to prompt women to question their discrimination within this radical movement (1988, 368-369). The National Union of Freedom Fighters (NUFF), spawned by the Black Power movement and which existed between 1972 and 1974, also failed to address specifically the question of women's liberation (Henderson 1988, 367).

It seems to me that the failure of these radical movements to progressively address questions of female identity and women's rights must affect their potential to achieve and sustain Indian/African solidarity. The period from 1919 to the 1930s is significant for the tremendous displays of Indian/African working-class solidarity and for the support by both African, and to a lesser extent, Indian women (Reddock 1994b; Rajack-Talley 1999), but by the 1970s Trinidad society, having experienced fierce ethnic antagonism during the 1950s and 1960s, was firmly divided along ethnic lines. Further, the Indian community, drawing on aspects of a reconstituted gender system identified by social historian Pat Mohammed (1998a) had, throughout the period of the 1950s and 1960s, repeatedly reinforced traditional masculinist constructions of home and culture to establish Indian womanhood as crucial to its politics of national cultural identification. These constructions of Indian cultural nationalism were positioned in competition with creole cultural nationalism. I am suggesting that the Black Power movement of the 1970s floundered in its attempts to generate the Indian/African working-class solidarity that characterised the 1919-1937 period, not only because Black Power leaders underestimated the extent of cultural divergences between Indians and Africans in Trinidad at the time (La Guerre 1985), not only because of the determined ethnic separatism of conservative Indian spokesmen that I continue to address in various chapters of this dissertation, and not only because of what Samaroo (1985) and Selvon (1987) describe as the 'heady black upsurge' that marginalised Indians, but also because the absence of critical and progressive theories on gender alienated African and Indian women activists and meant

further that the movement could provide no alternative framework for understanding the deployment of women, especially Indian women, in Indian/African antagonism.

A novel by Trinidadian novelist Clem Maharaj, The Dispossessed (1992), exposes how class solidarity between Indians and Africans falters and deteriorates over questions that arise from contestations over Indian women's sexuality. The novel tells the story of an Indian village community in post-indentureship/pre-Independence Trinidad. It is reasonable to assume that the novel is set in the 1950s based on references to a trade union disturbance over conditions of work on the sugar estates and a charismatic leader who has historical resonance with Bhadase Sagan Maraj. The Highlands Sugar Estate is in decline and the lives and livelihood of the villagers dependent on this estate are also declining. The estate barracks, described as having been 'lived in for over a hundred years, first as the home of African slaves and following them the indentured Indians and their descendants' (Maharaj 1992, 98), house a poor, working class, cane-cutting, drunken community, reminiscent of Harold Sonny Ladoo's fictional communities in No Pain Like This Body (1972) and Yesterdays (1974). One of the central tensions in this novel is Indian/African relations. There is evidence in the text to suggest that Indian and African villagers are attempting to reach across ethnic boundaries in the fulfilment of working class-solidarity.

In this novel, the decline of the Highlands Sugar Estate occasions the decline in the heroic stature of the Indian man. Sankar is the central figure and we are introduced to him in the first chapter entitled 'The Working Man' where he is given heroic status as a working class man struggling to earn a day's pay. At the end of a day, as Sankar bathes, the omniscient narrator describes 'The sunlight on the water running down his wet skin made him look like a golden statue' (Maharaj 1992, 5). Sankar loses his job when the Highlands Estate closes and is one of the lucky few to get a job on the neighbouring Good Intent Estate which employs Indians but no Africans. The tension this precipitates between Indians and Africans in the village is articulated, in the narrating sensibility of this novel, as the politics of working-class solidarity:

> "It have any Creole wokking on dat estate yet?" asked Eddie as he joined the conversation, checking on Good Intent's policy of not employing people of African descent. "Nah, boy, dey eh want all yuh," said Sankar, "not one Creole does get wok dey." "De white man know how to divide and keep we apart so one go feel he better dan de odder when all de time none ah we eh really worth a fart," said Tex (Maharaj 1992, 51).

There is an informed political sense at work here, identifying and articulating the horizontal antagonism between Indians and Africans mobilised by colonial policy for economic benefit. In The Dispossessed the crudest and most inflamed debate about Indian/African relations is marginalised; this discussion occurs in a rumshop, which provides the comic relief of Rookmin beating her husband, Bodhan, and which also helps to create a sense of the village cacophony. The fight involves the outcast and disruptive figure of Madan and his need for a nip of rum.[1] Interestingly, a safe space is created in a gambling room of the rumshop where a discussion about Indians and Africans was in fact taking place among gambling partners - the tall red-skinned Tex, the coco panyol Calvin, and the Indian Nat (Eddie, who it turns out later is a dougla, is present but remains distant from the discussion) - before the entry of Madan. It is an idle, friendly discussion about whether 'coolies' or 'creoles' have better manners. This is the space that Madan disrupts when he picks a fight with Calvin. The fight is prompted by little more than Madan's loneliness and desire for rum, which he racialises.   Once Madan is subdued, the space is rendered safe again for friendly and intimate racial discourse. Tex says sympathetically to the fallen and bleeding Madan: "Look at what trouble yuh cause yuhself, all because ah some misunderstanding over rum! Like all yuh Indian people does lose all yuh head once yuh taste rum. Come an sit down here an catch yuhself" (Maharaj 1992, 31).

In this way Maharaj marginalises and contains this racial invective, opting to show Indians and Africans trying to forge relationships based on lateral class comradeship. But the spaces in which these relationships are forged are occupied only by men and the class politics of the text cannot resolve the conflicts of ethnic difference that involve Indian women. Despite the class solidarity mouthed by Sankar and advocated by the narrating sensibility in the text, there is a devastating antagonism between Indians and Africans generated by confrontations over Indian women's sexuality.[2] In this imploding village community, women are negotiating their relationships and economic survival in a hostile, male environment. Among these women are those who move outside the Indian community to find partners - white and African – and the sexual insecurity and feelings of betrayal this precipitates in Indian men.

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[1] Madan is a minor figure in the text, functioning as a disrupter on the fringes of the village community. Madan is however very important in the text's suggestion of homosexuality and that is one of the reasons that he is ostracised by the community. He too is among the novel's dispossessed and eventually commits suicide.

[2] There is one African woman in the text – the minor character, Bella, cook at the white estate master's house. Maharaj's represents Bella as a black matriarch, confident, resourceful and stoic. It is Indian women who are the nucleus of inter-ethnic antagonism in the novel.

We are told that Sankar's first wife left him after the birth of their second child for 'a person of another race' (Maharaj 1992, 53). We are not told that it is an African man but from other references in the text we are able to assume that it is. This, it turns out, forms Sankar's primary insecurity, and paralyses him in his relationships with other women, including the selfless Suraji who cares for his two children:

> The memories of his earlier marriage and the thought of the same thing happening again increased his doubts. He did not blame his wife for running away; the life on an estate was a hard one and few outsiders felt able to endure it. But for her to run away with a person of a different race, that was the bit he could hardly face. He felt totally ashamed and humiliated. His wife not only let him down but his whole race. She had broken the ultimate taboo and he took the burden of guilt and remorse for what she had done (Maharaj 1992, 53).

Through Sankar, and later Sonny Boy, Maharaj represents the competition between Indian and African masculinity. Sonny Boy articulates both his and Sankar's insecurities that result from Indian women's choice of African sexual partners – "Dat ungrateful wretch! All ooman is de same. No matter what you give dem, if yuh doh have a big prick to go wid it, dey go leave yuh" (Maharaj 1992, 121). These transgressive women thus forfeit their claim to Indian ethnic identity, or as Sonny Boy puts it – "Ah telling yuh, boy, no ooman who call sheself Indian would go wid a Creole of her own free will" (Maharaj 1992, 120).

Sankar's masculine identity is so overdetermined by competition with the mythical African masculinity, that when he is deserted by his second wife, he deteriorates. Maharaj represents Sankar's deterioration through the character's preoccupation with carving a wooden penis of fantastic size that he uses to first threaten Sandwine – "One day, ah go give yuh dis and den yuh go understand why she run away. Is dis she did fraid" (Maharaj 1992, 127) - and then to rape her. This violent sexual attack on Sandwine is Sankar's attempt to re-affirm his masculinity; he is punishing one Indian woman for what he perceives as the crime of another. Just as he sees his wife's actions as a disgrace to the whole Indian ethnic collective, so too his revenge on Sandwine can be read as punishment of the whole Indian female collective to which his wife belonged.

Both Eddie's mother and Vernon's mother also have relationships with African men and both, like Sankar's wife, remain nameless in the novel. In this way Maharaj dramatises the erasure of thus transgressive Indian women. Eddie was raised by his mother 'who taught him a lot of Indian practices' and, after the death of Eddie's father, had 'gone back to live like

a Indian an she doh have much to do wid me' (Maharaj 1992, 76). Eddie's mother has transgressed by breaching racial endogamy with an African man, but she is able to re-enter the space and be re-absorbed by her village community at the expense of rejecting her son. Vernon's mother meanwhile recalls a parade of madwoman figures in Caribbean fiction. She is the village comic relief, 'the mad coolie woman' (Maharaj 1992, 57). Like Eddie's mother, she too re-enters the village community but she does so as a madwoman; madness at once prevents her total assimilation into the village and shields her from the village's interrogation and condemnation.

The obeah ritual of cleansing her of the evil spirit that is believed to make her occasionally mad is, to my mind, one of the most significant events in the text. Syne, an obeah man, is brought by Suraji to pray over Vernon's mother and to beat the evil spirit out of her. This is literally what Syne does; he beats her mercilessly in the sanctioned realm of obeah, has sex with her, and then stays on as her husband so he can chase the evil spirit whenever it re-appeared. This bizarre shamanism encodes a sanctioned violence that is inflicted upon Indian women who have transgressed by having relations with African men. Vernon's mother continues to resist however, and, still pretending she is mad but just not as often, she claps her hands to celebrate the defiance of Sankar by Suraji and Hitler.

It is clear that these women's transgressions are not simply identified as racial exogamy. Although this is unacceptable, racial exogamy **in relation to African men** is unthinkable. This is evident in the way that racial exogamy and Indian women's infidelity are differently constructed in relation to white men. Sankar's second wife, Latchmin, leaves with Sonny Boy and this exaggerates Sankar's insecurities, but the seed of his insecurity remains the myth of the African's man dominant sexuality. Sandwine submits to sex with the white Barbadian overseer, Goddard, so that her gang can get work and she too is vilified for breaching racial endogamy. But the effect of this is differently constructed in the text. To the Indian men in the village, Sandwine's relationship with Goddard means that she has betrayed her race and that she is a harlot. Her lover, Harry, considers:

> In his head he knew what made her visit Goddard, but in his
> heart, where it hurt the most, he felt she had betrayed not only
> him, but all men of East Indian origin. She was now stained for
> life and her status in the village would be destroyed. An Indian
> woman in appearance only was fair game **for anyone of any
> race**' (Maharaj 1992, 94 my emphasis).

Sandwine's affair with Goddard, while a threat to the Indian community, is a threat **because of the possibility it opens up** - the possibility that she was now fair game for anyone of any race, and in this context that feared race can only be Africans. So the criminality of Sandwine's sexual relationship with a white man is predicated on the potential of sex between an Indian woman and African men. And although Sandwine does not have sexual relations with African men in the novel, she is brutally punished by Indian men because her affair with Goddard links with the **possibility** of sex with an African man. Sandwine suffers a fate similar to Vernon's mother; she is beaten and rejected by Harry, raped by Sankar, raped by an Indian shopkeeper, and then by drunken men in a rumshop in town. She is punished by being made a receptacle for the Indian man's anger and frustration. The men having avenged her wrongdoing, Sandwine dies as a pauper, nameless and erased.

Interestingly as well, Sandwine's relationship with Goddard does not precipitate the feelings of sexual inadequacy in Harry that Sankar feels in relation to African men. In fact, Harry's manhood is reaffirmed; first by himself when he beats and rejects Sandwine, and then by Sandwine herself who reinforces his sexual competence:

> She compared the performances of the three men in her life. Sadhu demanded subservience from a wife and when that was not forthcoming expected secrecy and an outward show of harmony. Harry, her lover, in spite of being confined to a cramp, smelly latrine over the years, performed entirely to her satisfaction. And now, Goddard, whose only impact was to make her take a bath at an unusual hour (Maharaj 1992, 73).

In relation to the white man the threat of sexual inadequacy disappears.

Maharaj's novel is a dramatic illustration of the limitations of class ideology to intervene in the sexual politics of Indian/African relations. In this novel class solidarity **is** achieved but only among men in exclusively male spaces and this solidarity cannot withstand the antagonism that derives from relationships between Indian women and African men. Maharaj is aligned to this politics through involvement with C.L.R. James in London from as early as 1967. The narrating sensibility in the text interrogates this socialist politics of Indian/African solidarity through its portrayal of gendered power relations between Indian men and women and between Indians and Africans. Maharaj's representation is also enabled by his attention to homosexuality which he introduces through minor characters such as Madan, the dougla Vernon, Billy Jean, and the masculinised woman, Hitler. Maharaj's novel only hints at homosexuality but I suggest that his representations of women's cultural

vulnerability derives from his obvious sympathy for these fringe characters who are similarly dispossessed by heterosexist definitions of male and female gendered identity and the male/female binarism. This is also noteworthy because although this novel was published in 1992, sustained focus on homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle in Caribbean literature is only now emerging in works such as Lawrence Scott's Aelred's Sin (1998) and Shani Mootoo's Cereus Blooms at Night (1996). The Dispossessed, published in 1992 but set in the 1950s, re-tells the history of this tense nationalist period from the perspective of the 1930s politics of Indian/African working-class solidarity. While Maharaj identifies questions around Indian female identity and Indian/African relations in the context of this socialist politics, and goes further to beckon, albeit vaguely, at an engagement with sexual politics of homosexuality, he offers no viable alternative. The effect of such accumulative violence is the fragmentation of the estate village community. The minor homosexual characters die or fade away, the Indian women are violated and erased. The sugar estate closes down and the remaining community members disperse.

Current feminist engagement with these socialist models of working-class activism (Reddock 1994b; Rajack-Talley 1999) are drawing on the recovered history of Indian and African women's involvement in anti-colonial resistance to advocate solidarity between Indian and African working-class **women**. Women Working for Social Progress (WWSP), a Trinidad organisation started in 1983, is grounded in this new approach. Novelist Merle Hodge is one of the founders of WWSP and through this organisation has continued with the working-class activism in which she was involved in Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement (NJM) in revolutionary Grenada. Commenting on her activism in Trinidad, Hodge described her creative writing as a 'guerilla activity' that aims to validate Caribbean identity and so participate in the project of cultural sovereignty (in Balunstansky 1989, 654). Hodge's attention to the region's folk identity increasingly reconfigures the Caribbean folk with elements of the Indian cultural presence. Perhaps more significant in the context of this chapter is the ways in which Hodge's fiction integrates explorations of gender and Indian/African ethnic identity. I pay considerable attention to Hodge's novels here. Critical attention to her fiction has neglected to interrogate her representations of Indian/African relations (Rahim 1998; Boyce Davies 1990; Thorpe 1977; Kemp 1985). Moreover the fairly recent publication of Hodge's second novel, For the Life of Laetitia (1993) – twenty-three years after Crick Crack Monkey (1970) - allows me the opportunity to examine the evolution of her vision of Indian/African relations in the context of Trinidad working-class folk culture and feminist engagement with the politics of working-class solidarity.

Crick Crack Monkey (1970) renders the ways in which Indian/African ethnic division is manipulated by the middle-class. It suggests that the Indian and African working classes successfully negotiate peaceful and harmonious relations with one another outside the disruptive influence of the middle-class. The novel has as its central concern the opposing developmental options for its young protagonist, Tee. Tension is created by the opposition of middle-class values represented by the world of Aunt Beatrice, and the ways of the folk represented by Tantie. My intention first is to identify how racial difference is reconciled as part of the constituent elements of the folk community that Hodge presents as one alternative for Tee, and conversely, how middle-class contempt for the working-class folk is racialised.

In the world of Crick Crack Monkey, Africans and Indians occupy a non-conflictual place and there is an organic integration of both communities. In the folk community of Tantie's world, lateral comradeships are forged on the basis of class so that the whole village, regardless of ethnicity, gender and generation, is mobilised to form a barricade against 'The Bitch', the middle class, Europeanised Aunt Beatrice who advocates an ideological movement away from folk ways. The people who comprise this folk community and who people the fictional world of Crick Crack Monkey are significant. There is the extended family of Tantie; there are the boys on the block, among them Krishna; Neighb' Ramlaal and Neighb' Ramlaal's Wife and children. This is a racially integrated folk community and the integration is organic. One seemingly throwaway line in the text is evidence of this. In the continuing strategising against 'The Bitch', Tantie reckons that Toddan and Tee should be bundled away to Point d'Espoir; when they returned it would be time for Tee to go to school and Toddan 'they could simply lose among Neighb' Ramlaal-Wife own when there was no one at home' (Hodge 1970, 13). The impracticability of hiding an African child among Indian children only surfaces when one considers the ethnicity of both families, their biological lineage. Metaphorically this one liner is loaded in political intent and Hodge extends this vision of organic integration in the way she uses Moonie's wedding and locates the young Doolarie.

As Tee first leaves Tantie to live with Aunt Beatrice, The Bitch is reminded that Tee has to return for Moonie's wedding. It is instructive that the moment of Tee's separation from her folk roots is defined by her inability to attend Moonie's wedding. Tee imagines the wedding; Moonie is transformed:

> into a startlingly pretty and fragile doll smothered in folds of
> delicate cloth and flowers and surrounded by a drove of women,

> vast and meagre, all shrouded in uhr'ni...babus in sparkling
> white dhotis squatting with their sticks and peering up
> myopically at the great crowd...I thought of dhalpouri and good
> hot pepper. The height of the festivity for Toddan and me was
> eating off a piece of banana leaf (Hodge 1970, 78-79).

Literary critic Patrick Taylor, looking specifically at ethnicity in Trinidad literature, suggests that Crick Crack Monkey is incomplete – 'Cynthia does not quite reach adulthood, and the perspective on Indians remains external' (1993, 257). I want to argue that at the level of the metatext, the representation of Indians is far from superficial and this is what Taylor misses in his reading. What is significant here is not the descriptive rendering of the wedding but how the wedding functions in the text. Tee's missing the wedding is symbolic of a promise broken and it is here that the balance tilts in favour of Aunt Beatrice's world of imposed colonial values. Hodge announces this significance when, shortly after missing the wedding, the young narrator tells us 'since the weekend of Moonie's wedding neither Auntie Beatrice nor I had brought up the subject of my going home for a weekend' (1970, 84).

The missed wedding and its significance are internalised and form part of Tee's dreams. In this realm she **becomes** Moonie – 'I thought that I was the bride' (Hodge 1970, 79)-and that fluidity of racial identities at the psychic level is to me a more adventurous analysis. In the process of Tee's own ontological development, then, one of the identities she internalises is the Indian woman's. Secondly, Tee's inability to attend Moonie's wedding, 'that coolie affair' (Hodge 1970, 78), identifies Indian/African interaction as a primary casualty of Tee's socialisation into Aunt Beatrice's middle class world. This middle-class manipulation of Indian/African animosity also detained another Trinidad novelist, Earl Lovelace, in his 1979 novel The Dragon Can't Dance. Lovelace shows that when the Indian Pariag decides to buy a bicycle, which he uses   to sell barra and doubles (Indian snacks) and to make himself visible, it is Cleotilda and Guy, the ones closest to the norms of the Creole middle class, who are particularly threatened. Ten years after Crick Crack Monkey, Hodge would return to this theme in her 1980 short story 'Millicent'. In Crick Crack Monkey, the middle class, represented by Aunt Beatrice, is hostile towards any semblance of racial solidarity. Aunt Beatrice labels Moonie's wedding a 'coolie affair' and her entry into the novel and Tee's life is marked by her physical separation of Toddan and Doolarie:

> Aunt Beatrice separated them firmly and again bade Doolarie go
> home. Again she [Doolarie] only withdrew a few feet and stood
> staring wide eyed and expressionless, as we went down the path

with our unexpected benefactor...As Aunt Beatrice piled us into
the back seat she said to him with irritation: You see how she
has these coolie children running around with them? The man
grunted (Hodge 1970, 11).

As Tee is encouraged to recoil from her folk community, Hodge renders her
protagonist's distance in a vocabulary of racial invectives. Tee reflects that 'all this I was
seeing again through a kind of haze of shame; and I reflected that even now Tantie and
Toddan must be packed into that ridiculous truck with all those common raucous niggery
people and all those coolies' (Hodge 1970, 86). The psychic disruption in Tee's life then
manifests itself in her rejection of her African working-class family and her Indian working
class neighbours. This crystallises in Tee's rejection of Doolarie. Suddenly Tee sees Doolarie,
not as a young friend of Toddan's, but as a figure 'in her yellow dress, and white shoes, and
the fronts had already been cut away to give her toes room; and greasy paper bags announcing
that they contained polorie, anchar, roti from Neighb Ramlal Wife' (Hodge 1970, 106).

Doolarie is an interesting figure in Crick Crack Monkey. She is virtually voiceless but
her presence is central to an understanding of Hodge's vision of organic ethnic integration.
Just as Tee becomes Moonie in her dream, Doolarie becomes Tee at another level. One should
note how easily and quickly Toddan and Tee, who appear at the very opening of the novel
looking out the window for the new baby, becomes Toddan and Doolarie. As Tee goes off
with her aunt towards another world and another experience, 'Tantie stood in the gallery with
her arms folded while Toddan and Doolarie came down to the bottom of the path to peer into
the car' (Hodge 1970, 69). The ease with which the creative sensibility shifts from Tee and
Toddan to Toddan and Doolarie is deliberate, I think, in Hodge's fictional elaboration of her
political vision on Indian/African relations which she discusses in 'The Peoples of Trinidad
and Tobago':

> Cultural pooling, voluntary and unforced, rather than cultural
> levelling out is what is to be desired. And already, almost
> imperceptibly, Africans and Indians have begun to adopt what
> they will of each other's culture. They participate freely in each
> other's festivals and cultural manifestations...This stealthy
> interlocking of our cultures, this consummation of our
> personalities, is very promising. It is wrong to demand that the
> Indian make a deliberate effort to abandon his character in the
> interests of racial reconciliation; neither is the African's new
> racial consciousness to be seen as a threat to racial harmony. Just
> as a truly civilized individual is one who has achieved the
> balance involved in being true to himself with no detriment to

the interests of his neighbour, so as a society we shall have
attained to a rare degree of civilization when the rich diversity
of our racial and cultural characteristics implies no conflict with
the fact of our being a people (1975, 40).

As Tee grows further and further away from her community, Tantie writes to her that
'Dularie is also fine she said Tantie I keeping you company till Cyn-Cyn come back' (Hodge
1970, 105). Again, note the ease with which the centrality of Doolarie is being engineered and
with which the Indian child, Doolarie, is being drawn into the organic centre of the folk
community represented by Tantie.

Doolarie's appearance at the end of the novel deserves analysis in the context of an
insight by Rene Juneja. In her recent book on Caribbean writing, Juneja notices that 'Tee's
turning away from her creole past, her internal colonisation, is imaged as a bodily withdrawal,
a physical shrinking' (1996, 31). Indeed, Tee hides in bathrooms; she scuttles through back
doors; she plunges into thick shrubbery. She wants 'to shrink, to disappear' (Hodge 1970, 97).
At the beach, in a moment of climatic tension, she 'savagely slaps' Aunt Beatrice's hand,
'recoiling and turning away from human contact' (Hodge 1970, 33). Bodily functions like
eating, undertaken with relish in the past, become a cause for shame. At the moment when
Tee is furthest from her roots, imaged as resistance to physical contact, Doolarie is physically
embraced by Tantie as 'overcome with shyness, [she] buried her head in Tantie's lap' (Hodge
1970, 106). This near-birthing image is, for me, a climactic moment in the plot of the
metatext. Tantie recognises that she has lost Tee and gathers up Doolarie to leave.

In this   first novel, Hodge represents harmonious Indian/African relations among
the folk community as *a priori*; Indian/African organic interaction is taken for granted here in
the same way that Selvon's 1952 A Brighter Sun takes the relationship that develops between
Joe and Tiger and Rita and Urmilla for granted (Ramchand 1982, 97). But by 1980, ten years
after the publication of Crick Crack Monkey, Hodge's vision of Indian/African relations was
beginning to change. The unexamined assumption about Indian/African neighbourliness that
appears in her first novel is replaced by a less naïve, more deliberate attention to
Indian/African relations. In the short story 'Millicent' (1980a) Hodge retains her optimism
about Indian/African folk solidarity, but her interrogation of it is foregrounded. Millicent
disrupts the Fourth Standard class that she enters. She is urbanised, coming from Belmont on
the outskirts of Port of Spain; she is rude, defying the teacher and openly refusing to obey
instructions; she is wealthy with a whole dollar to spend in the cafeteria at lunch time, and
wears expensive dresses to school while boasting that she has many more and does not need

to wear a school uniform; her name is Hernandez, suggesting that she is neither Indian nor African. She is aloof, standing contemptuously apart from the rest of the class, and she is distant and disrespectful of folk ways, bringing a Mickey Mouse cup to school and regularly receiving foreign toys and shoes and clothes from her mother in America. Hodge tells us that before Millicent arrived, the class was very ordinary – there was the bright child and the dunce, the talkers and non-talkers, and the pairs who were always together. With the didacticism that is a common feature of children's literature, but which is noticeably less overt in Crick Crack Monkey, Hodge tells us that the pairs included Harry and Clem, and Sandra and Shira – one of each pair is Indian and the other African. Again unlike her first novel, this story historicises Indian/African antagonism by recalling one eruption of racial invective before Millicent arrived – a lunchtime fight between Carl and Deo which had divided the class into two gangs each calling the other 'nigger' and 'coolie'. The teacher, known only as Miss, had beaten the entire class, telling them that:

> everybody's great-grandfather was both a Coolie and a Nigger…because Coolie and Nigger just meant beast of burden, and that [was] all our great-grandparents were made to be, but if that was what we wanted to be then she would lick us like beasts of burden…That was the last of that (Hodge 1980a, 7-8).

Millicent's arrival occasions another, more inflamed episode of racial animosity. First, she did not want to sit near either 'picky-Head Congo Vena' or 'roti-coolie Harry' (Hodge 1980a, 7). Then she courts Clem and disrupts his relationship with Harry so that the pair is broken. She does the same with Sandra and Shira so that the latter, feeling privileged to be a member of Millicent's growing gang, insults Sandra saying 'We don't want any picky-head tar-babies here' (Hodge 1980a, 10). Millicent effectively transforms the ordinary Fourth Standard into a 'sour, quarrelsome class' with each racial group calling the other 'Cassava Nigger' or 'Pelorie Coolie' (Hodge 1980a, 11). She encourages racial tension while remaining aloof of it herself because she is neither Indian nor African and can therefore remain unaffected.

Although Harry is saddened by the loss of his friend, Clem, the class persists with racial invectives against each other, hoping to gain Millicent's approval and be called into her privileged gang who ate nicer things in greater amounts and who remains aloof and contemptuous of all they surveyed. It seems natural that Millicent was also bright and would be first in the class test. She is not; in fact she was last and it is this exposure that causes the rest of the class to resume their previous alliances.

Twenty-three years after the publication of <u>Crick Crack Monkey</u>, Hodge published her second novel, <u>For the Life of Laetitia</u> (1993). Like <u>Crick Crack Monkey</u>, the middle class fuels racial tension in this novel. The uppity Maths teacher, Mrs Lopez, who 'would float into the classroom on a cloud of elegant perfume' (Hodge 1993, 76), is scornful of the poor, rural Indian girl, Anjanee, and the relationship she develops with Laetitia. She taunts Anjanee ' "Girl, why you don't just stay home and help them make garden?" (Mrs Lopez pronounced it *gyaarden*, to make fun of the way people like us spoke)' (Hodge 1993, 113). And she tries to disrupt the friendship between Laetitia and Anjanee by telling Laetitia:

> "You are way above those other children so you have to be careful if you want to get ahead, you hear? Pick your friends – don't mix up with any and everybody. They will want to drag you down with them..." (Hodge 1993, 114).

Mr Cephas, the middle class aspirant whom Ma describes as:

> one of those foolish people who believed that white people sat at the right hand of God and black people under His chair, and that the next best thing to being white was to marry somebody white or whitish. So he had married a red-skinned woman to show that he was moving up in the world' (Hodge 1993, 69)

is also disrespectful of Laetitia's relationship with Anjanee. He rages at Laetitia: "and out of all the children it have in that big school, the only thing you could find to friend with is a *coolie?*" (Hodge 1993, 125). Miss Velma, his wife, who seemed to picture Laetitia's family 'as a horde of people out in the Balatier bush whom nobody could count or put names to' (Hodge 1993, 162), mouths the stereotype after Anjanee's death "these Indian girls so quick to take poison" (Hodge 1993, 202).

But the protagonist in this novel is able to resist and defy all these challenges to her friendship with Anjanee; she has a more mature and less impressionable social consciousness than Tee. Her early development takes place in Sooklal Trace, Balatier community, where folk ways include enlightened and neighbourly relations between Indians and Africans. Laetitia therefore has a sophisticated, pre-defined understanding of Indian/African relations that remains unaffected by the middle-class challenges. Hodge looks to the folk lexicon for a vocabulary with which to describe her understanding of Indian/African relations. During a class discussion prompted by accusations that schoolteacher Mr Tewarie is racial because he lets off the Indian boys and blames the African boys for all wrongdoing, the school children's

wisdom recognises the subtle uniqueness of Trinidad's experience of Indian/African relations. In the children's understanding:

> racist is like over in America, or South Africa...Like them Klu klee...Klu Klu...Klu Klux Klan and thing. We not so...' The class agreed. 'Racist' was the word used for those wicked white people in South Africa and America. In our country we just had some people who were *racial* (Hodge 1993, 95).

Here Hodge acknowledges and celebrates the capacity of Trinidad creole to describe the uniqueness of the encounter between Indians and Africans in Trinidad. Her constant use of the word 'neighbour' and its derivative, 'neighb' in her two novels shows itself here as an attempt to further characterise the contact between Indians and Africans. Anjanee reminds Laetitia of Laetitia's neighbour Tara, so the two start a neighbourly relationship. The intimacy of the word proclaims the intimacy of the relationship between Laetitia and Anjanee and between the African and Indian communities.

Laetitia's challenge in this novel, therefore, is not to negotiate race relations, but to understand her gendered subjectivity and the gendered subjectivities of other women in the novel. Her experiences with Ma Zelline, Miss Velma, her growing knowledge of Mammy Patsy's life, and, in particular, the experiences of her young Indian friend, Anjanee, are crucial in this regard. Ma Zelline is the defiant godmother. Manless and childless, 'Zelline belonged to Zelline' (Hodge 1993, 18). She lives on her own, 'in bachie' (Hodge 1993, 108) and without regret. Miss Velma is the mournful, cowed wife of the domineering Mr Cephas. She reads the Daily Word, tiptoes around the house, and 'always spoke in a low, apologising voice, especially when Mr Cephas was at home' (Hodge 1993, 68). Once a laughing, smiling schoolgirl, Miss Velma was withdrawn from secondary school so that her younger brother could get an education: "They didn't have the money to pay for two. And it's more important for a boy to get education. They out me by a lady to learn sewing" (Hodge 1993, 86). She worked in a shirt factory but Mr Cephas forced her to leave the job when they married. Miss Velma is now resigned to her fate as a subservient housewife, perpetually mindful of Mr Cephas's anger. Burdened and trapped in her marriage, she warns Laetitia about a similar fate:

> "You mustn't go against them, you know. Your father, you mustn't go against him. It don't pay to get them vex. When you get big and you have your husband, you will know for yourself.

Jump high or jump low, you have to please them. That's a woman's lot" (Hodge 1993, 86).

Miss Velma defies Mr Cephas on one occasion and, when she does, it is in an effort to help Laetitia. The two collude to keep Laetitia's suspension from school a secret. When Mr Cephas discovers the plot, he rightly suggests that the two are "in *complot* against me" (Hodge 1993, 186). In the vortex of his rage, Miss Velma stood her ground. She had 'stepped out of her half-dead, frightened self' Mr Cephas was looking at her 'with his mouth open' (Hodge 1993, 186). Miss Velma's defiance is not sustained, however, and eventually she suggests that Laetitia return to Sookal Trace to live with her grandmother. Laetitia imagines that her mother may have suffered similarly during her relationship with Mr Cephas and there is a suggestion that he physically abused Mammy Patsy. She escaped, however, and is struggling in New York, working long hours and attending night school.

It is Anjanee's experiences, however, that have the greatest effect on Laetitia. Bonded in school because of their similar rural, working-class background, the two develop a close friendship. Anjanee's reality is determined by her oppressive brothers and father who do not support her education and who think she should be satisfied with achieving a functional level of literacy. She sells produce in the village each morning before attending school so that she could pay the bus fare. When her baby sister is ill, she withdraws from school for several days to help her mother care for the child. She is unable to afford books and travels such a long way to school that she is always tired in class. Eventually she becomes anaemic and is unable to sustain a proper diet.

The detailed physical circumstances of Anjanee's life are sketched throughout the novel as the two girls draw closer and Anjanee increasingly confides in her friend. Despite the severe physical constraints in Anjanee's life, she continues to attend school and write exams. Her motivation is a determination not to end up like her own mother. This young voice of rebellion is attempting to break free of the cycle of service to the patriarchs that determined her mother's life. Anjanee outlines the circumstances of her mother's generation:

> "If you see how much work my mother does have to do when the day come!...So only me to get up four o' clock in the morning and help her knead the flour so everybody could eat and get food to carry. Only me to help her bring water and bathe the little ones for school, feed the baby, wash everybody clothes, iron everybody clothes, sweep the house, sweep the yard, cook a ton load of food in the evening again" (Hodge 1993, 64).

Anjanee's determination 'not to end up like that' turns out to be prophetic: 'I not going to end up like my mother, I rather dead' (Hodge 1993, 64).

The only way of dodging this destiny that Anjanee and her mother recognise is education. Anjanee's mother 'does just shake she head and say "Where I will leave them and go, *beti*? I ain't have schooling. You want me to go by the side of the road and beg?"' (Hodge 1993, 65). Anjanee's determination to be educated then is a fundamental need to escape her restrictive reality. Her death cannot be read as defeat but as indicative of a fundamental shift in perspective among young Indian women; she prefers death to her mother's circumstances. Indeed, all the major female figures in this text are at various stages in their realisation of, and reaction to, their gendered subjectivity. Ethnic and class considerations, however, render their experiences unique and particularised. Anjanee's death and the start of Laetitia's menstruation signal the protagonist's movement from childhood to adulthood. In the process of Laetitia's ontological development in relation to her world, her encounter and experiences with her young Indian friend are fundamental. Much like Tee, Laetitia's consciousness has been shaped by this central experience with Anjanee.

The three texts considered here are fictional illustrations of Hodge's politics of cultural resistance. In each of them she valorises folk culture but interestingly, she reconfigures established literary representations of Caribbean folk with a sustained attention to the Indian presence in Trinidad. Hodge's explorations of folk culture are grounded in the socialist tradition of anti-imperialist struggles in the Caribbean but interestingly again, her contemplation of Indian/African folk solidarity is deliberately gendered in a way the fiction of male writers is not. The experiences of Tee, Laetitia and Anjanee are the focus of her two novels but Hodge also pays attention to relationships among older Indian and African women - Ma, Tantie, Ma Zelline, Miss Velma, Maharajin and Tara - to signal the possibility of working—class solidarity among Indian and African **women**. In this way Hodge's consideration in these works overlaps with prominent representations of dougla feminism as bonding between Indian and African working- class women. The significance of these gendered considerations of Indian/Africans relations emerges through an exploration of Hodge's work alongside the works of another Trinidad novelist, Earl Lovelace. Lovelace is celebrated for his philosophy on Indian/African relations that he dramatised in The Dragon Can't Dance (1979). In the next chapter I look at his most recent novel, Salt (1996), which won the 1997 Commonwealth Writers Prize, as part of my attention to how Indians and Africans address each other in their fiction. In the same way that I have traced the evolution of Hodge's representation of Indian/African relations in this chapter, I will plot the evolution

of Lovelace's philosophy on Indian/African relations and explore his vision alongside
Hodge's.

CHAPTER FIVE

Writing the Other in Trinidad Fiction

A conversation between literary critics Kenneth Ramchand and Jeremy Poynting on Indian/African relations in Caribbean fiction, contains much of the analysis that exists to date on how Indians and Africans address each other in their literary works. Ramchand's 1985 article in <u>Wasafiri</u> argues that Earl Lovelace's <u>The Dragon Can't Dance</u> (1979) articulates the most advanced philosophy on Indian/African relations in Caribbean fiction through its attention to the way in which Indians might enter the creole culture of Trinidad. Ramchand argues that until the publication of <u>The Dragon Can't Dance,</u> Indian characters were either absent or peripheral in the fiction by African novelists:

> West Indian novelists tend to base their fictions upon the racial groups that they grew up in; not because they are writing to or on behalf of those groups but in the first place, because they know those groups best. In general, therefore, the Indian character does not appear, or is peripheral in works by non-Indian writers. Novels by writers of Indian origin, on the other hand, are peopled mainly by Indian characters. Such works yield up to readers who already possess the facts (either from first hand experience or from documentary sources) impressions, and insights into the facts such as the novel form is peculiarly fitted to give (Ramchand 1985, 18).

He identifies Samuel Selvon's <u>A Brighter Sun</u> (1952), George Lamming's <u>Of Age and Innocence</u> (1958), and Ismith Khan's <u>The Obeah Man</u> (1964) as early treatments of the theme of Indian/African relations but praises Lovelace's novel for its analysis:

> it is only after failing to win acceptance in the Yard that Pariag can put it to himself that his entry into the Creole culture depended not upon his abandoning or suppressing the Indian heritage but rather upon bringing it with him so that it might alter and be altered by the Creole construct (Ramchand 1985, 23).

One year later, Poynting replied to Ramchand's article and while he agreed that Caribbean novelists tended to write about the ethnic groups they grew up in, he identified interesting

differences between the roles each played in the fiction of the other. In a mammoth project, he examined 486 texts by Indian writers and 557 by African authors in the period following 1940, and concluded that whereas in general Indian writers have been conscious of being part of a wider society, African writing has tended to ignore the Indian presence (1986, 15-16). He suggests that it is only in the form of the short story that one finds a significant number of African writers dealing with Indian life. He adds that whereas Indian writing tended to deal with the increasing heterogeneity of the group, African portrayals tended towards a relatively uniform stereotype. Poynting agreed with Ramchand that Lovelace's novel was praiseworthy but contended that Samuel Selvon's <u>A Brighter Sun</u> (1952), George Lamming's <u>Of Age and Innocence</u> (1958), and Ismith Khan's <u>The Obeah Man</u> (1964) should not be dismissed 'as prehistoric prefaces to Lovelace's novel', but instead should be read as 'equally sensitive and still relevant explorations of Afro-Indian relationships' (Poynting 1986, 16).

This chapter supplements Ramchand's and Poynting's explorations of how Indian and African writers address each other's communities in their works by looking at two works from the 1950s - Seepersad Naipaul's short story 'Shouters Visit China in the Spirit World' (1950) and Errol Hill's play <u>Wey Wey</u> (1958). This is followed by a detailed examination of Lovelace's new novel, <u>Salt</u> (1997[1996]), published seventeen years after <u>The Dragon Can't Dance</u>, in which the author elaborates his philosophy on Indian/African relations which he started in his 1979 novel.[1]

Both Seepersad Naipaul's short story and Hill's <u>Wey Wey</u> were published in the 1950s, a period significant in the literary and political history of the Caribbean. The 1950s is the period of nationalist sentiment that culminated in independence for Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados and Jamaica in the next decade. The hope and promise of impending independence, the vision of Caribbean cultural unity, and the desire to add 'a new dimension to writing about the West Indian community' (Lamming 1996 [1960], 256) during this period of anti-colonial mobilisation found imaginative expression in the works of Caribbean writers. Many of these writers contributed to the boom in literary production that characterised the period from their base in London where they began immigrating in 1950 (Donnell and Lawson Welsh 1996, 206). Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul, Andrew Salkey, Edgar Mittelholzer, Errol Hill and John Figueroa were among the Caribbean writers who formed a network in London around the BBC Caribbean Voices Programme (Donnell and Lawson Welsh 1996, 214-215). In this environment, writers during this period shared in an

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1 <u>Salt</u> was first published in 1996 by Faber and Faber. All page references are taken from the 1997 edition published in New York by Persea.

optimism about Indian/African relations in the soon-to-be independent countries. This optimism manifests in Selvon's <u>A Brighter Sun</u> (1952), Lamming's <u>Of Age and Innocence</u> (1958), and in V. S. Naipaul's magnanimous response to a short story by African Guyanese writer, Herman Stephens. The story is entitled 'Worthless Diamonds' and was read on the BBC's Caribbean Voices programme in 1955. It tells the story of two Indian brothers in Guyana, one of whom chooses to chase diamonds only to discover that they are fickle fortunes whereas the other remains faithful to the land. In introducing the story, the young Naipaul comments: 'What I find even more pleasing is that Mr Stephens writes with so much affection for his characters, who are all East Indians. This charity of one race for another must surely be a peculiar West Indian phenomenon' (V.S. Naipaul 1955, 1), a comment that complicates established views of Naipaul's later politics.

Although Naipaul's father, Seepersad Naipaul, is best known for <u>The Adventures of Gurudeva</u> (1943), his 'Shouters Visit China in the Spirit World' was read on the BBC Caribbean Voices Programme in 1950, one year before the Trinidad and Tobago Legislative Council legalised the religious practices of the Shouter Baptists (Shango/Orisha) in Trinidad. In this story Seepersad Naipaul recounts a visit to a Baptist service. The Baptist faith, an African/Catholic syncretism, is regarded as a depository for Africanness in Trinidad, owing to its heavy Yoruba influences and the fact that until recently its followers were exclusively working class Africans (Mahabir and Maharaj 1989; Houk 1993). The Spiritual Baptists endured a long period of state oppression during which their practices were banned and their followers were forced to worship underground (Warner-Lewis 1991). Earl Lovelace's <u>Wine of Astonishment</u> (1982) dramatises the colonial persecution of Baptist worshippers and the resilience and tenacity of its followers.

Seepersad's Naipaul's story is largely descriptive and clearly an outsider's perspective but it is never condemnatory and indeed conveys the narrator's admiration for the rituals associated with the service he attends. Seepersad Naipaul was a journalist with the <u>Trinidad Guardian,</u> and his recounting of the Baptist service is written with an enforced objectivity in a climate, no doubt, of vociferous debates about the validity of the religion and its associated rituals. Indeed the attorney general, Sir Henry Gollam, who introduced the 1917 legislation which outlawed the religion, described the Shouters as an 'unmitigated nuisance' and their meetings capable of making neighbourhoods unfit for residential occupation (Thomas 1987, 23-28). This ordinance was repealed on March 30, 1951. Seepersad Naipaul's interest in the Baptists was likely to have also been partially motivated by the newspaper sensationalism encouraged by one of the newspaper's editors, Gault MacGowan. In his introduction to his

father's <u>The Adventure of Gurudeva</u>, V.S. Naipaul recounts how MacGowan, an Englishman new to Trinidad, had a taste for drama and the 'exotic' life of Trinidad:

> Voodoo in backyards, obeah, prisoners escaping from Devil's Island, vampire bats…But MacGowan was more than a sensationalist. He was new to Trinidad…and he took nothing for granted. He saw stories everywhere…his paper was like a daily celebration of the varied life of the island' (V.S. Naipaul 1976, 9-10).

Following his investigation of the Shouter's practices, Seepersad Naipaul remained sceptical about the Baptists' practice of manifesting spirits and travelling to other worlds during manifestations, but was convinced that the religion was neither a nuisance nor unholy:

> On the way home I wondered whether all that I had seen was just a kind of masquerade, or whether there was something solid and real behind it all. Perhaps the worst that can be said about the Shouters is that they have an utterly childish credulity, are pre-disposed to self-hypnosis, and are easily susceptible to fantasies. They bring to their altar a primitive, dynamic emotion, which they do not choose to hide. They let themselves go (Seepersad Naipaul 1950, 9).

His high regard for the music and rhythms that accompanied the service is evident as is Naipaul's admiration for the Baptists' 'dynamic emotion' and their freedom to 'let themselves go'. This piece is important because here is an Indian writer representing the Baptists sympathetically and indeed vindicating the faith. In present-day Trinidad and Tobago, where a national holiday now commemorates the Shouter Baptists' religion, and where the religion's influence is fundamental to calypso and other popular cultural expressions, Seepersad Naipaul's treatment may seem reticent and perhaps even negligible. But in 1950, when the validity of the religion was intensely contested, the story was brave. Seepersad Naipaul revealed what is perhaps the secret of his sympathetic representation of the Baptists in a letter to V.S. Naipaul one year after the BBC aired 'Shouters Visit China in the Spirit World': 'I have never forgotten what Gault MacGowan told me years ago: "Write sympathetically"; and this, I suppose, in no way prevents us from writing truthfully, even brightly' (in V.S. Naipaul 1976, 10).

Also published in the 1950s, Errol Hill's play, <u>Wey Wey</u> (1958), is a remarkably sensitive exploration by an African playwright of the circumstances and motivation of Indian

wey wey banker, Harry Roopchand.[2] This play is significant for several reasons in the context of this chapter. First, Hill writes the Indian banker, his wife, and their circumstances with a sensitivity that is unusual now in representations of cultural others and was even more unusual at the time of writing. Also, the play dislocates stereotypes about the Indian community through its characterisation of Harry and it debunks stereotypes about the Indian woman through the representation of Beti. Hill is also acutely attentive to creole and his attention results in the dramatic illustrations of some of the contexts in which the Trinidad vocabulary reflects the subtleties of Indian/African relations.

Harry uses the game of wey wey and the financial benefits it brings as a way of retrieving his pride lost to a history of indentured oppression and exploitation. Beti's potentially lucrative twenty acres of land do not attract him because the memory of exploitation on agricultural estates is fresh and it is a fate that Harry refuses for himself. He values the autonomy and retrieved self-respect that he gains through wey wey. He explains to his partner, Pretty Boy - 'I leave two ole people catching they tail on the white people estate. Since I knee high to a grasshopper I take off becausen I had no intention of bowing and scraping to nobody' (Hill 1958, 8). He rejects Beti's offer with this explanation - 'I has no intention of digging no land. My poopa dig land and my grandpoopa dig land and where it get them? Coughing out they liver string in the poor house' (Hill 1958, 14). Contrary to popular representations of Indians' love for the land, Harry is estranged from the land and agricultural labour. He is so driven by his determination to escape his parents' fate that he chooses jail over agricultural work. He reiterates his position at the close of the play:

> me ain't make for land and land ain't make for me. My poopa and my poopa-poopa work land in Trinidad, and all them poopas before them work land in India, and all they got to show when they bones dry up and they fingers cramp, is a set of hawking and spitting and a cold room waiting for them in six foot of free government earth. I have to get more than that out o' life (Hill 1958, 30).

Harry is a foul-mouthed, abusive, scheming man who was even serious about murdering Pretty Boy. Yet Hill has a deep understanding of him so that at the end of the play

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2 Wey Wey is an illegal numbers game played in Trinidad. It involves a banker, who either has a limited or unlimited bank, who reveals a number from one to thirty-six. All players who guessed the correct number are given thirty-six dollars to one. The punters take the marks of players and bring them to the site where the banker reveals his mark. The game is often played according to dreams, different images or interpretations corresponding to one of the thirty-six numbers. It is also played according to a wey wey chart.

the audience is sympathetic with Harry. Hill is equally successful in his portrayal of Beti. The audience first sees her when Harry roughly calls out to her to bring his tea. She enters the stage dressed in a sari and lots of jewellery. Harry quarrels with her about the absence of beef in their meal. Again stereotypes are being debunked - Harry is asking for beef, anathema to Hindus - and it turns out that the only things traditional about Beti are her sari and jewellery. Far from being the demure, traditional, uneducated, illiterate Indian wife, she quarrels with him and challenges him - she laughs at his suggestion about entering politics, she drinks rum, and refers to a newspaper article that she read about cattle meat being bad. Harry retorts that she reads too much. Despite Harry's threats of violence, Beti continues undaunted. At the end of the play, although she does not convince him to work the twenty acres of land, she does succeed in closing down his business.

This short play is an outstanding achievement. Hill ennobles Harry by investing him with self-awareness, a struggle to be more than he is expected to be, and a desire to retrieve his dignity lost to a history of indentureship. He elevates Beti from the long-suffering, submissive Indian wife to a defiant woman challenging traditional prescriptions of Indian womanhood and trying to recast herself and rewrite her future. Hill achieves all of this with an infectious, good-natured, and uniquely Trinidadian, sense of humour that satirically invokes the Trinidadian practice of racialising insults. In one of her critical essays, Merle Hodge remarks on the phenomenon:

> When one lands in Trinidad from the USA or from England, from a context of stark and simplistic white-versus-non-white racism, from a situation where the mere allusion to race is likely to offend people's delicacy, being fraught with hair-raising echoes of gas-chambers and lynching mobs, one is shocked and scandalised to find that frank references to racial characteristics are part and parcel of the normal vocabulary of altercation, in the playground as in the traffic-jam. Someone who offends you is not merely a damn fool. He is a damn coolie fool, or a damn stupid nigger, or a red ass, or a damn thieving Chinee (1975, 32).

And the late Samuel Selvon, trying to trace the construction of his Trinidadian identity, commented on the Trinidad practice – 'even calling one another 'whitey cockroach' or 'nigger' or 'coolie' held less racial significance than the transient anger or sarcastic reproach of the moment' (Selvon 1979, 14).

Hill satirises this practice. The play opens with Harry and Pretty Boy in conference. Harry speaks first, saying it is time to do something drastic. Pretty Boy seeks clarification,

and Harry replies 'Like kill a nigger' (Hill 1958, 6). Pretty Boy is disbelieving, and Harry continues 'Or a Chinee' referring to his rival, Chinee Alec. The words 'kill a nigger' here are used teasingly, as an opening for a discussion about killing Chinee Alec. Hill teases the audience with the statement, invoking their ire at Harry, and then mocking their response. The audience will bristle, and then relax and laugh at the play and themselves. Hill also has Harry racialising his insults about everybody. So Harry would not consider relocating his business because that would mean bowing to a Chinee - 'Bow to a Chinee? Never! You think any Chinee man got brain with Indian? All them good for is sell saltfish and press people clothes...You think he could have more brain than me?' (Hill 1958, 8). Insults about the people who play his wey wey game and keep him in business are also racialised, so that he will not consider playing a mark by a dream because 'Dream is for them chuppit nigger' (Hill 1958, 9), and he will not give in to Beti's suggestion to work the land because 'What you think God give me brains for? To work like nigger?' (Hill 1958, 14). And insults traded between him and his wife are also racialised – Beti refers to him as 'that piece of dirty coolie' and he refers to her as 'a frowsy coolie like you' (Hill 1958, 19).

Hill's portrayal of Harry is similar to Lovelace's portrayal of Pariag in the celebrated The Dragon Can't Dance (1979). Like Harry Roopchand, Pariag's roots are in the sugar estate and he too is trying to escape the lifetime of toil and indenture of that world. He 'had watched his brothers and his father work, bound still in that virile embrace to the sugarcane estate to which his grandfather had been the first to be indentured, renewing their indenture year after year as if it were an inheritance that no repeal of law could force them to relinquish' (Lovelace 1979, 142). Whereas Harry is the central character in Wey Wey, the attention that Pariag has received in literary criticism is greater than the authorial attention he receives in Lovelace's novel. Pariag mainly appears in three chapters and at wide intervals – chapters five, ten and sixteen. The infrequency of Pariag's appearance in the novel actually caused Ramchand to preface his attention to Pariag:

> On the surface, this might seem too little space and that little too
> interrupted to impress the character upon a reader; and,
> considering the amount of exposure, one could be reproved for
> making much ado about merely a minor character. These points
> are worth settling (1985, 20).

Ramchand goes on to celebrate The Dragon Can't Dance (1979) as 'an epic, singing the creole culture, restoring calypso, steelband and carnival meaningfully to the living

communities whose original self-expression they are; and celebrating the heroes and the crowds whose deeds went into the making of what we have of ritual custom and ceremony' (1985, 20). The Indian Pariag seeks entry into and recognition in this world. He buys a bicycle to make himself visible, but this action precipitates a collision between the Hill's principle of non-possession and the stereotype of Indians as materially acquisitive.

Ramchand and other critics (Poynting 1986; Taylor 1993; Lewis 1998) praise this novel for its vision of how Indians can enter the creole world represented by the Hill community. Ramchand argues that first Lovelace sets up a contrast between his main Indian character, Pariag, and Balliram, another Indian, who entered the creole world by distancing himself from Indian culture and aligning himself fully with elements of creole culture (1985, 22). Pariag is then represented as acknowledging the sustaining quality of his Indian community but also being conscious of its limiting, imprisoning aspects (Ramchand 1985, 22). Lovelace's vision of Indian/African relations in this novel is considered 'scrupulously worked out' by Ramchand who suggests that Pariag's entry into creole culture 'depended not upon his abandoning or suppressing the Indian heritage but rather upon bringing it with him so that it might alter and be altered by the Creole construct' (Ramchand 1985, 23). The Hill recognises Pariag's dignity and selfhood only after they have destroyed his bicycle and he walks through the community in defiance, trailing his smashed bicycle.

In Salt, published seventeen years after The Dragon Can't Dance, the Indian presence is again quantitatively scarce – Lovelace concentrates on the Indian Moon and his family in one chapter titled 'Lochan' – but again Indian/African relations and the Indian community are considerably more significant than is suggested by the single chapter. The novel provides a more elaborate and more developed focus on Indians and Indian/African relations in Trinidad than any of Lovelace's previous works. Salt is a non-linear history of Trinidad from 1834 up to post-independence. It is a compassionate, understanding novel, the language of which sings rather than talks, and Lovelace switches often and quickly among a cast of narrating voices that makes the novel 'a ceremony of souls' (Ramchand 1999, 55) and a chantwel of ancestral voices that manifest through the young, sometimes narrator, Bango's nephew. Whereas The Dragon Can't Dance articulates a vision of how Indians can enter the African creole world, Salt provides an analysis of how that vision emerged from Africans' creative reckoning their identity in the context of slavery, how that vision can potentially be politicised, and how it becomes corrupted in the post-independence period. The attempt to install an authentic independence is the task of the middle-class politician, Alford Georges, and his colleagues the Indian, Lochan and the European, Carabon. There is hope at the end of the novel; Jojo's,

Bango's and Alford's vision of nationhood has been transmitted to the young narrator who joins the march with a full understanding of his ancestors' vision. But their collective hope is not yet realised because Sonan Lochan and Adolphe Carabon are not yet among the marchers. Whether or not they will participate in the march and thus signal their solidarity with Africans and their agreement with the politics of welcome and accommodation of all races remains uncertain.

The title of the novel addresses the impossibility of return to homelands and anchorage to this new place. Salt prevents flight and anchors one to where one is. Guinea John, the ancestor, succeeds in flying back to Africa but others could not follow because they had eaten salt and made themselves too heavy to fly. Michael Carabon, one of the descendants of the white planter class, says that if black people wanted to go back to Africa, let them go – 'Like the Rastafarians. You hear any of them talking about Africa? You see any of them going back? Eh? Salt. Too much salt. Rastas don't eat salt. Too much salt meat' (Lovelace 1997, 213). There is a sense in the novel that salt imprisons and traps Africans in Trinidad because it prevents levitation and flight but it also serves to anchor them to this new place. Indians too are addressed in the title; they have crossed 'the big stretch of salt water' (Lovelace 1997, 218). Crossing water erases the caste of Indians, but Moon feels that survival of the journey across the ocean should mean an upgrade in caste so he takes a Brahmin name. Both Indians and Africans share this new place because of salt.

Reparation is a major theme in this novel. Ramchand, who has written extensively about Lovelace's fiction and who is among the first to offer an analysis of this novel, considers <u>Salt</u> the 'explicit, passionate and near ideological climax' of Lovelace's theme of reparation (1999, 51). In this novel reparation for Africans is an apology and compensation for wrongdoing and it is a way of restoring humanity to both Africans and Europeans, enslaved and enslaver, but it extends to all peoples, including Indians.

Commenting on his novel, Lovelace tells Ramchand that symbolic and concrete reparation would help to 'transform imposed images and self-images and thus open the way to self confidence and creativity' (1999, 51). He believes that the process would begin with Africans and the indignities they suffered but it would extend logically to all the peoples who were brought to the Caribbean. In <u>Salt,</u> this view is represented through Bango who, making the case for reparation and a public handing over of land to him, tells Alford Georges:

unless we want to doom ourselves to remain forever locked into the terrors of the error of our stupidity, we try to repair the wrong by making reparation: so many cows, so much land, so you could face again yourself and restore for yourself and the one you injure the sense of what it is to be human (Lovelace 1997, 168-169).

Africans' hope for reparation in the form of an apology or some other acknowledgment that slavery was morally wrong remains unfulfilled; first the apprenticeship system was announced and then Indian indentured labourers were imported to replace African labour on the estates. This is the context in which Indians and Africans in Trinidad encountered each other historically; in the novel Lovelace furthers this contextualisation by animating Africans' anguished disappointment over reparation. Indentured Indians symbolise this disappointment about reparation. Jojo sees a group of strange people and asks where that band of 'oily-looking people come from?' He is told that they are 'the answer to your claims for reparation' (Lovelace 1997, 185). Contrary to the historical circumstances of economic competition and the climate of antagonism and disappointment that existed when Indians arrived, however, Lovelace represents the defining personal encounter between the emancipated African ancestor Jojo and the indentured Indian Feroze, free of acrimony. Jojo finds Feroze cutlassing the land next to where he lived. Feroze looked at Jojo with sober outrage, and said almost apologetically that the land was his as part of his contract. They have an exchange, not hostile, just cautious and exploratory, each curious about the other, Jojo trying to understand the circumstances that brought Feroze, literally and metaphorically, into his backyard. Crucial to the encounter is the issue of land rights. Indians in the novel have entitlement to land as part of their indentureship contract; Africans are unsuccessfully seeking land as reparation – 'It was clear to him [Jojo] that the Colony's treatment of the Indians had given him an even greater claim to reparation, but what was worrying was his feeling that he had made an enemy of Feroze and rest of Indianpeople' (Lovelace 1997, 186-187).

This last statement is curious. Nothing about the exchange between Jojo and Feroze intimated hostility. In fact, Faustin, Jojo's friend on the Carabon plantation, says to him later that it is not Indians' fault that land was awarded to them as part of their contract. Jojo himself was not hostile to Feroze and certainly nothing about Feroze's reaction indicated that enmity had resulted from the exchange. Why then, would Jojo feel that he **had made** an enemy of Feroze and the rest of Indianpeople? The use of the past perfect precludes the explanation that Jojo's claims for reparation would now be strengthened in view of the colony's treatment of Indians.

It seems to me that this is another example of how the lines between fiction and historical truth are sometimes blurred in Lovelace's fiction. Ramchand noted this slippage in relation to Lovelace's resolution of <u>The Dragon Can't Dance</u> (1985, 23). This novel concludes its analysis of Indian-African relations with Pariag and Aldrick, the protagonist, contemplating each other from afar (Ramchand 1985, 23). Aldrick is tempted to go in and talk to Pariag but eventually decides against it, believing that there was nothing to explain. Ramchand believes that Aldrick **does** have things to explain to Pariag, and is now able to do so and describes this as a seeming lapse in Lovelace's fiction (1985, 23). He speculates that: 'It is possible that at this point Lovelace slips from fictional truth and presents a societal fact, for more people in our society hold the view that there is nothing to explain than one would have liked to believe' (1985, 23). He continues that if the resolution of the relationship between Aldrick and Pariag seems insufficient, the reason might be in the author's sense that there is more of the self to be found before the African and the Indian can dare to expose themselves to each other (1985, 23).

I think Lovelace's dramatisation of the historical encounter between Indians and Africans in <u>Salt</u> is another example of that slippage from fictional truth to historical fact. Many of the factors that contribute to the animosity between Indians and Africans – indentured labour depressing wages of emancipated Africans, religious and cultural differences, and colonial manipulation of those differences – are not contained in the novel's treatment of Indian/African relations. But Lovelace **is** dealing with the subject of Indian/African relations and has to account for the racial antagonism that is a societal fact. He does this through Jojo's concern that he had made an enemy of Feroze and the rest of Indianpeople, although that concern is not justified by either his representation of the encounter between Feroze or his representation of the encounter between Jojo's grandson, Bango and the Indian Moon two generations later.

Bango, nephew of Jojo, finds Moon cutlassing land next to his (Bango's) home. This encounter is respectful; Bango sees:

> this thin Indian man, bareheaded, with long-sleeved shirt
> buttoned right up to his neck like he just come out from working
> in the sugar cane field, swinging his cutlass patient and quick
> through the bush and in the other hand is his crookstick heaping
> up the cut bush (Lovelace 1997, 149).

Bango calls out to Moon, telling him to go and squat somewhere else. Moon had a smile on his face while Bango talked, then said he had bought the land. Bango realises he had been tricked; he thought the Carabons were selling the land in forty-acre parcels. Moon calls Bango 'neighbour' and asks that he not get vexed with him. Later Bango tells Myrtle that he cannot be vexed with Moon because 'is not his fault' (Lovelace 1997, 150). Like the exchange between Jojo and Feroze two generations earlier, this meeting is exploratory, cautious, and free of hostility.

These encounters help establish Jojo and Bango as the figures through whom Lovelace works out his vision of accommodation and welcome to all races that is fundamental to the process of nation-building. When emancipation is announced, Jojo realises that he had to:

> put aside the depth of this loss he had lost and find a way in his mind to claim this new world as home. And he could claim it, he felt, out of having endured here, out of having planted the land without reward, out of having built houses without occupying them, out of having sown without reaping...He was, he began to think, part of a new people whose sweat and blood had fertilised the soil of every plantation in every single island...He could claim it not as a place to go back to, not as a place where he could find his past, but as a place in which he had to seek his future. And he had to do this in the midst of a new multitude (Lovelace 1997, 173).

Two generations later, Bango is Jojo reincarnated. Each year he demonstrates his sense of belonging to this new place by claiming his right to participate in the Independence Day marches; he outfits children for the marches and onlookers applaud:

> because they so astonished that this man with nothing to his name, no house, no land, the little money he get coming from sculpting heads from dry coconuts and little trinkets from dried coconut shells, would from his own pocket outfit these boys and bring them, uninvited, into this big Independence march (Lovelace 1997, 46).

For Bango, a truly independent country must address reparation and, like Jojo before him, his commitment to this new place means accommodation of, and welcome to, the other multitudes that share the same space. Jojo's realisation that his future must be forged among these new people is reproduced in Bango's wish to welcome all others. This inspires his decision to add another dimension to his Independence Day march, four children to represent

the major races on the island– African, Indian, White and Chinese- to manifest his vision of harmonious race relations in the independent country. Aunt Florence interprets this as Bango's 'wonderful welcome that he is making to each and every race of people on the island' (Lovelace 1997, 47). Through Jojo and Bango then, Lovelace reveals the emergence of his vision of African accommodation and welcome as prerequisites for national identification. Specifically, African accommodation and welcome to Indians is dramatised through the entry of Moon and his family into the Cascadu, and later Cunaripo, community.

Moon obtains a parcel of land next to Bango as part of his indentureship contract. He enters the village of Cascadu with his wife, Dularie, his sister Jasodra, and his five children. He had left Poole Sugar Estate to enter this community, his movement from the sugar estate to live among Africans in Cascadu much like Pariag's move from the country to the creole community of Calvary Hill in The Dragon Can't Dance. Moon is a hardworking entrepreneur who cultivates crops, makes fish pots and baskets, weaves fish nets, vended on a roadside stall and eventually owned a variety store. He is also a village 'smartman', living by his wits and hard work and the sound business counsel of his wife Dularie. In this way, the novel reinforces the stereotype of the commercial Indian but in other ways departs radically from it.

Cascadu marvelled at the speed of Moon's progress, which is prompted in part by Moon's rivalry with Gopisingh, the hardware owner across the road. But Moon is also passionate about gadgets and this is one of the ways Lovelace elevates him from racial stereotype and invests him with dignity and humanity. Moon:

> loved the idea of craftsmanship, of work, of all the various wonderful stupid things that people made with their hands…He loved the look of bamboo, the feel of it…Bread too. He loved the smell of bread…Inside his store too he delighted in moving among the items for sale…He loved the simple technology of scissors, of pliers, the feel of the equipment and sawn wood (Lovelace 1997, 221-222).

He is generous and respectful of people; on Saturdays he would station himself outside his shop with a bag of coins to give to the old and infirm, and he ensured that his children learned the same respect for people by involving each of them each Saturday.

Moon helps to make Cunaripo into a real town with loud music and busy activity. Cascadu and Cunaripo accommodate him, allowing him the space to establish himself among them and to negotiate his relationship with them. Moon in turn accommodates African creole culture. He made his shop a venue for Carnival activities, calypso, staged stickfights, and

invited steelbands and chantwels and Carnival characters such as *babydoll* and *jab molassie* to parade on the stage in front of his shop. Moon is altered by the creole Cascadu and Cunaripo communities and he in turn alters the communities. The result of his entry is a rich cultural mosaic of *chutney*, calypso, songs from Indian films, *khurma, sahina,* sweetbread and cakes, and framed pictures of Haile Selassie, Vishnu, Marcus Garvey and Hanuman.

This vision of accommodation and welcome is politicised through Alford Georges, Bango's nephew; Sonan, Moon's grandson; and Adolphe Carabon, the black sheep of the white landowning family. Alford Georges, who politicises Jojo's and Bango's vision of belonging to this new place, is the new, young, educated, political voice of the nationalist era. He understands Bango's claim for reparation and wants to publicly hand him a parcel of land. He also shares the vision of accommodating all races and to illustrate this he conceives of a Carnival band that includes all the major races but with each playing the other- Indians to be Amerindians; Europeans to be African warriors– 'In order for people to understand one another he wanted them to take on the role of the other' (Lovelace 1997, 90).

There is a wholesomeness about this political vision that is reiterated in the novel by all members of the small group who joins Alford's struggle. Alford's politics is different because 'he stumble on the truth that to free yourself you have to free everybody. It is a situation in which you have no control over people' (Lovelace 1997, 193). Kennos, the Christianised Indian and member of this small political group, supports the idea of Carnival as a new religion because 'for my part...Carnival must be claimed by all of us, just as we must all claim all that has been created in our presence' (Lovelace 1997, 92). Alford, Sonan, Adolphe and Kennos represent the promise and optimism of Independence. Their views on reparation and welcome, and their early efforts to organise politically, tell the story of the dreams and idealism of nationalism and the promise of selfhood and wholesomeness and belonging contained in Independence. Alford takes his vision to the National Party and Sonan takes his to the Democratic Party. It is here, within the framework of the two-party political system and tribal ethnic allegiances, that their vision becomes corrupted.

Alford is initially allowed to articulate his vision in the National Party, no doubt a fictional representation of the People' National Movement (PNM). Ramchand calculates that Lovelace was twenty-one when the PNM was formed and that it must have caught his imagination as the event that would make something out of Emancipation (1999, 55). In Salt, like in Lovelace's first novel While Gods are Falling (1965) and again in The Schoolmaster (1968), the PNM raises hopes of a new world at last, but in all three novels, the party brings greed, corruption and a jockeying for economic advantage (Ramchand 1999, 55). As a

member of the National Party, Alford Georges runs for bye-election on the theme 'Seeing Ourselves Afresh'. In his thesis he argues that:

> because enslavement and indenture had brought our peoples to these islands, we had continued to see ourselves from the perspectives of our loss, characterising ourselves as ex-enslaved, ex-indentured. In reality we would better address our future if we saw ourselves as a new people brought together and created anew by our struggles against enslavement, indenture and colonialism (Lovelace 1997, 122).

And he encourages people to:

> See these islands with new eyes...See past the slums, see past the racial divisions, see past the present ownership of resources, see a people who have been thrown together and are working to make this a new world place. Look not at what has been done to you, look at what you are doing, look at what you have done...There is no profit in imitation, he said. What we have to do is see ourselves with new eyes, see a land where it is possible to create a new people and a culture of prosperity and dignity and freedom (Lovelace 1997, 128).

But Alford is soon disillusioned; the Prime Minister views him with increasing suspicion and Alford realises that although the Prime Minister may have shared his views at one time, it was no longer politically feasible to do so. The Prime Minister could not now entertain reparation claims because he 'can't play the arse with whitepeople land because he will never again win another election' (Lovelace 1997, 191).

Sonan too is disillusioned. He joins the Democratic Party, historically resonant with Bhadase Sagan Maraj's People's Democratic Party (PDP), and tries there to articulate the vision for the country that he shared with Adolphe, Alford and Kennos. Whenever he was called upon to speak he 'tried to point to the possibility of the new world, to give some sense of that vision fashioned in his discussions with Alford and Kennos and Carabon, and, later in talks with his sister and to some extent Reena Loutan' (Lovelace 1997, 233). But he feels estranged from the narrow Indian-only interests of the Democratic Party. He tries to encourage Africans into the party but the party rejects his efforts on the grounds of protecting its discrete cultural and racial identity; the party's response is 'once you start to mix up the politics, you begin to mix up the people. And that is when trouble start' (Lovelace 1997, 236).

In Salt Lovelace furthers his discussion of Indian/African relations that he began in The Dragon Can't Dance, by articulating the emergence, politicisation and corruption of a progressive politics of welcome and accommodation by Africans to all races. But perhaps the most significant development in Lovelace's philosophy on Indian/African relations is his attention to Indian women and their centrality in the politics of Indian/African relations. Although this thesis is not elaborated, this is an idea that Lovelace alludes to for the first time in Salt. Through his presentation of Sonan's sister, Maya, and Maya's friend, Reena Loutan, Lovelace confronts orthodox constructions of Indian/African relations that found political expression in Bhadase Maraj's PDP during the nationalist period. Lovelace suggests that Indian women also participate in the politics of nationalism:

> the women, who all the time had been walking behind him [Moon] now standing silently, not far behind him as most Indian men would have them, but closer, more abreast of him, as if the old world customs were behind them, exchanged for a new world freedom in which they would have the chance to make themselves anew (Lovelace 1997, 218).

Just as Alford and Sonan politicise the vision of belonging and accommodation of the generations before them, Maya and Reena Loutan politicise their gendered liberation. They are representations of the new, educated Indian women. Maya is described as smart, rigorous in her thinking, more correct in her grammar and more understanding of the business than any of her brothers. She is enrolled at the University of the West Indies, as is Reena Loutan.

The two women self-consciously advocate a feminist understanding of Indian/African relations. Reena Loutan is working on a thesis on 'Indian Women and Politics' in which she argues that:

> women were being kept out of power by a macho and insecure male, made largely impotent under enslavement and colonialism vis-à-vis the white man and who harboured a residual sense of shame at having been so exposed in the presence of his woman, the Indian male even more vulnerable because he perceived African political power as a new threat, so that he felt the need to keep the Indian woman hidden away, unexposed, cocooned by whatever means available to him (Lovelace 1997, 231).

Maya meanwhile encourages her brother's political vision of ethnic accommodation and welcome; as Sonan struggles with his narrow political choices – 'There were still only two

parties to choose between. One, an Indian party with few Africans, in the opposition; and the other an African party with a few more Indians' (Lovelace 1997, 230) – she encourages him to avoid that trap of dualism and to seek a new politics that would do away 'with all this race stupidness' (Lovelace 1997, 230). When Sonan joins the Democratic Party Maya condemns this as the worst choice he could make and accused him of being no better than the males in Reena Loutan's thesis. When he tries to encourage Africans into the Democratic Party, Maya is immediately supportive.

Reena Loutan and Maya both explicitly position themselves in opposition to conservative political discourses on Indian/African relations that depend on masculinist constructions of Indian female identity. When Sonan meets Reena Loutan, he felt that her eyes gave him the mistaken impression that she wanted to be rescued. Her response is ' "From what," she asked him… "You mean from all those black fellows?" ' (Lovelace 1997, 231). And to Mr Bissoon's explanation as to why Sonan should not try to encourage Africans into the Democratic Party – "once you start to mix up the politics, you begin to mix up the people. And that is when trouble start…This is not going to stop at politics. They will get at our religion, …our strength" (Lovelace 1997, 236) – Maya interjects, "Our women?…I know that is what frightens you men." Mr Bissoon acknowledges that "Yes, our women" ' (Lovelace 1997, 236-7).

This represents the most significant development to date in Lovelace's philosophy on Indian/African relations. In this novel he positions Indian women to make a radical intervention in discourses on Indian/African relations. Reena Loutan's thesis on 'Indian Women and Politics' is identical to some of the current analyses by Indian women of their gendered and ethnic identity (see Mohammed 1998a). His suggestion that Indian women also participate in the politics of nationalism and indeed, that Maya's gendered political intervention, two generations after Moon began his negotiation with African creole culture, is enabled by nationalism, echoes in Pat Mohammed's consideration of how nationalist politics in Trinidad enabled the development of Indian women:

> It appears to me that the ideas and symbols of nationalism, a message of equality of race and creed, along with the visible public participation of women also had a profound effect on the generation of Indian girls who were coming of age during the period of Independence. The availability of free secondary education meant that there were greater opportunities for those who before were prevented due to limited finances. Education was, I argue, of greater importance for Indian women than for

women of other ethnic groups, as other groups had already benefited from new cultural definitions of femininity in the society. The period of nationalism and independence, with its emphasis on free secondary education opened new opportunities and possibilities for deferring marriage, for contemplating a career, for expanding literary and creative potential, for challenging the negative and dominant ideas about female morality and, most of all, new conceptions of the term equality itself. It offered Indian women opportunities to meet and mix with other groups and to expand their knowledge of Trinidad society as it incorporated other gender belief systems (1998d, 750).

But the expectation that these ideas prompts, in the context of this dissertation, is unfulfilled in Salt; this is the least elaborated feature of Lovelace's philosophy on Indian/African relations. Maya and Reena Loutan make their conclusions on Indian/African relations without considerable analysis and the novel tells rather than illustrates these conclusions. In addition, both Maya and Reena Loutan are minor characters in the text and are featured peripherally in the one chapter that is dedicated to Moon and his descendants. Lovelace is unable in this novel to fully elaborate this political intervention nor does the novel acknowledge just how radical this gendered politics is.[3]

The significance of this gendered political intervention in discussions of Indian/African relations will emerge in the following chapters. I want to focus here on what happens when Lovelace's works are read alongside those of his contemporary, Merle Hodge. One observation is that representations of Indian/African relations by both writers are similar in how they have evolved in relation to social and political developments in Trinidad. The self-consciousness evident in the prominence and deliberateness with which Hodge treats Indian/African relations in her 1993 novel, For the Life of Laetitia, as opposed to the unmannered, cackling innocence and fluidity of Indian and African identities in Crick Crack Monkey, published twenty-three years earlier; and the centrality afforded the theme in Lovelace's Salt, published seventeen years after he represented the entry of Pariag into the urban African milieu of Calvary Hill in The Dragon Can't Dance, no doubt connect with the deteriorating relationship between Indians and Africans in Trinidad over the last decades.

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3 Lovelace was asked by this writer to elaborate Maya's and Reena Loutan's politics during a discussion on Salt at UWI, St Augustine (March 26, 1999) that concluded the university's Literature Week. Lovelace was unable to elaborate. He was at first unable to locate the references in the text and then referred to a UWI conference on East Indians when a male Indian participant referred to Indian women as 'our women'. The discussion wandered and no further explanation was offered.

A related observation is that these writers' persistent attention to the theme of Indian/African relations seems to be converging in their considerations of how Indian women's gendered and ethnic identity is, in various ways, crucial to progressive discourses on Indian/African relations. Hodge's works, firmly located within Caribbean feminism, help to elaborate something of the significance of this gendered intervention in Indian/African discourses. Dougla feminism, with which the second part of the dissertation will be preoccupied, further elaborates these ideas. In the next chapter I map some of the theoretical parameters of dougla feminism and locate it in relation to Caribbean feminism. My own location within the Trinidad women's movement motivates my interest in how dougla feminism provides opportunities for women's interventions in Indian/African relations that defy conservative discourses. The emerging body of fiction by Indian women writers contains various representations of these political interventions and I concern myself with these in part two of the dissertation.

CHAPTER SIX

Towards a Dougla Feminism: Indian/African Relations and the Women's Movement

As I detailed earlier in this dissertation, dougla feminism emerges from enquiries into the political implications of dougla identity conducted first by Shalini Puri (1997) and two years later by Rosanne Kanhai (1999a).[1] Dougla feminism is for now nothing more than an urgent guess at how women in Trinidad can make a progressive intervention in a climate of deteriorating relations between Indians and Africans. I supplement the little attention that dougla feminism has received, with considerations derived from my own involvement in the women's movement over the past ten years or so, and suggest how it might connect with other thoughts that are circulating among women who it seems are all simultaneously activists and academics, poets and *panditas*. At this stage, I can do little more than direct attention to these relationships while at the same time trying to provide an extended context for dougla feminism and the wider Caribbean women's movement with which it seeks engagement.

We can trace systematic attention to women and gender in the Caribbean to the 1975 Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) which appeared in the context of the United Nations International Year of the Woman. Sociologist Christine Barrow explains that the WICP set itself the task of letting Caribbean women speak for themselves in order to prevent premature allegiance to the prevailing Eurocentric and androcentric theoretical perspectives (Barrow 1998a, xviii). Barrow describes the WICP as 'the most extensive and ambitious project of its kind', whose intention was not to homogenise Caribbean women so they fitted into prevailing theories of female identity but to create a truly indigenous understanding of their lives (1998a, xix). In this regard the project questioned imported formulations of race and class, redefined several concepts such as 'work' and 'employment' in the lives of Caribbean women, and refuted models which conceptualised women's place as private or domestic (Barrow 1998a, xix).

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1 Puri's paper, though published in 1997, was first written in 1995 and presented at ISER-NCIC conference on Challenge and Change: The Indian Diaspora in its Historical and Contemporary Contexts, University of the West Indies, Trinidad campus, August 11th-18th.

The WICP's attempt to indigenise Caribbean feminism was positioned in relation to the findings of the West India Royal Commission three decades earlier. The Commission was appointed to investigate the social and economic conditions in the British Caribbean that resulted in the Labour Riots of the 1930s. Its 1945 report denounced black family life as abnormal and dysfunctional and, although families were labelled matrifocal, Barrow found that the reality of women's lives was distorted by stereotypes of wives and mothers, confined to the home, fully occupied with domesticity and child care, submissive to their husbands and conforming to mainstream cultural prescriptions for social acceptance and mobility (1998a, xviii).[2] By the time of the WICP project in 1975, Caribbean women had gained from their involvement in radical anti-colonial resistance movements that characterised Caribbean history from the early 1900s. Their participation in the Labour Riots of the 1930s (Reddock 1994a; Rajack-Talley 1999), nationalist struggles of the 1950s (Reddock 1994a) and the Black Power movement of the 1970s (Henderson 1988) provided a framework with which they interrogated the white, middle-class orientation of Anglo-American feminist models and with which they sought to theorise the materially and historically situated experiences of Caribbean women.

In spite of the WICP's efforts, Caribbean feminism has been repeatedly charged with replicating the same Anglo-American middle-class theoretical bias that the WICP critiqued in 1975. Reflecting on the women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago, Pat Mohammed, herself one of the early second wave Caribbean feminists, draws attention to a dependence on Anglo-American feminist thought during her efforts at feminist organising from the mid-1970s:

> some of us had read Sheila Rowbotham's <u>Woman's Consciousness, Man's World</u>, Betty Friedan's <u>The Feminine Mystique</u>, Juliet Mitchell's <u>Woman's Estate</u> and Marilyn French's <u>The Women's Room</u>....The jigsaw puzzle of our life's experiences began to be explained to us by these women who lived in other countries and about whom we knew nothing. We were inspired by the movement which gave them insights, and by the methods they had employed to arrive at these insights-small groups and consciousness raising, lobbying for change, picketing and marching for rights, the concept of sisterhood

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2 Barrow notes that following the Commission's report, focus on family continued in anthropological and demographic studies but the primary effort of these investigations in the 1960s was the construction of macro-level models which highlighted race, class and ethnicity and paid scant attention to sex and gender.

which bonded all of us together regardless of class or race (1991, 42).

In Trinidad, interrogations of feminism's Euro-centric assumptions that differentiate women's gendered subordination on the basis of class informed the 1981 socialist feminist experiment, Concerned Women for Progress (CWP).[3] Mohammed, also a member of that organisation, recalls that the CWP set itself a number of tasks and in order to carry them out, they thought it necessary, 'at that time, to build a mass women's movement, mobilising mainly working-class women whom we felt were the most oppressed as they suffered the double exploitation of sex and class' (1991, 42). But it seems that this group too faltered over its members' middle-class assumptions:

> working class women were openly sceptical about the intentions of a bunch of middle class women. How could we, from our middle class and privileged positions- and the fact was that many of us were middle class and privileged- be so presumptuous as to tell them how to organise their lives, how to deal with problems with their men? The urban working class dweller in Trinidad- the group of women we targeted- is too sophisticated and cynical in this respect. Years of political trickery, years of individualism, has bred such a cynicism. We could not penetrate that barrier in a short while. While we did learn from the experience in retrospect, I think at the time we lacked the humility to recognise that we were the intruders (Mohammed 1991, 42-43).

Apart from considerations of how various models of feminist thought engaged with class differences among women, race/ethnicity was also emerging in international fora as a key platform for exposing differences in women's lived experiences of subordination, resulting in feminists defining themselves as black, Asian and women of colour (Baksh-Soodeen 1998, 75). These differences were based on different explanations of women's subordination, and therefore different strategies for change (Baksh-Soodeen 1998, 75). Differences over questions of race/ethnicity have a special significance in Trinidad; racial and ethnic diversity is a fundamental aspect of Trinidad society that complicates all feminist approaches. As I have pointed out before, Trinidad is arguably the most culturally diverse of all the English-speaking Caribbean countries (Hodge 1975, 33; Wood 1968, 1-2). Indentured Indians of

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3 CWP later spawned The Group. Some members of The Group founded WWSP.

course also contribute to Trinidad's cultural diversity. In particular, the Indian population in Trinidad is as numerically significant as the African population.

In this particular context, feminist attention to ethnic differences among women has provided the theoretical foothold for Indian women's considerations of the Afro-centricity of Caribbean feminism. Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, one of the founding members of Women Working for Social Progress (WWSP) and co-ordinator of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) from its inception in 1985 to 1995, commented three years after she left CAFRA that the dominant discourse within Caribbean feminist politics (theory and practice) is Afro-centric as opposed to either a Euro-centric or multicultural paradigm (1998, 78-79). She feels that feminist organising in the region has been viewed as the domain of African women, rather than as a space in which women of different racial/cultural identities and experiences interact. Interestingly, Baksh-Soodeen's views are echoed by Rosanne Kanhai (1995b) in a critique of CAFRA while Baksh-Soodeen was still co-ordinator of the regional organisation. Writing from her experience in CAFRA, Kanhai argued that the organisation is patterned along the lines of Euro-American feminism, and that the issue of mobilising among Indian women figures nowhere in the development of the organised women's movement. She adds that Indian women share marginality with a number of other women of other ethnicities and classes and suggests that 'feminist activism should expand outwards to include as many women as possible, that the voices of Trinidad Indian women be joined with those of other Indo-Caribbean women, women of the Indian diaspora, Afro-Caribbean women, and women of colour globally' (1995b, 25).

It is in the context of these charges of Afro-centricity in Caribbean feminism that dougla feminism appears. Afro-centricity is not synonymous with African-dominated. The membership of WWSP, for example, is dominated by African women but its vision and activities are not confined to African women and African issues. Afro-centricity refers to an exclusive political emphasis on African women and aspects of African identity. In the climate of antagonistic relations between Indians and Africans in Trinidad, the Afro-centricity with which Caribbean feminism is charged, obtains a cynical edge from the historical alignment between feminism and middle-class creole nationalism.

In an article that calls for 'conceptual openness, methodological plurality, vigorous social history, and less historical eclecticism', Barbadian cultural historian Hilary Beckles argues that Caribbean feminism subverted its own interests by throwing in its lot with a nationalist paradigm in which:

political contests over inequitable ownership and control of productive resources, women's objection to masculinist domination of public institutions, resistance to racism against people of African descent in everyday life, and the critique of socio-political privileges attained by representatives of the white supremacy ideologies, were oftentimes presented as hostile to the national interest (1998, 48-53).

He contends that there was no autonomous, privileged space for feminist movements within the masculinist politics of nation-building where men cultivated political cultures that were patently hostile to female participation (1998, 48-49).

Beckles suggests that Caribbean feminists of the nationalist era should have learned from their Haitian sisters during 1804 and 1826 when, despite the abundance of evidence which shows the active involvement of Haitian women in the revolutionary process, the independent nation of Haiti was constructed as an expression and representation of masculinist authority that systematically sidelined and repressed women into second class citizenship (1998, 50). He illustrates this with reference to two successive constitutions in the first two decades of Haitian independence which denied women's rights; restrictions on women's employment opportunities in public office; women's alienation from land ownership rights; and control over marital relations (1998, 50). In the last regard, Beckles explains that in order to ensure that white foreigners could not own land in Haiti, women who married foreign men were deprived of citizenship whereas the same penalties did not apply to Haitian men who married white women (1998, 50).[4]

Beckles argues convincingly that Caribbean feminists, by accepting this masculinist nationalist paradigm, also set independence as 'a seminal moment for women within the evolution of feminist identity' (1998, 49). In Trinidad, the nationalist politics of the 1950s and 1960s polarised Indians and Africans and institutionalised tribal voting patterns. Assertions of creole nationalism during the period cast Indians as a 'hostile and recalcitrant minority' (Brereton 1981, 239) and participated in inflamed racial rhetoric. For these reasons, charges of Afro-centricity in the Trinidad context can sometimes resemble charges of racism. Curiously however, these charges of Afro-centricity are coming from Indian women who have themselves developed their feminist consciousness in an African-dominated women's movement. Baksh-Soodeen, Rosanne Kanhai, and others whom I will discuss in this chapter, are all grounded in the African-dominated, Afro-centric women's movement. This suggests

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4 Beckles' attention to Haiti highlights the importance of looking at the politics across the region.

that there is space in the movement's current infrastructure for these discussions and that perhaps those spaces can be developed. It also indicates that these charges of Afro-centricity work towards greater and not lesser participation by Indian women in the movement. Nevertheless, the challenge posed by dougla feminism forces consideration of how Caribbean feminism has selected a history and constructed a mythology that is consistent with the nationalist project in its exclusion of the Indian experience.

Examining how Caribbean feminism has been selective in writing its narrative of slave resistance, Beckles notes that Caribbean feminist historians have constructed an heroic feminism around the two Nannies - Nanny of the Maroons and Nanny Grigg. He argues that selection and promotion of the stereotypically armed and deadly 'rebel woman' results 'in the exclusion of other types of less well-documented rebellious women whose oppositional politics remains textually suppressed' (1998, 46). Beckles' project is the excavation of other African, Amerindian, white and mulatto women who resisted colonialism and patriarchy in various nuanced ways but his critique of feminist mythic narratives is equally applicable in relation to Indian women in Trinidad. Baksh-Soodeen points out that whereas Caribbean feminism has secured the representation of the African slave woman as a symbol of strength and power holding the family together during slavery, there is no such elevated view of the Indian woman who worked all through the indentureship period (1998, 79).[5] Indeed, it is in response to the occlusion of models of Indian women's resistance that feminist scholars interested in the Indian experience have sought to sketch portraits of rebellious indentured women. Reddock (1994a) was the first to point out that among the indentured women there were many who were not docile or dependent, having been prostitutes, widows and estranged wives in India. She also found that in the post-indentureship period a few women negotiated ways of owning property despite the legal sanctions. Writings on Indian women increasingly focus on aspects of resistance; Matikor: The Politics of Identity for Indo-Caribbean Women, published in 1999, contains no fewer than eleven articles that address Indian women's resistance.

The absence of Indian women from Caribbean feminist historiography is in part attributable to the persistent and unexamined representation of Indian womanhood as chaste,

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5 Baksh-Soodeen notes Edith Clarke's My Mother Who Fathered Me, Lucille Mathurin Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery, Sistren Theatre Collective's writing about Nanny of the Maroons, and Rhoda Reddock's PhD thesis 'Women, Labour and Struggle in 20th Century Trinidad and Tobago' all of which present the African slave woman and worker in contrast to the European bourgeois ideal of the woman as housewife as examples of the African woman as symbol of strength and power.

docile and dutiful. Investigating the colonial project of social engineering in the post-emancipation period that sought to recast both Indian and African women as submissive housewives and mothers, and men as responsible workers and family heads, Barrow explains that girls were socialised for refinement and domesticity through recitation, needlework and cookery, while boys were taught gardening and other manual skills (1998a, xiv). The church encouraged marriage and wholesome family life structured according to the European nuclear ideal. Barrow argues that whereas these colonial values contradicted established gender identities and relationships among Africans, Indians were more easily converted (1998a, xiv). She suggests that the ambivalence and anomalies of these values were evident when applied to African men and women – African men were being taught Euro-centred values of responsible manhood in a situation of high unemployment, dehumanising poverty and persistent white male promiscuity with black women; African women were being taught the virtues of home and family yet they had no choice but to enter the workforce to support their children and other dependants (1998, xiv). Among Indians, however, Barrow argues that the colonial models of masculinity and femininity fitted in quite well with this community's own patriarchal traditions (1998a, xiv). Wiltshire-Brodber adds that because indentured Indians were allowed to maintain their language, religious and cultural traditions, gender relations among Indians in colonial society were not as pressured into change as among Africans and therefore gender relations among Indians remained close to the male dominant model characteristic of traditional Indian society (1988, 146).

These assumptions expose the limitations in trying to address the Indian community from within Afro-centric feminist discourses. Baksh-Soodeen reminds us that the bourgeois housewife ideal, to which Barrow is referring, was only practised among the white planter class during colonialism and to some extent by both the African and Indian middle class in the post-colonial period (1998a, 79).

The assumption that Indian women function exclusively within the male-dominated realm of the extended family drives another important Afro-centric generalisation about the experiences of Caribbean women. As economic conditions worsened with the approach of the Great Depression, African women joined men in migration and assumed pivotal roles in transnational family networks (Barrow 1998a, xv). This, and internal migrations to towns, reinforced the high proportion of working mothers and grandmothers, female headed households and matrifocal families among Africans (Barrow 1998a, xv). This is the historical basis for one of the most persistent generalisations in Caribbean feminist discourse - the high number of women who head households. It is now believed that forty per cent of households

in the English-speaking Caribbean are headed by women. Baksh-Soodeen points out that this generalisation persists despite the fact that among Indians in Trinidad and Guyana, the lower class family shows forms such as the joint Indian family, the three-generation extended family, the nuclear family and the female-headed family (1998, 79).

The ways that attention to Indian women's experiences reconfigures Caribbean feminist discourse is a continuing discussion by women groups in the region but has received scarce attention in the literature. My review of the literature on Indian women suggests that whereas both Indian and African women share a history of oppression and colonialism that dougla feminism tries to build on, there are significant distinctive features to their histories. Barrow (1998a) and Wiltshire-Brodber (1988) note that slavery, although a brutal and inhumane system, did generate a remarkable level of gender equality among the enslaved – 'The majority of slave women worked side by side with their menfolk…within a system which, in denying their humanity, also obscured their gender' (Barrow 1998a, xiii-xiv). Barrow argues that slavery, together with inherited African patterns, laid the foundation for contemporary female economic autonomy evident among African women (1998a, xiv). In contrast, Indian female identity, far from being obscured, was at the centre of the indentureship system. As I have noted before, the male/female ratio was a constant concern during the years of the system and the scarcity of females has been identified as one of the causes of the alarming number of wife murders during the period. Indian female sexuality was being constantly policed and sometimes violently controlled. These historical differences help to explain why African women's sexuality is not available for discursive exploitation in conservative discourses on Indian/African relations in the way that Indian women's sexuality is and perhaps contributes also to an understanding of why the women's movement has failed to address Indian/African relations coherently.

Pat Mohammed's invaluable research (1998a) on gender relations in the post-indentureship period identifies how the Indian community reconstituted gender roles based on the classic patriarchy from which they had emerged and consolidated a synonymous relationship between Indian feminine identity and Indian culture. In this way, the Indian community constructed a 'Sita' model of Indian womanhood on which its construction of Indianness depended. She identifies Indian mythology, in particular Book VI of the Ramayana, as the main source through which a framework for gender relations between Indian men and women was reintroduced in Trinidad (Mohammed 1998a, 399). The story told in this section of the sacred text is of Sita's fidelity to her husband, Rama, despite all the clever advances of Rawan. Mohammed suggests that this story provides the model on which

Indian masculinity is constructed and Sita embodies the ideals of Indian womanhood – chastity and devotion (1998a, 399). Sita's chastity protects her husband and his honour; Mohammed believes that this helps to explain the Indian community's obsession with female chastity (1998a, 399).6 The story is also a compelling argument for the retention of child marriage in India; an unmarried girl who has entered puberty was considered at risk of sexual involvement and a disgrace to the family if she became pregnant. In support of the influence of this narrative, Mohammed found that the Ramayana was enacted each year in Trinidad during the festival of Ramleela; this festival, and others, attracted whole villages by the 1920s and were of tremendous importance to the Indian population (1998a, 399-400).[7]

Another Indian epic that supported the position of women within the classic reconstituted patriarchy in Trinidad was the Mahabharata, which tells the story of the polyandrous Draupadi. Mohammed found that this story was retold in Trinidad without emphasis on female polyandry, which is integral to the original story, but with emphasis rather on the attempted rape of Draupadi by Duhsasana (1998a, 400). As Duhsasana peels off the layers of Draupadi's sari, the God Krishna intervenes and although Duhsasana pulls and pulls, Draupadi remains clothed and cannot be stripped. In effect, Mohammed concludes, these stories were retold to emphasise the chaste and virtuous behaviour expected of women under any circumstances (1998a, 401).

These myths were transmitted at prayer meetings and religious festivals through Hindu pundits, and these values were reinforced with the introduction of Indian films to Trinidad from 1935 (Mohammed 1998a, 398). Indeed it has been found that in many rural areas the cinema was the prime form of entertainment by the 1950s (Haracksingh 1988, 120). Women attended in large numbers and were allowed in for half-price each Wednesday night. Entire families usually attended on Saturdays. Such was the influence of the cinema, according to Kusha Haracksingh, that role models, personal names and developing

6 In the full text of this story, Rama is exiled for fourteen years because of his cruel stepmother. He is accompanied by his loyal brother, Lakshmana, and his devoted wife, Sita, who was married to him when she was six years old. During the period of exile, Sita is kidnapped by Rawan, the demonic king of Sri Lanka. Rama defeats Rawan and rescues Sita but Rama does not accept Sita until she has proved her fidelity to him by entering a fire. Only when she has been through the fire unscathed does Rama accept her as his Queen. Interestingly, Sita is later banished to the forest by Rama when a washerman in the city refused to take back his wife after she had spent one night away from home. He said he was not like the King who took his wife back after she had spent years in another man's house.

7 Mohamed tells us that the Ramayana served other functions as well. It sustained Indians on their voyage from India to Trinidad in that their journey was comparable to the temporary exile of Ram, and their wives were to be like Sita, self-suffering and faithful to the end. The epic was also important to

conventions could all be traced to Indian movies during the 1950s and early 1960s (1988, 120). The Sita model of womanhood was also reinforced by visitors from India in the post-indentureship period. Twelve years after the end of indentureship, for example, Arya Samaj Pundit Mehta Jaimini on a visit to Trinidad, itemised the five-point ideal for Indian women – chastity; devotion towards husband; mistress of the house; to produce children who were good citizens and useful to the society; and to bring forth peace and happiness in the family and society (Reddock 1994a, 61).

Indian women's greater access to formal education from the 1950s has helped to destabilise this persistent Sita representation. Mohammed adds that along with increased access to education, the erosion of the extended family network, which, while beneficial in the way it effected support and security, placed the Indian woman within a network where she virtually exchanged her autonomy for service to the patriarchs, has resulted in social and cultural changes such as the dramatic decrease in the number of arranged marriages and greater acceptance of women who marry late or choose not to marry at all (1988a, 381-397). Despite these changes, however, Ramabai Espinet, creative writer, literary critic and feminist, laments that the presence of Indian women has not been felt, in the public sphere, in comparison to other ethnic groups and that Indian women have been absent from art, from literature, as scholars and thinkers, as doers (1993, 42-61).[8] Espinet questions why Indian women 'who read the same books that Indo-Caribbean men do, pass the same exams, and perform effectively as teachers, nurses, and civil servants, remain invisible'(1993, 42). Her insightful analysis of this is that they are invisible because they are absent from that sphere of influence which produces public figures, writers, artists, politicians, performers and other persons of impact and influence – 'They are **functionally equipped** to operate in the world of work, but once that is done, they revert to the seclusion of the patriarchal culture which has always kept them in the women's quarters. In that peculiar half-state of existence in which they are present but unseen, this single fact of the patriarchal culture which is their inheritance, has been reproduced over and over in varying forms' (1993, 42-43, my

Indians who were placed on the lowest rung of Trinidad society; the myths and rituals gave an epic quality to the mundane reality of their daily lives (Mohammed, 1998: 399).
[8]In terms of involvement in mainstream politics, for the period 1961 to 1995, there were 26 female senators, eight of whom were Indian. There are 30 members in a fully constituted Senate. For the same period, 1961 to 1995, there were 20 female members of Parliament, 5 of whom were Indian. In 1995 there were 4 Indian women in the 37-member House of Parliament. These statistics were compiled by Shirley Ann Hussen in a paper presented at the ISER-NCIC 1995 conference on Challenge and Change in the Indian Diaspora held at UWI, St Augustine. The paper is ambitiously entitled 'The Challenge of the Gender/Ethnicity Interweave in Power Relations: The case of the Indian Woman in Trinidad and Tobago'.

emphasis). Espinet believes that the Indian woman's isolation is symbolised by her *ohrni* or *chador*:

> The ohrni does not merely shield the chaste wife or daughter from the gaze of the outsider; it also shields the Indian woman from her mate. The ohrni is not just a piece of gossamer cloth. Its fragile quality suggests a powerful metaphor for the weight of the binding customs and rituals to which Indians have been habituated for centuries, and which still play a decisive role in their behaviour. For example, Indian men are conditioned to not really "see" the Indian woman. "Seeing" invites interaction, and custom decrees that this is reserved only for the husband. The consequence of this is that the Indian woman exists in a framework which is static, already defined, and to which numerous rituals are attached. The place of Indian women in society is enacted through the mechanism of this existing framework (1993, 42-43).

A crucial aspect of this discussion of the particularities of the Indian woman's experience, is the ways in which Indian gender systems were reconstituted, and continue to function, **in relation to** the Africans whom Indians encountered in Trinidad. Espinet identifies the Indian patriarchal culture as having a single germinating centre - the ownership of the Indian woman and her reproductive capacity (1993, 42). Mohammed's analysis of the reconstituted Indian patriarchy (1998a) provides a critical qualification for Espinet's observation. Mohammed suggests that the reconstituted gender system among Indians became one of the significant markers that differentiated Indians from others in the society (1998a, 397). The other major racial group was, and still is, Africans, with whom Indians had a distant but contentious relationship. The post-indentureship Indian community, obsessed with female chastity, as evidenced in the stories of Sita and Draupadi, now existed in a context of African men. Sexual relations between Indian women and African men, albeit uncommon during indentureship and the early post-indentureship period, translated into competition between Indian and African masculinities and provides an explanation for the fact that this contestation is often located on the body of the Indian woman. Espinet observes that an explicit 1950 calypso called 'Moonia' by calypsonian Invader manifests the contestation between African and Indian masculinities in relation to the Indian woman when the Indian father says to his daughter who wants to marry an African man - 'What's the matter, beti?/That kilwal standing like jankey/You got am speed/So you like am nigger breed' (1993, 51).

It is also interesting that the representation of the demonic Rawan in the story of Ram told in the <u>Ramayana</u>, is a black man, as he was of Dravidian extract. This representation has

particular relevance in Trinidad; it certainly appears me to that at the Ramleela festival, where the story is re-enacted each year, the effigy of Rawan seems to be growing bigger and blacker and seems increasingly to represent African men. As recently as 1997, MacDonald James, in a letter to the editor of the Trinidad Express, observed this feature of Indian/African relations:

> in Ramleela celebrations, the evil Hindu God Rawan steals Goddess Sita from Hanuman who pursues this evil thief of hearts to the very end. In Trinidad and Guyana since the arrival of the Fatel Razack [the name of the first ship which deposited Indian indentured labourers in Trinidad and Guyana], Rawan suddenly became African (1997, 30).

Given the fact that Indian womanhood has been securely constructed in relation to the African community, it is not surprising that Indian women's current reconsideration of their gendered subjectivity simultaneously addresses Indian/African relations. Dougla feminism contains this simultaneity in its address to feminism and ethnic relations and it challenges Caribbean feminism to take Indian women's experiences into account. Feminist scholarship in the region has recently started to answers these challenges. A Caribbean issue of Feminist Review entitled 'Rethinking Caribbean Difference', which explores issues relevant to indigenous feminist theorising, appeared in 1998. The issue is edited by Pat Mohammed. Another 1998 publication, Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities, edited by Christine Barrow, includes Mohammed's examination of how gender identities among Indians in Trinidad were reconstituted. The editor's introduction notes the difficulties in identifying 'the Caribbean woman' and accounts for this difficulty by acknowledging Indian, white, Chinese and middle-class coloured women who create the mosaic of Caribbean feminine portraits. The editor carefully, if perhaps tentatively, inserts Indian women's experiences in the introductory essay in an effort to broaden the theoretical framework with which the essays in the collection are engaging. But the Afro-centric point of reference is difficult to dislodge so that even while acknowledging the experiences of Indian women, the introduction states that:

> Caribbean feminist scholarship, while owing much to European, American and African feminist studies, has clearly been uncomfortable with prevailing knowledge - Caribbean women did not fit received images and rhetoric; they were not marginalised in the same way as their Third World counterparts; they could not be accommodated into public/private dichotomies which confined them to home, domesticity and motherhood; and

though constrained by patriarchal ideology and practice, they did
not suffer the same subordinate status in relations with their
menfolk (Barrow 1998a, xi).

This statement is true of African women, but certainly cannot be applied in its entirety to
Indian women. Indian women's experiences in the classic patriarchal social structure that was
reconstituted following indentureship **can** be partially accommodated in the public/private
dichotomy and they do suffer noticeable subordination in relation to Indian men.

There are other promising recent developments. Historians Bridget Brereton and
Verene Shepherd continue their academic interest in Indian women in Engendering History
(1995) which they edit with Barbara Bailey; the 1996 publication Women of Belize: Gender
and Change in Central America includes a lengthy interview with a Belizean Indian woman,
Zola; Eudine Barriteau, one of the region's most prolific and respected feminist theorists, has,
for the first time, included Indian women in her analyses, if only peripherally (1998, 186-
210); the first ever collection of essays on Indian women by Indian women - Matikor: The
Politics of Identity for Indo-Caribbean Women - was published in Trinidad in 1999; and Pat
Mohammed's 'Gender Negotiations Among Indians in Trinidad 1917-1947' is forthcoming.

In the face of a dominant Afro-centricity in Caribbean feminism, dougla feminism has
been advocated (Puri 1997; Kanhai 1999a) as a conscious approach to feminist organising
across ethnicity, but similar considerations of gender and Indian/African relations have
emerged from other research, suggesting that dougla feminism is participating in a significant
historical moment where various feminist enquiries of Indian/African relations are moving
towards the same destination. In 1993 Ramabai Espinet sought to explain the Indian
community's obsession with policing Indian women' sexuality by pointing out that a feature
of any society in which two racial groups exist in confrontation is that women are utilised as
chattel, as property to be exchanged, or not exchanged, between men (1993, 42-61). This
observation is continuous with fundamental aspects of dougla feminism. Three years later,
during her doctoral research among Indians and Africans in Trinidad, anthropologist Diana
Wells focussed on another gendered aspect of Indian/African relations (1999, 561). She
identified motherhood as an equally unifying concept for both Indians and Africans in
Trinidad:

> The gender-specific role of mother as care-giver seems to be
> linked to cross-racial alliances and identifications that counteract
> racial stereotypes. First, important relationships with a person of
> a different ethnic group for both men and women often came in

the form of a mother's friend or neighbour who 'cared for me
like a second mother' (1999, 561).

Wells uses this finding to framework her analysis of the Women's Political Platform that emerged prior to the 1995 general election in Trinidad and suggests that women are singularly positioned to transform the politics of Trinidad because 'while male political campaigning is about ethnic campaigning, women political leaders can speak in a way that cross-cuts ethnic divisions' (1999, 543-561). Her research findings are also motivated by feminist considerations of Indian/African relations.

As I have mentioned before, Merle Hodge's philosophy on Indian/African relations also converges with these gendered analyses of ethnic relations in its suggestion of how Indian/African solidarity can be forged by working class women. Trinidad fiction provides other representations of this - Rita and Urmilla establish a relationship before Joe and Tiger in Samuel Selvon's A Brighter Sun (1952); the African woman Ma Rouse and the Indian woman Philomen forge the only meaningful relationship in C.L.R. James's Minty Alley (1936); In Edgar Mittelholzer's 'We Know Not Whom to Mourn' (1947), the most significant inter-racial relationship is between the Indian woman Dookie and the African woman Bella – 'Bella's mother and Dookie…had planted rice together as girls' (Mittelholzer 1947, 82-83) - and 'there comes a gentle peace' between the African woman, Dorothy, and the Indian woman, Subah, in a climate of violent ethnic conflict in Lakshmi Persaud's For the Love of my Name (2000, 187). All of these relationships between Indian and African women help to define what Rosanne Kanhai describes as a 'MaCommere' relationship in her 1995 short story of the same name.

These historically coincident elaborations of women and Indian/African relations suggest that dougla feminism may have potentially broader applications than is suggested by the meagre research already conducted. It certainly appears that the usefulness of gendered discourses on questions of national identity, ignored for so long, is becoming increasingly unavoidable. The women's movement, it seems, is at this moment uniquely positioned to insert progressive analyses of Indian/African relations. I am drawing attention here to the point that I raised earlier in this chapter that significantly, all the Indian women from Trinidad who are now articulating their own experiences and their rejection of models of womanhood prescribed by the Indian patriarchy have been motivated by the Caribbean women's movement which privileges African women. Ramabai Espinet, Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, Rosanne Kanhai and Pat Mohammed, all have their roots in the regional women's movement.

Espinet and Baksh-Sodeen both have links with Women Working for Social Progress (WWSP); Rosanne Kanhai is associated with CAFRA and Pat Mohammed has been involved in various women's groups since the 1970s. All these women have arrived at a feminist consciousness alongside African women and provide examples of how Indian women's liberating consciousness has been facilitated by African women even within a predominantly Afro-centric movement. I suggest that a dougla feminism must recognise that Indian women have been using, and can continue to use, African women's resistance as a framework for their own liberation and in so doing can draw attention to the Afro-centricity of the regional women's movement in a tone that also celebrates the elements of trust and intimacy implicit in these relationships. Most significantly, a dougla feminism can elaborate the twinned resistance to both repressive gender prescriptions for Indian women and the Indian/African ethnic polarity. The concept of dougla feminism renders Indian/African relations unavoidable and speaks to the central social and political tension in post-independence Trinidad society.

I believe that a dougla feminism can also modify the theoretical approach of Indian women's interventions in dominant Caribbean feminist discourse. There have been a number of instances thus far of Indo-centric approaches, evidenced, for example, in the calls for the University of the West Indies (Trinidad campus) curriculum to include a course on Indo-Caribbean women's writing, and the publication of <u>Matikor: The Politics of Identity for Caribbean Women</u> (Kanhai 1999b), which includes essays by Indian women on Indian women. In my understanding, a dougla feminism does not seek to replace dominant Afro-centric perspectives with Indo-centric perspectives and indeed must guard against overemphasising what Guyanese feminist, Kamala Kempadoo, herself a dougla, calls 'a politics of separate identity' (1999, 112). Instead, it privileges inter-racial Indian/African concerns. In other words, a dougla feminism guards against replicating the separate-but-equal claims of Indian conservatism in feminist discourse and concentrates instead on how an inter-racial space that pays equal attention to both groups, can be forged. This is not to suggest that investigations of Indian women's particular experiences are illegitimate. Indeed, this chapter has illustrated the importance of those investigations and the need for further interrogations that will lead towards a more representative definition of Caribbean women and help to modify Caribbean feminist ideologies. What I am suggesting is that these investigations should be conducted **with a view to** understanding the wider social and political circumstances of Trinidad society which are overdetermined by race. Examinations of Indian women's circumstances and modified Caribbean feminist ideologies are not an end in themselves. These must engage with politics of the wider society. As I explained in chapter

two, the UNC assumption of political office in Trinidad in November 1995 occurred in the context of Indian political and cultural marginalisation and Indian resentment that the community is neglected in national accounts. Indians' insecurity about citizenship, identified by Reddock (1999, 576), can be traced to the nationalist era and those insecurities have been repeatedly reinforced throughout the last fifty years of Trinidad history. The representation of the 1995 UNC government as the Indian community's political and cultural coming of age, then, threatens to co-opt Indian women's support for what is in effect a new nationalist project, that is perhaps even more masculinist in its orientation. The covert removal of Indian woman attorney general, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in favour of Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj within weeks of the UNC government is one example of the party's rabid masculinist ideology; the 1996 attempt to modify the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) to offer women cooking and sewing classes is another. The fact that Prime Minister Basdeo Panday retained the public support of prominent, articulate, professional women party members while he was being charged with sexual harassment is an early indication that Indian women are being similarly uncritical of masculine political power. Elaborations of a dougla feminism enables critical consideration of Indian women's collusion with the current Indian nationalist project by drawing attention simultaneously and urgently to gender and ethnic conflict. In so doing dougla feminism ensures that wider societal conflicts remain in sharp and constant focus.

Dougla feminism, premised upon the negotiation between Indian and African women, will eventually benefit all groups of women who exist outside mainstream Caribbean feminism and who wish to negotiate with the movement. Already there is evidence of progressive feminist political intervention in national debates on Indian/African relations. In 1998, a group of women drafted an article entitled 'Time for Women to Fix Race Relations' (Burgess et al 1998, 1 and 4).[9] Carried as a page one commentary in the Trinidad Guardian on the occasion of International Women's Day, the article notes the increasing tension between Indians and Africans and articulates the group's fear that communities which had hitherto managed their affairs with admirable resourcefulness, were being pulled apart. The article points to the limited involvement of Indian women in the organised women's movement and suggests that the greater involvement of this group of women could help Trinidad out of its circular racial discourse. It argues that ethnic animosity and control of female sexuality become one and the same in conservative discourses and that Indian/African antagonisms are

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[9] The article was drafted by Jacquie Burgess, Merle Hodge, Folade Mutota and Sheila Rampersad, all members of the Trinidad group Women Working for Social Progress (WWSP).

played out on the bodies of Indian women. The group feels that women have a great responsibility during this period of racial tension in Trinidad. Its thesis is simple; because women, particularly Indian women, are used as chattels in the rivalry between Indians and Africans, the struggle against male oppression must necessarily involve a struggle against racial polarisation. They argue that a more integrated women's movement would lead to a more integrated Trinidad and Tobago. This suggestion marks the most recent development in debates on race in Trinidad and it is part of the emerging attention of feminists to Indian/African relations. Its focus on Indian women and their potential to intervene in debates on race, is a radical and progressive departure from the traditional parameters of the discourse.

Representations of the radical intervention that dougla feminism stages have so far remained largely uninterrogated, due in part to the limited work produced by Indian women writers. Now, for the first time, there is noticeable and coherent literary production from Indian women that allows the analysis of their perspective on Indian/African relations. In the following chapters I return to fiction to explore how literary representations elaborate the critical link between Indian women's gendered resistance and their resistance to ethnic polarity and thus can be usefully read as explorations of dougla feminism. First I focus on representations of Indian womanhood in Trinidad fiction and explore how these representations converse with aspects of the system of Indian gender relations. I then address representations of resistance by Indian women and locate how the emerging body of fiction by Indian women twin their representations of Indian women's gendered and ethnic resistance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Runaway Doolahin: Resistance and the Sita Model of Indian Womanhood

In this chapter and the next I examine representations of Indian womanhood in order to explore how Indian women's writings address Indian women's negotiation of their gendered and ethnic identity. The fiction considered in this chapter provides elaborations of four broad, but not historically discrete, approaches to representations of Indian womanhood. There is short fiction from the 1940s and 1950s in which Indian womanhood is so overdetermined by representations of chaste and dutiful 'Sita-models' that even when authors try to write the Indian woman's resistance, they succeed in consolidating the Sita image. The period from the 1950s through to the 1990s is sprinkled with longer works, novels for the most part, that address Indian women's resistance to community and familial expectations. Overlapping these two broad periods are works that self-consciously advocate a return to the Sita ideal and works by Indian women themselves in which resistance emerges as a privileged theme. My interrogation of these four approaches will provide the organising axis for this chapter.

Early attempts at representations of the Indian woman used the form of romantic fiction and foregrounded arranged marriages as a feature of the Indian gender system through which to stage conflict. Trinidadian Ernest A. Carr's 'The Snake Charmer', published in the Guardian Weekly Magazine in 1947, uses this form and identifies arranged marriages as the location of conflict for the young Doocanee. In this story, Carr associates Doocanee's resistance with creolisation and with the African community, a point that I will return to in the next chapter, and he portrays the Indian woman as the young, victimised maiden, her husband as the unqualified villain, and her dougla lover, Popo Green, as the hero who defeats the villain and rescues his lover. Carr stages a conflict between Doocanee's desire to choose her husband and her sister's insistence on a financially expedient match with the lusting villain but then elides those conflicts by resorting to heroic action and an agreeable resolution. There is no sustained interest in Doocannee's subjectivity. Indeed, she disappears from the story as soon as Popo Green takes her away. Carr portrays her sympathetically but the sympathy that the story encourages only works to elevate the hero, Popo Green, who rescues her from her culturally-determined life of toil and servitude to the old and lusting Kobraman.

A short story by an Indian woman, published one year later also in the <u>Guardian Weekly Magazine</u>, uses the same form, stages a similar conflict, and moves towards a similar resolution. Mary D. Kallo's 1948 'Doolarie' tells of the young Indian maiden who wants to marry the Muslim boy, Hamid, but whose family chooses the son of a rich farmer as her husband. Kallo stages a Hindu/Muslim conflict and tries also to comment on how class, religion and colour all constitute the parameters of Doolarie's containment. Doolarie's family awaits a large dowry before agreeing to her marriage; her suitor is the son of a rich farmer. Her father, in an effort to convince her that the marriage they have arranged is acceptable, describes her suitor as 'rich...fair and nice'. When it is revealed that he is the groom, the converted Hamid says curiously 'you see, not only Mohammedans are fair'. Clearly class, religion and colour are among the factors that determine Doolarie's life but Kallo is unable to elaborate on this theme while using the traditional form of romantic fiction. She elides the Hindu/Muslim conflict by Hamid's improbable conversion to Hinduism and despite her portrait of Doolarie's rebellion, she reverts to representing Doolarie as dutiful and chaste, conforming to formal conventions. We are told that Doolarie has a 'rebellious spirit', evidenced by her clandestine relationship with Hamid, by her challenging the taboo of religious endogamy, and by her agreeing to elope with him. Indeed the story opens with her rebelling, leaving home at night, gliding among coconut palms, her 'eyes glittering like stars'. Yet Kallo also characterises her as the young, obedient Indian woman with 'dark eyes and dusky brown complexion' who 'possessed all the shyness of her sex with some boldness of youth and unsuppressed spirit'. Nevertheless, Kallo's story is an early, bold attempt by an Indian woman to represent some of the conflicts staged in the text.

The form of romantic short fiction secures the representation of Indian women within the same parameters that the stories seem to challenge. Kenneth Newton's representation of Meena as a rural maiden, soft-spoken, diffident and demure, 'holding her orhini veil against her chest' though appearing ten years after the representations of Doocanee and Doolarie, are wholly consistent with those 'Sita-models'. In Newton's story 'Seeds of Wrath', read on the BBC Caribbean Voices programme in 1957, Meena is invested with the desire to challenge her father's expectations and elope with Ramlal but constrained by her desire for community approval - 'An' what people go say...They go say I is a runaway doolahin' (Newton 1957, 4). The form of the short romantic fiction relies on these representations. Meena, Doocanee and Doolarie must be constructed as models of victimised, long-suffering, devoted Indian womanhood in order for them to be sympathetic characters, worthy of masculine heroic endeavour.

While this is true for early representations of Indian women it is also applicable to texts outside of this period. Ian McDonald's poem 'Betrothal', for example, was published as late as 1994 and represents the same conflict, in the Guyanese context, while reinforcing the fifteen-year-old's 'Sita-like' qualities. She is 'tender, good and submissive' and yet refuses to marry someone of her family's choosing. Her resistance to their expectations is not furious but evident in her 'quiet downward look'. The poem anticipates her self-immolation if her parents insist on her marriage to the financially secure son of a goldsmith. Like Meena, Doocanee and Doolarie, the young Indian woman in this poem encourages our sympathy because she is 'tender, good and submissive', the innocent victim, whose fate in left in the balance, unlike the resourceful and self-possessed Jaillin of The Hummingbird Tree, McDonald's best known work. The Hummingbird Tree (1969), a coming of age novel set in 1940s rural Trinidad, traces the development of the young white boy Alan and his friendship with the Indian village children, Kaiser and Jaillin. The novel again locates romantic love as the site of conflict without resolution as Alan and Jaillin's childhood love for each other cannot be realised because of the power relations that manifest through class and colour hierarchies in colonial Trinidad. While this novel develops one aspect of romantic involvements between white men and Indian women by depicting the problems and dilemmas that emerge, other aspects are developed in Clem Maharaj's contemporary fictional work The Dispossessed (1992) in which Indian female sexuality is exploited by the white overseer in return for economic favours. Samuel Selvon also addressed the theme in 'Johnson and the Cascadura' (1957), and returned in Turn Again Tiger one year later to demonstrate how the process of Tiger's developing self-identification necessitates that he confronts and exorcises his desire for the white wife of the estate overseer. The conflicts generated by these relationships are unavoidable and the texts provide offer no imaginative solution to these cross-cultural encounters.

More nuanced representations of Indian womanhood emerge in the fiction, novels for the most part, published from the 1950s through to the 1990s. The form of the novel and experiments with it by Caribbean writers seeking to broaden representations of Caribbean reality in the period of nationalism no doubt help to account for these changes, but other likely explanations can be found in the changing realities of Indian women's lives. Indian women secured greater access to formal education in the 1950s; the American base in Trinidad during the Second World War and the lure of the 'Yankee' dollar attracted both Indian and African women to Trinidad's capital, Port of Spain, to work as prostitutes and to develop a taste for American styles and values; the experiences during the 1970s period of labour agitation

involved Indian women from the sugar cane industry (Rajack-Talley 1999, 190) much like the heroic involvement of Indian women in the 1930s Labour Riots (Reddock 1994a); generational shifts in perspectives among younger women for whom education and different degrees of economic independence make it easier for them to disappoint family expectations; and feminism and the growth of the women's movement must all contribute to the different representations of Indian womanhood that appear in the fiction over these four decades.

Seepersad Naipaul's The Adventures of Gurudeva, first published in 1943 but with greater circulation following publication of the revised 1976 edition by Andre Deutsch, is the transition novel, caught stylistically and ideologically between the romantic genre of the short fiction I referred to earlier and the more sustained novels of a slightly later period.[1] This episodic novel, autobiographical in parts, is based on village reality in the 1940s and 1950s. V.S. Naipaul, his son, describes the stories as a 'unique record of the life of the Indian or Hindu community in Trinidad in the first 50 years of the century' (1976, 16). The characters in the story 'move from a comprehension of the old India in which the community is at first embedded to an understanding of the colonial Trinidad which defines itself as their background, into which they then begin to merge' (V.S. Naipaul 1976, 16). Seepersad Naipaul himself was part of the process of change and his son usefully places the stories in The Adventures of Gurudeva in two stages - the early sections written between 1941-1942 in which Gurudeva becomes a village strongman and which reads like the beginning of a rural epic, and the later sections written ten years later in which Gurudeva's Indian world is less stable because the world outside the village could no longer be denied (V.S. Naipaul 1976, 18).

Some aspects of the stories read like a pastoral romance, others are broadly satirical, and they point to a more complicated system of gender relations among rural Indians than is suggested by singular emphasis on arranged marriages. Seepersad Naipaul broadly portrays Indian masculine authority through his representation of the unidimensionally brutal Gurudeva and other male characters in the text. As far as representations of women and femininity are concerned, Ratni's father, Pundit Sooklal, for example, compliments himself for raising a daughter 'who could put up with everything' (Seepersad Naipaul 1976, 33). Similarly, Seepersad Naipaul represents Indian female subservience with broad satire - Ratni is a bride at twelve who is brutalised by her husband and her in-laws. She seldom laughed because Gurudeva would not let her. He felt laughter was 'bad manners in a newly married

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[1] All page references from The Adventures of Gurudeva are taken from the 1976 Andre Deutsch edition.

girl; and if she sometimes forgot and did laugh out, he promptly silenced her with a look, if not with a slap'. If she cried, her mother-in-law considered her sulky and trying 'the embodiment of ill-omen in the house' (Seepersad Naipaul 1976, 25). The village panchayat sanctions her expulsion from Gurudeva's household on the basis that she was unable to bear a son.[2] Ratni herself believed she was in the wrong – 'She knew she ought to bear sons; she knew she could bear no children' (Seepersad Naipaul 1976, 140).

Seepersad Naipaul's representation however, introduces other features of the Indian gender system that are significant to point to here. Indian women's collusion in their own oppression emerges in these stories as a prominent feature of gender relations. Ratni's mother - like Doocanee's sister, Mungaree, who encourages an ill-fated match between her sister and the sadistic Kobraman in Ernest Carr's 'The Snake Charmer' (1947) - believed that Gurudeva's brutal treatment of her daughter was inescapable, and though she was sorrowful, 'hardly put in a word of protest'. After a particularly severe beating, Ratni is left lying bruised and unconscious in the front yard. Phulmati, weeping for her daughter, composes herself and says bravely and understandingly, 'well, it is her karma; I gave her birth, but for her karma I am not responsible'. Seepersad Naipaul thus explains Ratni's lack of agency by drawing attention to the community's gendered cultural values that Phulmati transmits.

In his rendering of these more complicated aspects of Indian gender relations in the historical context of change occasioned by the American military base in Trinidad, Seepersad Naipaul represents, just as broadly, the changing face of Indian womanhood through Daisy. Daisy is a riotous character, staged in stark contrast to the mass of other Indian women in the world of the stories. Seepersad Naipaul offers Daisy's westernisation as one key to her alternative understanding of her gendered subjectivity. She plucked her brows, painted her lips, rouged her cheeks, wore high heels and 'tight frocks that clean showed up the shape and contours of her body; and she used brassieres that jutted out her breasts in an aggressive, forward thrust' (Seepersad Naipaul 1976, 129). Instead of covering her head with an *orhini*, she styled her hair, and periodically went to town for new hair-dos. She walked with a 'swoosh', as though she was stepping on springs. Daisy's unabashed delight in her sexuality and her association with the American base and American soldiers suggest that her character is based on the hundreds of Indian and African women who flocked to the bases to work as prostitutes for American servicemen. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour the Americans

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[2] King Darasatha in the Ramayana, the father of God Rama, had three wives living in the same house. His polygamy is justified on the basis of the fact that he had no son and had three queens in the hope that one of them would bear him a son.

established military bases in Trinidad. Historically, the arrival of the Americans brought American currency to Trinidad during a period of economic depression. Sparrow's signature calypso, 'Jean and Dinah', is a direct reference to this period of prostitution, Jean and Dinah referring to the prostitutes selling their bodies 'around the corner'. The song also reflects the effort at 'ego retrieval' (Rohlehr 1988, 261) among Trinidadian men in the line 'the Yankees gone and Sparrow take over now'.

Daisy brings this outside world into the village; her American boyfriends brought her home on evenings in their jeeps, she wore slacks and would climb into the servicemen's jeeps and disappear for days at a time. She began her trek to independence by taking a job as a saleswoman in a Chaguanas store. She seems to have found good fortune with the American servicemen, but after the war, she finds her financial independence threatened. She returns to the village boys, whom she had contemptuously shunned and snubbed and succeeds in attracting Gurudeva's attention. Seepersad Naipaul uses Daisy as comeuppance for Gurudeva whom she eventually deserts in favour of her fierce independence, taking undisguised delight in her notoriety, independence and overt sexuality. Through Daisy, Seepersad Naipaul represents a different destiny for Indian women; Daisy achieves independence, not just another sort of dependence.

This connection between westernisation and Indian women's resistance to their communities' prescriptions of womanhood, is made again in Shiva Naipaul's portrayal of Sushila in The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1973). Although this novel, written by Seepersad Naipaul's son, appeared much later than The Adventures of Gurudeva, the similarities in the portraits of Sushila and Daisy suggest a literary resemblance in the Naipaul family. As Daisy is used as comeuppance to the domineering and abusive Gurudeva, so too Sushila is comeuppance for Egbert Ramsaran. As Daisy is used as a revenge device for the domineering and abusive Gurudeva, in the same way Sushila brings comeuppance for Egbert Ramsaran. As Daisy is staged in contrast to portraits of long-suffering Indian womanhood, so too Sushila is the antithesis of Rani. Like Daisy, Sushila takes pride in her sexuality; she uses brilliant lipsticks, wore short tight bodices that exposed her stomach, and flaunted herself shamelessly. By the age of sixteen she had already run away twice to escape 'the constraints of the Settlement' and 'taste the freedom that lay beyond its borders' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 74). She scandalised everyone by becoming pregnant while still unmarried 'pregnancy, far from being a "lesson", had been her emancipation: she was a full-fledged woman after it' (Shiva Naipaul 1982, 76).

Whereas Daisy's resistance is located in the westernisation of the American military presence, Sushila's resistance to her community's expectations is located in urban Trinidad. She would disappear for weeks and visit her daughter, Sita, at irregular intervals. No one knew exactly whether she was in Port of Spain or San Fernando but it was somewhere in the urban distance. Sushila's biological female identity is her destiny. Her primary purchase is her good looks and her independence is attached to the benefits she derives from this. When her thighs and breasts begin to sag, she becomes inconsolable. In an uncontrolled fit one night, gripped by the realisation that she was ageing and therefore losing her purchase, Sushila lamented her gendered subjectivity 'to be a woman, that is the hardest thing in the world. I should have been born a man'(Shiva Naipaul 1982, 234).

Like his father, Shiva Naipaul stages his portrait of Sushila against a background of other 'Sita' portraits of Indian womanhood. But whereas Daisy is allowed to resolutely walk away from Gurudeva and the Hindu agenda of containment for Indian women, Sushila deteriorates and disappears aimlessly into the night. Indeed the closest Shiva Naipaul comes to representing Indian women who are successful in re-negotiating the circumstances of their lives is his presentation of Mrs Lutchman in Fireflies (1970) published three years before The Chip-Chip Gatherers. Mrs Lutchman is the central character in this novel and is a point of entry into the Indian woman's reality and into the stilted Khoja extended family unit whose fortunes and influence as the leading Hindu family on the island are declining. Her experience as a female descendant of the Khoja family is explained in the metaphor of fireflies trapped in a jar, dispensable, without sustenance, and in service of larger and stronger forces. Her desire to escape from the jar is expressed in frequent commercial eruptions and she does eventually succeed in building an affection between herself and her husband. But like Sushila, Mrs Lutchman is not allowed to realise her potential in the novel. After the death of her husband, the departure of both her sons, the necessary sale of her house and the failure of all her small commercial enterprises, Mrs Lutchman had completed her life cycle. She reviewed her life – 'a marriage so many of whose happiness she had had to invent for herself and which…had ended on the brink of success; a son virtually dead to her; the house that had to be sold; and now Bhaskar…on the verge of leaving her…She would be ending her days a remote and curious figure, lost in the house of the Ramnaths' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 407).

The links between westernisation/urbanisation and Indian women's resistance which can be seen in the Naipauls' fiction find perhaps their finest fictional rendering in Samuel Selvon's A Brighter Sun (1952). This novel provides one of the most enduring portraits of Indian womanhood that emerged in this period. Appearing first in A Brighter Sun (1952) and

six years later in <u>Turn Again Tiger</u> (1958), Urmilla is a young village bride who moves to Barataria, half way between town and country, between Indian and African worlds and she matures from the abused 'Sita-like' model into a self-possessed symbol of creativity who is able to negotiate a relationship with Tiger on equal terms. In this novel Selvon dramatises changing gender relations as part of his focus on the changing lifestyles of Indians in Trinidad. As Tiger reassesses prescriptions for masculinity, so too Urmilla renegotiates her relationship with Tiger. The novel identifies westernisation, modernisation, urbanisation and creolisation as factors which all influence Tiger's and Urmilla's struggle to negotiate their gendered ethnic identities within an emergent nationalism. Selvon's remarkable achievement in this novel has been adequately treated elsewhere (Nasta 1988; Ramchand 1985; Poynting 1986) and I will expand on the relationship between Urmilla and her African neighbour, Rita, in the next chapter. In particular I want to reinforce here the significance of Selvon's portrait of Indian womanhood in this novel. Urmilla moves from oppressed village maiden to feminist organiser within six years of real time, from the publication of <u>A Brighter Sun</u> (1952) to <u>Turn Again Tiger</u> (1958), and before the 1960s second wave of feminism. The women of Five Rivers, while washing at the riverside, nominate Urmilla to lead them in protest against shopkeeper Otto who credits rum to their husbands. The spontaneous discussion found support from all the women and Urmilla found a new strength in the company of other women: 'Urmilla...thinking she never had any time with Tiger, and her inward shyness completely gone in the company of women, so that she found herself with the strongest voice' (Selvon 1958, 100). The other women too, felt a new strength:

> This was something quite out of the ordinary for the village women, and as they thought about it they became conscious and excited, and suddenly felt new emotions and new thoughts. "One man against all the women, Otto bound to give in!" They began making jokes at one another, as if the idea had sparked off their tongues and given them a new freedom and a new feeling...All these expressions of unity – and there was even one or two shouts about the rights of women, coming from the dormant depths of some mind – Urmilla felt strengthened and determined (Selvon 1958, 100-101).

The protest is short-lived. Otto concedes to the women's demands but all the women except Urmilla and Berta, Otto's wife, are beaten by their husbands that night: 'It was the first and last uprising of the women in Five Rivers. No one was imaginative enough to give the incident a short title, and later on, men referred to it as The-night-we-wash-the women-with-

licks, and the women spoke of The-time-we-make-Otto-stop-trusting-rum' (Selvon 1958, 110). Selvon's language of feminist consciousness anticipates the consciousness-raising among Caribbean women in the 1960s. The short-lived protest, while not achieving much long-term benefit for the women of Five Rivers, sparks a confidence in Urmilla that later manifests in her insistence that she and Tiger continue the marriage on different terms. Urmilla's return to Barataria as a mature and self-confident woman is perhaps Selvon's feeling that this early feminist consciousness is better suited to semi-urban Trinidad. I also want to point out that despite Selvon's accomplishment in representing Indian womanhood, it would be another nine years before a portrait of a triumphant Indian woman appeared in Trinidad fiction. Seepersad Naipaul's Daisy leaves Gurudeva for an uncertain future, Shiva Naipaul's Sushila deteriorates and Selvon's Urmilla succeeds, but Ismith Khan's Binti in his 1961 The Jumbie Bird triumphs.[3]

Binti is the symbol of resistance in this novel. One of the noticeable features of Khan's representation of Binti is that unlike other literary representations of Indian women, Binti is an old woman, grandmother of the young protagonist, Jamini. In this way, Khan creates a portrait of the stoic Indian matriarch, a figure that has reappeared only in the 1990s and in the fiction by Indian women writers. Rosanne Kanhai's attempts to recuperate the word *bhowjee* (literally translated from Hindi as sister-in-law) in her short story 'MaCommere' (1995a) to describe mature Indian womanhood is one such example. Ramabai Espinet's 'Tamani: a cane cutting woman' (1991a, 11-12), along with others in her anthology Nuclear Seasons (1991a) such as 'For Grace My Mother' and 'An Ageable Woman' are other examples of representations by Indian women writers that celebrate the endurance and resourcefulness of Indian women throughout their history in Trinidad. These representations at once subvert the long-suffering 'Sita' models of Indian womanhood and transform them into models of heroic endurance.

It is useful to note that these recent representations of heroic, mature Indian womanhood appear in the works by women writers who are at the same time actively engaged in the women's movement and whose non-fiction considerations of Indian women's gendered subordination are staged as a challenge to the Afro-centric orientation of Caribbean feminism. Kanhai's fiction must be contextualised by her thoughts on the women's movement and dougla feminism (1995; 1999a; 1999b); Espinet's poetry must be similarly contextualised within the arena of feminist politics (Espinet 1990a; 1993). Both writers contribute to the emerging focus on an heroic Indian feminist mythology in which the academic works of other

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[3]All page references to this novel are taken from the 1985 Longman edition.

Indian women writers - Neesha Haniff (1999), Pat Mohammed (1999; 1996), Janis Kanhai-Winter (1999), and Theresa A. Rajack-Talley (1999) - are also participating.

Ismith Khan's Binti is a much earlier, male-authored representation of this heroically resistant Indian matriarch. Binti is a portrait of an Indian woman successfully negotiating her economic independence and challenging the prescriptions of the family patriarch. The novel focuses on the experiences of an Indian Muslim family whose patriarch, Kale Khan, articulates the desire of members of the former indentured community to return to their homeland. Kale Khan is a Pathan, inheritor of a fiercely independent, warrior tradition, who courageously resists British colonialism during the Husay Riots in Trinidad.[4] He keeps alive his community's desire for repatriation and, in fact leads a movement for repatriation from Trinidad and from Indians' experience as temporary, exploited migrants. To Kale Khan and others, the desire to return home is a desire to retrieve their dignity and manhood that was lost during the indentureship experience and which has kept them in this foreign place after indentureship.[5] But the Indian community is represented as changing, its members trying to negotiate a relationship with creole culture without repudiating their own cultural heritage. It takes three generations of Pathan men – Kale Khan, his son Rahim, and his grandson Jamini - to reckon with the possibilities of a future in Trinidad. Binti, Kale Khan's estranged wife, emerging from the same tradition and having suffered the double effects of colonial exploitation and Kale Khan's patriarchal domination, accomplishes this in one generation and with dignified resourcefulness.

Binti, like Kale Khan, remembers Hindustan and she too dreams of her happier past. Although suitably controlled, even repressed, in terms of her outward appearance, we are given glimpses of a less composed and submissive subjectivity. Inside she cries for the life she has lost and the happiness of her youth when she dreamt of her handsome husband and when she eloped with Kale Khan – 'She cried that night…but she wept without a tear, without a sigh, without a rise and fall of her bosom' (Khan 1985, 38). Like Kale Khan, she too dreams of returning home – 'play on, dream on, for when it's done, I shall awake in Hindustan with jasmins in my hair' (Khan 1985, 38). And like Kale Khan, she possesses the Pathan fire

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[4] Stewart Brown explains in his introduction to the 1985 Longman edition of this novel that the Pathans were a mountain-dwelling people whose ancestral homelands straddle what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan. They are renowned for their courage and military prowess; they resisted the British in India and were also involved in fighting the Russians in Afghanistan. The 1884 Hosay Riots in Trinidad remains crucial in the history of Indian anti-colonial resistance in the Caribbean. For a detailed account of the Hosay Riots see Kelvin Singh Bloodstained Tombs: The Muharran Massacre (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988).

[5] Brown writes in his introduction that this novel is the only one that examines in any depth the issues of indenture and repatriation for the Indian community.

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which manifests as she commandeers the graveside attendants during Kale Khan's funeral –
'although her voice was not with great power or strength, the old woman's posture…made her
seem suddenly to possess the fire that Kale Khan had had in him' (Khan 1985, 180). Unlike
Kale Khan, however, Binti negotiates, not a way back, but a way forward. She walks through
the streets of Port-of-Spain with two-gallon drums, a funnel and a tin cup selling coconut oil;
later she starts selling coals and gets a recipe for vinegar so she could bottle it and sell that too
during her Sunday rounds. In this way she establishes and maintains her economic
independence from Kale Khan who would prefer to 'give her somet'ing every week' and so
prevent her from walking 'all over town disgracing the family name' (Khan 1985, 24). Kale
Khan had given away their daughter at the Cawnpore Railway Station before leaving India for
Trinidad because he felt 'girl children are too much trouble' (Khan 1985, 10). Only once in
the novel does she allude to the lost child, although such passing mention is probably an
indication of the novel's interest in depicting the crude sexism of the patriarch. In Trinidad
Binti successfully defies Kale Khan prescriptions of Indian womanhood by establishing her
independence.

Binti achieves all this with her dignity intact and with an assured balance – she wears
a heavy silver bracelet 'for the world to know that she was a woman of respect, of a higher cut
and class; that she laboured and vended in the streets not from poverty, nor want, but because
she set her life in balance, and made it hold its equilibrium' (Khan 1985, 25). This
equilibrium that Binti has achieved manifests in her reconciliation with the dying Kale Khan
and positions her to restore the family after his death. Stewart Brown describes her as the
most sympathetic and 'whole' character in the novel. Not embittered by the trials of her life,
she is 'a symbol of creative energy', suggesting by her 'energy and independence that there
are ways for individuals to adapt to changing conditions without losing their cultural identity'
(Brown 1985, xi).

Binti is an early portrait of the self-possessed and resistant Indian woman who is
prominent in the recent work by Indian woman writers. Indeed female resistance is a
privileged theme in their works. These Indian women writers seem to set themselves the task
of subverting the monolithic 'Sita' representation while also addressing how Indian women
negotiate elements of the 'Sita' stereotype that remain constitutive of their experience. Ruth
Sawh, born in Trinidad and now living in North America, is a young writer whose work has
been published in the Trinidad magazine The New Voices. Her 1988 short story 'The
Wedding Invitation' depicts the Sita portrait of Indian female identity as an aspect of a

cobwebbed and decaying Indian tradition. Leela, the young Indian woman without voice and without agency, is pictured:

> sitting on the living room sofa amidst many dull brass wares locked behind wooden and glass cabinets with faded plastic flowers hanging from the roof or bundled together…An over abundant feather arrangement squatted on the dining table…leaving no room for eating…Artistic webs and dust…Brightly coloured pictures of Hindu Gods and Goddesses between black and white portraits of family members decorated what space was left…What air, if any at all managed to reach the living room through brown velvet curtains, was second class- already breathed out by men and animals…and through the back door came what seemed to be the scent of cow dung (Sawh 1988, 6).

Unlike Leela, the male character, Mano, has voice with which he articulates dreams of a different life:

> I was tired of cows, cows, cows…My house and surroundings I had decided was to be free of cows, dasheen bush clumps and in laws. My backyard would be perfumed with the scent of orange trees in bloom…I would have a swimming pool with diving board, large umbrellas that shaded curly, white wrought iron chairs beneath strategically placed palms and flood lights, a barbecue grill and of course, a kitchen that opened out at poolside." He also wants changes in his family life – 'Extended family hinged on to the sides of my house would never do for me' (Sawh, 1988, 7).

Mano exercises the prerogative of the privileged male and refuses to marry. He imagines a more 'modern' life and although Leela cannot – she is simply married off to someone else – Sawh tries to represent her limited identity by showing the decaying tradition that overdetermines Leela's choices.

In Sawh's story, the Sita representation of Indian female identity that is under scrutiny is located within an old, traditional cultural heritage. Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen, a Trinidadian poet whose anthology Ancestry (1997a) contains some exciting new poems, locates her poem 'The Painting' in present-day Trinidad. Ramkissoon-Chen continues to live and work in Trinidad. This poem references the commemoration of Indian Arrival Day, celebrated as an official national holiday for the first time in 1995:

> What does she portray, this woman

with child and water pail?
Arms torque her neck
naked limbs washed
in standpipe water.
And the makeshift pail is an empty
oil tin. A wide handle hooks it-
inventions from discards of her need.

Yet she walks through the veil
of the dusk, nimble and erect
firm like the concrete waterstep.
In her rustic hut, her spouse's
parents await her
to fill their brass *lotas* with water
her arms needled with tattoos
to serve them.

With drinks in crystal glass
we toast her, commemorate
her *arrival*. She lingers in the soul
of the artist's work (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997c, 98).

The poem situates itself in relation to the discourse on Indian arrival during commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians to Trinidad. In its articulation of the contradiction between Indian women's reality and the picturesque representation, the poem suggests that Indian women are outside the celebratory tone of the Indian arrival discourse in Trinidad. Servility is tattooed on the Indian woman's body, her veil and torque are metaphors of ethnic and gendered oppression. In the last stanza, the poet makes explicit reference to the need to remember and to represent Indian women of Trinidad's past, and yet she seeks to mobilise the static images of servitude and duty that have previously characterised such attempts.

In 'The Unforgiving Father' (1997d, 13), Ramkissoon-Chen shows an Indian woman, Rohini, deliberately challenging her community's expectations and submitting to the consequences. The poem is no romantic celebration of free choice nor does it perform to

feminist mythology. Rather it stages the tragedy of ruptured familial and community ties and the anguish of father and daughter:

> 'Rohini, daughter! O Rohini!'
> the responses
> were but echoes
> of his calls.
> And the nightclouds closed in
> like sealed lips.

> The birds were quiet in roost-
> only the stifled cry of a toad
> in a snake's mouth.

> Through the dark streets he sought her
> with hurried paces
> to the right, and to the left
> he sought her.
> A rustic on the bridge called out
> 'She's run off, sir; she's gone
> to the other village, with Sethi's son.'

> Back in the hut he stood
> a bent stem swaying
> in the winds.
> He added a drop
> to the goblet she had brought
> from the well.
> He drained his eyes
> like the upturned pot she had scrubbed,
> of all tears.

> She loved her paramour
> shamed thus, her father.

He severed her like a bough

for woodfire.

And he would not smear on his forehead

the ash of her regrets.

She hid among the corn.

Rohini his daughter hid to watch

his bier as it passed

to its rest.

The corn leaves bowed.

And the long tassels

dropped with her tears (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997d, 13).

Rohini estranges herself from her father and village community and although Ramkissoon-Chen does not write any romantic or heroic resolution to this situation in her poem, neither does she represent the daughter's rebellion as straightforward or painless. The twinned tears of father and daughter indicate the emotional cost of such rebellion for all involved and the painful cultural codes that link estrangement to death.

One of the most significant aspects of gender relations among Indians is the threatening inevitability of violence against women. This aspect of Indian gender relations is a ubiquitous theme in representations of the Indian community in Caribbean fiction. When Urmilla laughs at her husband's coughing attempt to smoke a cigarette, 'it flashed in Tiger's mind that this was rudeness and that he should slap her into respect for him' (Selvon 1971 [1952], 12).[6] Tiger considers that 'all of that [violence] was good for a man to do his wife sometimes' (Selvon 1971, 145). His beating causes Urmilla to deliver a stillborn son. In Turn Again Tiger, Tiger has matured and restrains himself from beating Urmilla, but the other women in Five Rivers village are not so lucky. The night after their rebellion against their husbands' excessive drinking, 'women wailed and screamed in Five Rivers as the men put them in their places with blows left and right...Wives ran out of their houses and consoled one another in the open, crying and embracing. It was as if all the men had gone mad' (Selvon 1979 [1958], 88).[7] Shiva Naipaul similarly represents the violence against Mrs Lutchman by her husband in Fireflies (1970). Mr Lutchman's violence is encouraged by their neighbour

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[6] All page references to A Brighter Sun are taken from the Longman 1971 edition.
[7] All page references to Turn Again Tiger are taken from the 1979 Heinemann edition.

Naresh – 'That's the way to treat them...A few more beatings like that and she go know she place' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 32). Kobraman, in Ernest Carr's 'The Snake Charmer' (1947), 'seemed to gain a certain terrifying satisfaction from her [Doocanee's] cries of pain' and rape hangs in the tension of the story. The fact that gendered violence against Indian women emerges in all of these texts suggests that these representations are in some ways documentary, which does not obstruct the condemnation of this violence by the authors.

Indeed, these literary representations address what has historically been an overt feature of gender relations among Indians in Trinidad (Brereton 1981; Reddock 1994a; Mohammed 1998a). Although no data exists on which to make considered conclusions, I would guess, along with other observers in the women's movement in Trinidad, that violence against Indian women is disproportionately high compared to other ethnic groups in the society. The most extensive work conducted thus far is B. Shiw Prasad's 1999 analysis of violence among Indians in Guyana. Based on research conducted during the 1980s, she finds that violence within Indian marriages is ritualised to the extent that it conforms to a social script which has clear rules concerning who is permitted to use violence in a marriage and who is not (Shiw Prasad 1999, 50). Indian women, Shiw Prasad notes, seem to hold the disquieting view that the violence they experience is:

> something that goes with the territory of being married. They regard it as something *they* have to deal with in ways that would not threaten the stability of the family. Some women described their abuse as *karma* or fate and therefore something they have to learn to live with, if there is no hope of changing their husbands' behaviour (1999, 46).

And because open aggression by Indian women is socially taboo, Shiw Prasad finds that Indian women generally seek conciliation rather than retaliate against this violence (1999, 48, 46). In this regard abused women use non-violent means such as verbal abuse, withdrawal techniques, and complaining to relatives and religious officials (Prasad 1999, 45). Prasad's findings are tentative and there is clearly a need for more research on violence in Indian households. My own experience as an activist against domestic violence from within the non-governmental sector in Trinidad, suggests that we can cautiously extrapolate from Prasad's research that a similar situation obtains in Trinidad. Given this context it was perhaps inevitable then that violence against women would emerge as a privileged theme in Indian women's writing.

Sheila Ramdass, an Indian woman born in Trinidad and now living in Toronto, returns again and again to violence in the Indian community in her poetry. Ramdass is a new voice in Indian women's writing and the poems considered here are contained in her first collection. The collection wanders loosely in its focus, a feature that registers with Trinidadian author Austin C. Clarke as an appreciated universalism – 'Miss Ramdass…is a poet of universal application, dispelling any assumption that her work applies only to one cultural-ethnic group…it is precisely this universality that makes her work so appealing' (1995, 15). Nevertheless, there are several poems in the collection that defy this universalism and indeed demonstrate the directness and control Ramdass achieves when she addresses particular aspects of her gendered and ethnic experience. 'I am Not a Coolie', 'Illegitimacy' and 'Papa' are some examples. In 'My Mothers Wept', she historicises male violence against Indian women:

> my indo-Caribbean fathers
> soaked the remnants
> of their souls
> that was left
> from the colonial purge
> in rum shops across
> the land
>
> while my mothers wept
> from drunken kicks
> wrongly delivered and swift
> even as they bent
> to kindle mud fires
> chulhahs with half-burnt wood
>
> or as they washed dishes
> in galvanised buckets
> of well water
> with coconut fibre
> and ashes

and even in their busy sorrows

my youthful mothers

never failed

to wipe salty tears

from their children's cheeks

and their overworked

fingers

never failed

to build temples

full of dreams

that would keep

their children dry and clean

in future days

always (Ramdass 1995, 58).

Although the representation of male violence is strong in this poem, it is also crucial to note that Ramdass devotes far more space to her telling of women's strength, domestic endurance and their creative and imaginative building of future lives. The poem constructs heroic Indian womanhood by historicising the endurance and creativity of Indian women, in contrast to Indian men who 'soaked the remnants/of their souls…in rumshops across/the land' (Ramdass 1995, 58). In 'Sita' Ramdass makes direct engagement with the Sita archetype in order to focus on its connection with violence against women:

Their union was

a replica of ancient vows

taken by Rama and Sita

true to her vows

he exacted from her

the perfection

as in womanhood

exemplified by Sita

and she became Sita

and she in turn
expected from him
a Rama

but he failed

he did not want godly graces
was contented with lower status

yet
he tested her
by chulhah fire

and punished her patient nature
with exile
in a forest of sorrows (Ramdass 1995, 64).

Again the imbalance between men and women in the union of marriage is highlighted by the mythic allusions as well as the pathos of the imagery used to depict violence and disinterest. Ramdass's focus is on both Indian feminine and masculine identity but masculine identity stands accused of breaching the contract of gender relations. 'For Peace' is actually dedicated to a woman named Phulmatee whom Ramdass describes in the poem's footnote as being 'trapped by her culture and murdered by her spouse':

Phulmatee,
you would walk
up and down my street
looking for something:
perhaps a friend
or opening for living

Phulmatee,
not understanding your
imprisonment, I condemned you
for wasting your time
leaving your schooling
for not working.

Phulmatee,
I was disturbed
when I heard
you were married
by arrangement, to a man
who was a rogue.

Phulmatee,
I was very sorry
when I learned
that you had died
from a fractured skull
inflicted by the rogue.

Phulmatee,
I weep and weep,
with anger and grief
whenever I remember
the high price
you paid for peace (1995, 56).

In this poem Ramdass draws attention to Indian women's collusion in their own oppression, a point that I will return to shortly, by apologising to the dead Phulmatee for her condemnation. This poem which draws on auto/biographical forms, seems to tell two stories of Indian womanhood as well as narrating the space between the two. While the poet acts as observer, first scornful and then mournful of Phulmatee's life, Phulmatee herself is as an unknown

subject whose familiar and tragic death can only be represented from the outside by a woman more educated and liberated than her.

A new aspect of violence between men and women that is emerging for the first time in the fiction of Indian women writers is women's violence against their husbands. Although this does appear in other fiction, it is usually as comic relief as in Clem Maharaj's The Dispossessed (1992) where Rookmin beating her husband in the village rumshop is part of the village animation. In Ramabai Espinet's 'Barred- Trinidad 1987', published in 1990, the subject is treated very seriously. The recurring images of this narrative are the cowering, unnamed protagonist, gripped by fear of an intruder and being trapped in enclosed spaces. In the first section of the story the intruder is unknown and the narrating protagonist jams a chair against the door; she says she is trying to approach closure which for her is 'the completion of whatever which is necessary for living and which remains like a door perpetually, uneasily, left ajar' (Espinet 1990b, 14). The protagonist of the second section of the story is aware of her Indianness and feels the distance between her new home in Trinidad and her original home in India. She is aware of her journey across the sea from India to Trinidad which 'has not been easy and many a time I have squatted in the dirt of this or that lepayed hut, a few coins knotted in the corner of my ohrni, waiting, waiting – waiting to make the next move. There is fear, poverty, and sometimes a heavy hand striking at night' (Espinet 1990b, 14). Again there is an impression of being in limbo, and again there is an enemy outside. In this section the enemy is identified as her drunken, abusive husband – 'The boy I married turns into a strange man who hits and curses at night'. One night he comes home, drunk again, and beats her – 'He is enraged. I move to warm up the food and suddenly a cuff connects. He is deadly accurate – all over my head and breasts...I fall near the chulhah and he kicks me as I fall' (Espinet 1990b, 14). The husband moves towards the bedroom and the crying baby, threatening to kill. The protagonist reaches for the cutlass and attacks him - 'He on the bed and quick, quick I chop him two, three times, me ain't know how hard...Me ain't really know how much time I chop he. He ain't get chance to touch the baby yet' (Espinet 1990b, 14). A strong context of male violence is given for this act and interestingly, in this three-part short story, the protagonist only retaliates against her husband, not for her own sake, but for her baby.

So too in Rosanne Kanhai's 'Rum Sweet Rum' (1982), Dolly negotiates her life of poverty and abuse with remarkable resourcefulness but must finally kill her husband as an act of liberation. Dolly tests the limits of her resourcefulness trying to provide for herself and her family and trying to repair the destruction wrought by her drunken husband. She works as a

maid and makes mango anchar to sell in the market on weekends. When her husband burns down their home, Dolly takes up a collection from her well-wishing neighbours, bought uneven slabs of wood, nailed them together and filled the spaces with rags and newspapers. Galvanise, weighted down by bricks, formed the roof and coloured plastic fluttered over openings that functioned as windows. For the most part, she survives by her wits and rum. She uses her wits to poison her husband. A neighbour reports later 'if you see how good she [Dolly] looking…she looking plenty more nice. Like she get over some of the worries. And the children getting big too. Now the husband dead she won't have no more' (Kanhai 1982, 17). The murder of her husband is a fateful, final act of resistance and liberation and is the only way in which a narrative of self-fulfilment can be written.

Nevertheless, Kanhai's story casts a knowing glance at the ways in which Indian women collude in their own oppression. In 'Rum Sweet Rum' Dolly's mother repeatedly returns her daughter to a violent marriage with the conspiratorial advice 'go back and make a living. Is your husband. Is your luck.' But women's collusion in their own oppression and in the oppression of other Indian women is a feature of the Indian gender system that has not yet been meaningfully represented by Indian women writers. Social science enquiries have identified the tyranny of the *sas* or mother-in-law (Shiw Prasad 1999; Layng 1975; Angrosino 1976; Mohammed 1998a) as an aspect of gender relations that deserves attention:

> In one form, the main villain is the old patriarch's wife, the girl's mother-in-law or *sas*. She may treat the girl as a virtual personal slave. Klass says that many a *sas* ceases all domestic work when her son marries; one of his informants is reported to have announced triumphantly, 'Me have a doolahin, now!…' In this situation, the *sas* takes primary control over child-rearing decisions (Angrosino 1976, 58).

No doubt wider changes in the society will have impacted on the role of the *sas* since Angrosino's research, but something of this power relationship survives among the Indian community. Attention to this history of an authoritarian relationship between older women and young *doolahins* may help to explain why there is little evidence of the mother/daughter bond - and more generally inter-generational female bonding - in the fiction of Indian women writers compared to the fiction of African Caribbean women writers where the theme is unavoidably prominent (Boyce-Davis and Savory Fido 1994; Cudjoe 1990; Anim Addo 1996; O'Callaghan 1993).

This investigation of representations of Indian women's resistance in the creative works of Indian women is not meant to suggest that all Indian women writers pay the same attention to their gendered and ethnic identity. Indeed there is fiction by Indian women writers that reinforces conservative constructions of Indian womanhood. Rajni Ramlakhan's 'Flight' for example, published in 1983 in The Indian Review, a magazine recognised for its exclusionary ethnic politics, creates a protagonist who is educated, self-aware and politicised but whose life is spoiled by her independent choices. Savitri wins a language scholarship, graduates from university with an honours degree and works as a teacher and social worker. Ramlakhan tells us that she had 'blossomed into a very mature and sensible young woman' (Ramlakhan 1983, 20). Her work brings her in contact with Steve, Indian but Christian, who shares her political consciousness having been educated during the 1970s when the University of the West Indies Trinidad campus was one of the centres of mobilisation around Black Power politics. Savitri refuses to fulfil her community's expectations and marry a young Hindu boy, saying that she did not study just to get a good Hindu husband. She meant to have a career and not blindly follow Hindu tradition. Thus far, Ramlakhan is sympathetic to her character and the representation contains all the elements that suggest that Savitri is sensibly and successfully negotiating the changes in her life. The first hint that Ramlakhan means to subvert this portrait is the suspicion she creates in reference to Steve's politics of ethnic accommodation- 'He talked of taking from the rich and giving to the poor…of equality among all men and of the fusion of the races. What did he mean?' (Ramlakhan 1983, 21).

After being lovers with Steve for four years, Savitri realises that he does not intend to marry her. The same qualities in Savitri that Ramlakhan appears to endorse in the early part of the text now becomes the reason for Savitri's disillusionment - Steve refuses to marry her because he believes her to be too independent, liberated, and holding a good job so she shouldn't want to get married. In this way Ramlakhan orchestrates the comeuppance for her young protagonist who now realises that she is already an outcast from her religion and estranged from her family and friends. Ramlakhan's representation of Savitri dramatises the error of new, resistant ways and effectively squashes the challenges of young, educated Indian women who try to exercise agency in their lives.

There are, no doubt, other women writers whose work shares in this view. Jeremy Poynting names another contributor to The Indian Review, Ann Marie Bissessar, who in 1983 published a poem which lamented the discarding of the *orhini* and sari and reinforced the role of Indian men as warriors who protect their women and kin (1987, 247). These works complement representations by male authors who serve a similar politics. S.K. Ragbir, a

regular contributor to The Indian Review, published three stories in 1982, all of which emphasise the severe consequences of women's resistance and seek to encourage young Indian women back into an orthodox relationship with their families and communities. Not coincidentally, westernisation, urbanisation and creolisation, all of which have been represented in other works as enabling Indian women's resistance, are in Ragbir's stories identified as encouraging Indian women's deviance. 'Aftermath' (1982a), 'Neesha - The Story of a Girl Who Loved' (1982b) and 'The Trouble With Shanti' (1982c) variously blame Carnival, urbanisation and modernisation for Indian women's fall.

One representation of Indian womanhood that appeared in 1989 in the work of a creole Jamaican woman writer is so unusual that it must be discussed here. Olive Senior's 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' looms large in recent Caribbean women's writing, in part because the title of the collection in which the story appears, Arrival of the Snake-Woman and Other Stories, privileges it. It is also the first collection to follow the success of Summer Lightning and Other Stories (1986) for which Senior was awarded the 1987 Commonwealth Writers Prize. Despite the prize, Senior's short fiction has not received the wide attention that it deserves, no doubt because short fiction is less popular than novels for publishers and critics alike, although Senior herself notes that there is now greater interest in short fiction from publishers and the public (in Rowell 1988, 485). This increasing attention to short fiction, and the greater exposure of Senior's work following the Commonwealth Writers Prize, contextualise an apparent critical fascination with, and tentativeness towards, 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' (Donnell 1999; Pollard 1988b; Gafoor 1993; Ramchand 1998). Velma Pollard, in a cursory introduction to Senior's poetry and fiction, describes 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' as an exploration of 'the Jamaican situation in which the ex-African and the ex-Asian strive to find a place in the post-colonial society' (1988b, 543). But she does not explore the theme further and focuses instead on 'the uncompromising nature of fundamentalist religion' that the story exposes (Pollard 1988b, 542). Ameena Gafoor's analysis in 'The Image of the Indo-Caribbean Woman in Olive Senior's "Arrival of the Snake-Woman"' (1993) is a rare, longer look at this story by a Guyanese critic. Gafoor suggests that the story presents the 'culmination of all the phases of readjustment and accommodation inherent in migration and displacement' (1993, 34) for Indian women from the Caribbean. She emphasises Miss Coolie's resistance to colonial machinations – 'through her ingenuity and resourcefulness Miss Coolie shows society that there are *alternatives* to colonial confinement and repression, that the marginalised can be liberated to take her place in the centre of the text' – and reads 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' as an allegory that traces

the nineteenth-century history of Indian women in the Caribbean, culminating in the 'arrival' of the Indian woman in the historical and cultural configuration of the modern Caribbean (Gafoor 1993, 37). In her notes to the article, Gafoor thanks Kenneth Ramchand for inspiring her to 'investigate the experience of the Indo-Caribbean woman in yet another text' (1993, 43). This would help to explain why, in two 1998 newspaper commentaries, Ramchand similarly invokes 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' as a metaphor for the 'arrival' of Indian women. This interpretation of the story, however, stumbles over Senior's equally prominent representations of Miss Coolie as stereotypically commercial and usurious, exotic, sexualised, a resourceful mother and a dutiful wife. In an effort to resolve the confusion over these two representations, Gafoor suggests, much like Ramchand's reading of Earl Lovelace's Pariag in The Dragon Can't Dance (1969), that Miss Coolie's adjustments are positive negotiations with creolization (1993, 39). But even so, she is unable to resolve the final image of Miss Coolie as a 'capitalist money-lender on the hill' and submits that 'I find this problematic' (Gafoor 1993, 6). Alison Donnell reads the end of the story as Jamaica's capitulation to late capitalism and Miss Coolie's ability to work with different identities in an open system of accommodation (1999, 129).

I would like to draw attention to several factors that I think will further our understanding of both the story and critical engagement with it. Representations of Indian ethnic identity are rare in Jamaican fiction and consistent with the particularities of the Jamaican Indian community, which I have stressed elsewhere in this dissertation. During archival research I found a short story by Jamaican Barry Reckord entitled 'High Brown', that was read on the BBC Caribbean Voices Programme in 1953, that offers a rare fictional representation of Indian/African relations in Jamaica during the first half of the twentieth century. Reckord's representation of an Indian man, Rama, and his ambiguous relationship with Africans is set in a Trench Town slum, part of what was described in this period as 'Tin Roof Towns' (Shepherd 1987, 174) because zinc being rare, flattened petrol tins were used to roof the shacks. These 'Tin Roof Towns' were characterised by overcrowding, illiteracy, poor housing, poor health, unemployment and crime and were home to a large percentage of Jamaica's Indians (Shepherd 1987, 176-177). Trench Town (formerly Trench Pen), the neighbourhood in which Reckord's story is set, was the first community to be named a 'Tin Roof Town' (Shepherd 1987, 176). Here, Rama lives in constant tension with his

environment, simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by the African community that surrounds him.[8]

Senior's 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' is not only rare among Jamaican authors, it is also unusual in Caribbean women's writing. With the noticeable exception of Merle Hodge, there is no other non-Indian Caribbean woman writer who has engaged meaningfully with the Indian presence in the Caribbean since the outburst of women's fiction over the last three decades. The unusualness of Senior's story, and the prominence afforded it in the title of her collection, should therefore not be underestimated. Furthermore, Senior's own identity as a mixed Jamaican creole woman writer, places her among a group that is similarly marginalised in Caribbean nationalist narratives.

The portrait of Miss Coolie in this story is part of Senior's personalised reconstruction of a little piece of history. She deliberately manipulates exteriority in her imaginative re-telling of a post-emancipation encounter between Miss Coolie - the snake-woman who 'like nayga-man' and who comes from a distant community where 'coolie-man is the wussest man in the whole world' (Senior 1989, 3) – and the African creole community that is, in various ways, negotiating, resisting and changing in relation to colonial impositions. The story is set in the post-emancipation period in which exoticism is unavoidable in African creole contemplation of Indians. Senior herself is writing from a geographical and historical context where Indian/African relations is seldom the subject of national attention, and where Indian racial exogamy with Africans is more commonplace than in Trinidad and Guyana. I suggest that we avoid the temptation to resolve whether Senior's representation of Miss Coolie is exotic and stereotypical even as it asserts Miss Coolie's mature and stubborn resistance to colonial and creole othering and concentrate instead on how Senior manipulates exteriority. Senior tells Charles H. Rowell that Arrival of the Snake-Woman and Other Stories is more experimental than Summer Lightning and Other Stories:

> Though both books share many elements in common, *Arrival of the Snake-Woman* is more complex in themes, wider in scope and more experimental in form. *Summer Lightning* is tightly focused on one world – that of rural Jamaica at a particular point in time; *Arrival* is more expansive...While the consciousness of *Summer Lightning* is that mainly of the child, the stories in *Arrival* are also told from the point of view of adults (males and females) as well as children of different races and classes (1988, 484).

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[8] Reckord's story also illustrates how Rama's repulsion and admiration, hostility and intimacy, are rendered in a language of racial epithets.

It appears then that Senior's choice of Ishmael as a child narrator in 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' is deliberate. Senior extends her tremendous facility with the technique of child narration with slippages between Ishmael's child and adult sensibilities and she further experiments with magical realism in her characterisation of Miss Coolie as a mysterious, exotic, enigmatic snake-woman and cultural Other:

> In *Arrival* I am also experimenting – tentatively – with magical realism. I believe it is a form well suited to our societies as it enables us artistically to fuse the mundane with the other world which lurks not too far beyond our everyday existence – the magical, spiritual, whatever you choose to call it...In recent years I have been very much affected by the work of Latin American writers – particularly Jorge Amado, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa – and I believe their example is helping me to shape the work that I am writing now (Rowell 1988, 484).

In this creative, personalised historiography, Senior deliberately and honestly acknowledges the exteriority and stereotyping that was unavoidable in African creole contemplation of Indians and creatively manipulates these representations.

The question of Senior's manipulation of stereotypes in this story will no doubt resurface in readings of her work. The image of Miss Coolie as 'our embodiment of the spirit of the new age, an age in which sentiment has been replaced by pragmatism and superstition by materialism' (Senior 1989, 44), registers as a particularly harsh stereotype in the climate of Indian/African antagonism in the Caribbean. Senior's own comment that in this collection she is 'beginning to explore the lives of the rising black and brown bourgeoisie' (in Rowell 1988, 484), will appear to support suggestions that her representation of Miss Coolie uncritically reproduces the widespread stereotype of Indians as materially acquisitive. In addition, the appearance of this story at a time of heightened interest in Indian women's identity and the respect Senior enjoys in the English-speaking Caribbean, combine to explain the weight of expectation that the representation of Miss Coolie carries. In this chapter I have been pointing to the various representations of Indian womanhood being offered by Indian women writers to subvert the repressive 'Sita' ideal. The title of Senior's story, 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman', resonates in the southern Caribbean, and Trinidad in particular, with Indian Arrival Day; indeed it is this resonance that both Trinidadian Kenneth Ramchand (1998) and Guyanese Ameena Gafoor (1993) privilege in their attention to the story. But Senior's presentation does

not provide us with a portrait of Indian womanhood that can be easily appropriated for Indian heroic feminism. I would argue for a view of Senior's story that recognises the tremendous faith she places in her readers and that is unafraid to become involved in the world of the story. 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman' provides us with a **different** portrait of Caribbean female identity and a different portrait of Indian female identity. Miss Coolie is neither the monolith of the 'Sita' bride nor is she the feminist hero. She is a different portrait that raises questions that we as readers are invited to address. Senior leaves open the question of Miss Coolie's sometimes baffling response to her environment and in so doing leads us into open territory, a disturbing space where we find political echoes but also unavoidable ambiguities. This other place, according to Senior, is where magic and spirituality lurk, where 'there are no saints, no villains, no absolute good, no absolute evil' (Rowell 1988, 483). She transfers that space to the page by telling part of the story and inviting the reader's participation:

> For what you see on the page is only part of the story. The inexplicable, the part not expressed, the part withheld is the part that you the reader will have to supply from your emotional and imaginative stock, the part that will enable the work to resonate. So that in 'Arrival of the Snake-Woman', for instance, although I tell so much about everybody, everything else, the story doesn't answer the fundamental questions about the 'snake-woman' herself, questions about her interior life that are posed at the end of the work (Rowell 1988, 483).

While the historical and geographical context of Senior's representation guides our understanding of the story, I am suggesting that we also avoid locking doors of imaginative and interpretative possibilities. Through Miss Coolie, Senior offers a different portrait of Caribbean female identity and a different portrait of Indian female identity, a portrait "within a configuration of possibilities" (in Rowell 1988, 483) that I think necessitates this contextualisation of her story which, along with the works of Indian women writers, engages in considerations of Indian women's gendered and ethnic identity.

To date, Jeremy Poynting (1985) is the only scholar who has extensively considered Indian women's fiction.[9] With the exception of Rajkumari Singh, Mahadai Das and Shana Yardan - all Guyanese women writers - whom he believes have achieved individual voices, Poynting concludes that the over-arching concerns in Indian women's writing are with human

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[9] Rosanne Kanhai's 'The Masala Stone Sings: Indo Caribbean Women Coming Into Voice' (1995) is an important work but primary texts for this research were all taken from the Creation Fire (Espinet 1990) anthology of poems.

happiness, social injustice, religious bigotry, racism and sexism (1987, 244). He identifies protest themes which include 'indignant portraits of such oppressed figures as the cane-worker, stories of poverty which drives to crime and, more unusually, anti-war protest' (Poynting 1987, 248). This dismissal of Indian women's fiction is plausibly attributable to Poynting's inattention to gender - he notes in his introduction that his research focus on women 'represents a belated effort to remedy a deficiency in the basic concept of the research I carried out rather than a consistent concern with the specificity of women's experience within the general experience of Indians in the Caribbean' (1985, 29). The fact that many of the works considered here are almost all published in the 1990s and are therefore outside the period of his investigation, and that his work contains a greater emphasis on Guyana, would also explain his dismissal. My reading of Indian women's writings in this chapter and the next suggests that there are significantly nuanced approaches to representations of Indian women's resistance which need careful and scholarly attention. In the next chapter I investigate what to me is one of the most exciting trends in recent women's fiction - a tendency to represent Indian women's resistance in relation to Africanness - in order to conclude my attention to representations of Indian womanhood and Indian/African relations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'Ah Turn Creole Now …Ah Tired Being Ah Coolie Woman'[1]
Africanness and Indian Women's Resistance

One aspect of representations of Indian women's resistance that recurs in Trinidad fiction is women's gendered resistance contextualised by Africanness. I use the term Africanness here to mean Africans and/or African-derived cultural expressions. This relationality between Indian women and Africanness, though not unique to Indian women's writing, is a recurring feature of their fiction. Representations of this relationality have been variously treated by male Indian and African authors.

Earlier in this dissertation I pointed to the limitations of creolisation in terms of its geographical specificity and its dismissal of the possibility of a significant Indian cultural contribution to Caribbean society. In the social and political context of Trinidad in the period of the 1950s and 1960s, creolisation became complicit with a creole nationalism that advocated the cultural assimilation of Indians into the African-dominated creole society and measured Indian commitment to the emerging nation by the decline of Indian cultural identity (Brereton 1981; Reddock 1994a; Haracksingh 1988). For the most part, literary representations of creolisation and Indian women's resistance replicate the assimilationist politics for which creolisation was co-opted in Trinidad. Ernest A. Carr's 'The Snake Charmer' (1947), for example, represents Doocannee's creolisation as assimilation into African-derived creole culture – 'she knew few, and certainly observed fewer, of the customs and practices attaching to the traditions of her forbears'. Similarly Michael Anthony represents the creolised Mr Gidharee in Green Days by the River (1961) as retaining little of his Indian cultural identity; James Bradner's creolised Lily in Danny Boy (1981) is Christianised and westernised. In all of these works, creolisation is understood as withdrawal from Indian culture.

Indian conservative reaction to the assimilationism implied in creolisation has been, predictably, to causally link sexual unions between Indian women and African men to cultural assimilation. Pat Mohammed observed this in an article that addressed 'The "Creolization" of Indian Women in Trinidad'- 'It [creolization] is a particularly daring, even offensive word, to

use in reference to Indian women in Trinidad for it was used popularly to refer to those women who mixed or consorted with people of African descent, especially men, Indian women who changed their eating habits and dress habits and who adopted non-Indian social customs' (1988a: 381). Shiva Naipaul's representation of a sexual relationship between the Indian girl, Renouka, and an African man in Fireflies (1970) is a dramatisation of this conservatism. While this novel establishes a relationship between Africanness and Renouka's resistance to orthodox Hinduism, it realises only self-destruction.

Renouka is among the new generation of Khojas who, after the death of the elder Mrs Khoja, rise in rebellion against the new heir, Govind Khoja, and against the rigid prescriptions of this orthodox Hindu family. The disintegration of this anachronistic unit is occasioned by the death of Mrs Khoja and the changing times. It is described as emancipation and measured by the seriousness with which members of the family started to treat Christmas celebrations, Badwatee's conversion to Roman Catholicism, and the fact that women no longer waited for men to eat first. It is also measured by the self-destruction of several members of the household – Bhaskar has a nervous breakdown, is forced to surrender his dream of becoming a doctor, and withdraws from life; Indrani removes herself from the family and lives out her life as a hermit in the countryside; Romesh loses his identity among a parade of American film stars; and Renouka's deterioration is dramatised by her simultaneous relationships with her cousin, Romesh, and an African commercial traveller.

Renouka is identified with rebellion from her childhood. She attends a Catholic school, wears a short school skirt that exposes her legs, and talks to boys after school. During one of the Khoja family celebrations, she chopped off her braids. Her parents initially supported her difference but when Renouka's father, who once abhorred the Khoja orthodoxy, begins an extra marital affair with a deeply religious woman, he makes a complete about turn: 'his former admiration for Renouka was replaced by an implacable hatred. She, the apple of his eye, was transformed into the source of all evil' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 255). Renouka had inherited her father's independent spirit and his reversal deprived her of essential support: 'She was back where she had started. The wheel had turned full circle' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 257). The Khoja family, the object of her resistance, had so far sustained her rebellion. Now, 'betrayed by her father and betrayed by herself, she gave way to despair' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 257). Her despair is dramatised by her entry into the urban Port of Spain and her deterioration is represented, somewhat melodramatically, through simultaneous sexual

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[1] Clem Maharaj The Dispossessed (1992), p 112.

relationships with her cousin and an African man. Shiva Naipaul thus equates the taboo of inter-racial sex between an Indian woman and an African man with the taboo of incest.

Renouka's relationships prompt the desired and predictable outrage in the Khoja family which had hitherto functioned within an exclusive Indian cultural enclave. Africans live , ubiquitous but invisible, on the periphery of their world. They employ an African maid, Blackie, who inhabits an unobtrusive place in their lives and whose name signifies that they can know her only as an ethnic/racial stereotype. She is the butt of curiosity and snide jokes for the Khoja guests. On one occasion Mrs Khoja announces to her guests that Blackie's grandfather used to be a slave, a snippet of information she used to lift the guests out of their torpor. On another occasion a guest asked about Blackie's whereabouts, and wondered aloud and laughingly if she had returned to the plantation. Blackie's annual holiday was the day of the Khoja *catha*; Africans could have no place in the festivities. Blackie's death is recorded along with the death of the Khoja dog, Shadow II.

The other Africans mentioned in the text form an amorphous, indistinguishable group of 'Negro boys' who inhabit a place outside the Khoja front gate, occasionally poking their faces through the bars of the gate. When young Khoja boys played cricket on the pavement, the 'Negro boys' were allowed to bowl and field but never to bat, mimicking a colonial class model seen in nineteenth century English cricket. Now and then the African boys were shooed away from the game by Mrs Khoja. On the last day of the *catha*, the 'Negro boys' were called in and fed on leftovers. Only Mr Lutchman, married to a Khoja but an undaunted critic of the clan, cultivates a different relationship with Africans. He invites Wilkie to his home and considers that 'at the bottom…he and Wilkie were not very different from each other' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 184).

It is in this climate of increasingly untenable Indian ethnic insularity that Renouka stages her revolution and revenge. Renouka, despairing, is 'unable to weep' and with a 'delicious, mocking self-hatred' unburdens herself to the commercial traveller. She uses him as a repository for her hatred for the Khojas and as a tool of her rebellion. He, in turn, uses the relationship as a measure of his irresistible conquering sexuality. He felt proud that he 'had stormed a barrier he always believed to be impregnable and his friends treated him as they would an adventurer who had explored hitherto unexplored lands' (Shiva Naipaul 1970, 262-263). The relationship is loveless and unfulfilling. Renouka predictably outrages her family but after the imprisonment of Romesh, her anger is spent and her despair culminates in her migration to Canada. Her rebellion is self-destructive and brings her no fulfilment and no

independence; she is migrating to Canada to work as a domestic servant. In this way she actually takes the role of the African maid, Blackie.

A short story by V.S. Naipaul entitled 'Potatoes' read on the BBC Caribbean Voices Programme in 1952, contains a more complex, albeit undeveloped, representation of the relationship between Africanness and Indian women's resistance. For the most part, V.S. Naipaul's presentation of Mrs Gobin's attempt to negotiate her independence from her tyrannical mother is unusually sympathetic. Mrs Gobin is a young Indian widow, beholden to her mother for a monthly allowance, who decides to forge her economic independence. Mrs Gobin's difficulty in executing this is sympathetically presented by V.S. Naipaul as a consequence of Indian ethnic exclusivity:

> Mrs Gobin felt she was alone, felt it poignantly– alone in a big bad world...But always she was lost. If she could have formulated her thoughts, Mrs Gobin would have cursed the life she was brought up to live. Perhaps her method of thinking, her way of life, was all right in an all-Hindu society, but in this cosmopolitan hotch-potch where nothing was sacred and everything was somehow flat and unsatisfying, in this hotch-potch, it was totally inadequate (V.S. Naipaul 1952, 5).

Mrs Gobin's mother is the voice of Indian conservatism which equates Mrs Gobin's attempt at independence with un-Indianness. Mrs Gobin challenges these prescriptions - 'It never does pay to be dependent on anybody. But mark my words, Ma, I am going to make myself independent' (V.S. Naipaul 1952, 4), and her challenge is decoded by her mother as 'turning nigger'. On hearing about the potato enterprise, Mrs Gobin's mother quoted from the Bhagavad Gita, saying 'Yes, I know what your type always does...Your father used to warn me all the time about you; and ever since you have been living in the town, you have been playing the white woman. Well, go ahead, and turn nigger. I am not going to stop you' (V.S. Naipaul 1952, 5).

Mrs Gobin's negotiation of these conservative constructions of her gendered and ethnic identity is not satisfactorily explored in the story. V.S. Naipaul does not allow Mrs Gobin to triumph - her enterprise fails and she returns resentfully to her mother for her allowance. The story is incomplete; the failure of Mrs Gobin's enterprise and her return to economic dependence are recounted in the final paragraph of the story, an indication of the hastiness of the resolution. V.S. Naipaul would later extract Mrs Gobin and her mother for <u>A</u>

<u>House for Mr Biswas</u> (1961) in which Mrs Gobin becomes Shama - Mr Biswas's wife - and her mother, Mrs Tulsie.

In <u>Wey Wey</u> (1958), published six years after 'Potatoes' was broadcast, Errol Hill also represents the threat to conservative constructions of Indian womanhood presented by neighbouring African gender ideologies and practices. I have discussed Hill's achievement in this play elsewhere in the dissertation but I reference it here again for its illustration of how the 'turning nigger' accusation is levelled at Indian women who choose to re-negotiate aspects of their gendered and ethnic identity. In <u>Wey Wey</u>, Harry accuses his wife of 'becoming more jamet than creole' (Hill 1958, 18). Hill acknowledges the conservatism implied in the taunt and exposes it through his portrayal of the self-possessed, literate Beti against whom the accusation is made.

The emphasis on creolisation as assimilationist in both Indian and African conservative discourses has not precluded occasional representations of creolisation as enabling Indian women's independence. In Clem Maharaj's <u>The Dispossessed</u> (1992), creolisation describes Mona's movement from the rural Indian peasantry to the urban rum shop. Mona actively seeks and consciously chooses to 'turn creole'; when Sonny Boy tries to force her to leave the rum shop and return with him to the sugar estate, she says 'dis is me people, yuh hear Sonny Boy? Ah turn Creole now. No more slaving and sweating for me, ah tired being ah coolie woman, ah want to enjoy meself' (Maharaj 1992, 112). Mona sees her creolisation as an escape from her oppressive 'slaving and sweating' which to her is synonymous with being 'ah coolie woman'.

Likewise, Urmilla's creolisation in Selvon's <u>A Brighter Sun</u> (1952) and <u>Turn Again Tiger</u> (1958) enables her to re-negotiate the terms of her relationship with Tiger. Selvon's celebration of his characters' creolised cultural identity has its origins in his own experiences growing up in Trinidad. In a 1979 interview, he tells Peter Nazareth that he came:

> from mixed parentage, mainly Indian. But I was never Indianised. As a child I grew up completely Creolised, which is a term we use in Trinidad, meaning that you live among the people, whatever races they are, and you are a real born Trinidadian, you can't get away from it. And, of course, with a great deal of western influence - I grew up on American films and music (1979, 424).

In his fiction Selvon extrapolates elements of creolisation - cross cultural interaction precipitated by commitment to country of birth, modernisation, urbanisation, Americanisation

- that empower Urmilla and provide her with a framework within which to challenge repressive aspects of her ethnic and gendered subjectivity.

Urmilla's demand for visibility and individual identity is directly related to her friendship with Rita and the alternative consciousness introduced to her by her African neighbour. Urmilla is introduced to us as a submissive, demure child bride. Rita is assertive, feisty, rebellious, shrewish even, talking back to Joe and physically defending herself against his physical assaults. Whatever Urmilla understands about her rights as a woman, she learns from Rita. Rita, drawing on her experience with Joe, cautions Urmilla 'don't let yuh husband get like dat, chile...because life go be hell' (Selvon 1971, 36). Before leaving for Five Rivers, Urmilla is again warned 'don't let no man rule your life for you' (Selvon 1979, 12). Rita becomes a protector, teacher, and mother to the young Urmilla. She is the first to diagnose Urmilla's pregnancy and acts as midwife. Ill during her second pregnancy, Urmilla insists that only Rita attend to her. She resists Tiger's wish to get a doctor, saying 'Rita know what she doing, I don't want no doctor. Rita like a mother to me' (Selvon 1971, 191). Selvon's portrayal of this relationship completely overturns the biological determinism of ethnic separatism.

With an alternative consciousness introduced and encouraged by Rita, Urmilla begins to mobilise organised resistance in Turn Again Tiger. She 'found herself with the strongest voice' in the village women's discussion about their husbands' drunkenness, and she leads a march to Otto's shop to protest at him giving rum on credit to the village men. The village women 'felt new emotions and new thoughts' through their solidarity and the idea of lobbying Otto gave them all 'a new freedom' (Selvon 1979, 81-82). The women's revolution is short-lived and all, except Urmilla, are beaten by their husbands that night. But Urmilla continues to mature and mid-way through the novel she is finally able to reflect on and articulate her experience as a married woman and her desire to continue the marriage on different terms. She challenges Tiger to greater understanding:

> You think you is the only one in the world growing up, that nothing happening to other people, only to you...You think I would of talk to you like this five years ago? All these years I ain't open my mouth to you or ask you for anything, and you always making the decisions what to do, when to do, how to do. Sometimes you get on as if I ain't here at all...The same way you getting older, I getting older too, you know (Selvon 1979, 126).

Urmilla's maturing consciousness is recognisable to Rita. Immediately following her unusual self-expression, Urmilla visits Rita dressed in a sari and high heels. Rita acknowledges her development – 'And you looking too good, girl. And you have a different look on your face, as if you is a big woman now' (Selvon 1979, 136). Tiger's maturity is measured by his involvement in organised political activism in Barataria; Urmilla's is measured by her resistance, self-assertion, and the developing consciousness that she politicises.

Selvon's representation of Indian/African relations in these novels emphasises the endurance of Indian/African relationships between women. Rita and Urmilla are the first to begin a neighbourly relationship that defies ethnic difference – 'During the day Rita would stand by the fence and gossip to Urmilla as she swept mango leaves from the yard' (Selvon 1971, 31). Only when Rita acts as midwife to Urmilla do Joe and Tiger establish a similar relationship. When there is tension between the two couples, Rita is the one to hasten reconciliation. And the women are the ones who persevere in the inter-racial friendship despite criticisms from their families. Rita continues her relationship with Tiger and Urmilla despite Joe's frequent warnings about getting involved 'in coolie people business' and Urmilla defends Rita against her family's criticisms – 'they blame Rita and say is she fault. We had a big quarrel because I stick up for she' (Selvon 1971, 209).

Thirty years after the publication of A Brighter Sun, Selvon reflected that the relationships between Rita and Urmilla and Joe and Tiger were not contrived as a literary device to explore Indian/African relations in Trinidad, but were representations of relationships he knew and took for granted:

> I took the Negro-Indian relationship so much for granted that it still amazes me that when some people talk about that novel [A Brighter Sun] they mention the Tiger-Joe relationship as a racial statement. To me I was just portraying the relationship that existed between two human beings and that was all (in Ramchand 1982, 97).

For that reason, Selvon never researched Indian/African relations before writing A Brighter Sun. He was in Trinidad, however, at the time of his interview with Kenneth Ramchand, conducting research that he hoped might enable him to fictionally render the initial Indian/African encounter in Trinidad, the pre-Joe and Tiger period. Up to the time of the interview, still optimistic about the future of Indian/African relations but confessing a progressive disillusionment, Selvon was uncertain whether he would address the theme at all in his new book, and if so, how it would be rendered (Ramchand 1982, 96).

Selvon's disillusionment in the decades following publication of A Brighter Sun (Ramchand 1985; Poynting 1986; Nasta 1988) was occasioned by growing social and political animosity between Indians and Africans in Trinidad. The deteriorating relationship between Indians and Africans also account for the self-consciousness evident in the prominence and deliberateness with which Merle Hodge treats Indian/African relations in her 1993 novel, For the Life of Laetitia, as opposed to the unmannered, cackling innocence and fluidity of Indian and African identities in Crick Crack Monkey, published twenty-three years earlier. This context is also crucial to the centrality afforded the theme in Earl Lovelace's Salt, published seventeen years after he represented the entry of Pariag into the urban African milieu of Calvary Hill in The Dragon Can't Dance. Indian women writers, having joined the discussion of Indian/African relations much later than Selvon, Hodge and Lovelace, are creatively expressing themselves from this tense social and political climate. Yet these writers continue the project of privileging and celebrating Indian/African cross-cultural relations in their work. The Indian women writers considered here appear to be constructing a relationality with Africans and Africanness that is decidedly and deliberately different from the relationality crafted in post-indentureship Indian conservatism (Mohammed 1998a: 398) that identified Indian women as an ethnic border and Africanness as a potent cultural and racial threat. It seems to me that the works under scrutiny here show Indian women defiantly re-assessing and re-negotiating that relationality with Africans.

Ramabai Espinet's 'Mama Glo' (1991b) and Niala Rambachan's 'Picture the Diablesse' (1983) both suggest the fluidity of Indian and African cultural identities that Merle Hodge dramatises in Crick Crack Monkey (1970). Mama Glo' is a benign and powerful female figure in the creole folklore of Trinidad. Espinet's glossary note for the title of this poem explains that Mama Glo' is protector of rivers and their environments and appears as a combination of woman and water snake. In her poem Espinet identifies this figure as facilitating her creative voice. When she finds her voice, she is fertile with creative energy and inspiration from 'centuries/of womanthought' (Espinet 1991b, 28). Similarly, another Trinidadian Indian woman poet, Niala Rambachan, identifies her alter ego as a figure from African folklore. In 'Picture the Diablesse' (1983), republished as 'You and I' in the CAFRA anthology Creation Fire (Espinet 1990a, 38), the poet is the *diablesse*. In this way both Indian women poets locate their creative ontology within Trinidad's African creole cultural tradition.

Other writers declare a cultural intimacy with elements of Carnival, a festival which has evolved from the African/European encounter but which, like the folkloric figures of *Mama Glo'* and *La Diablesse*, is constructed as a metonym for Africanness. In conservative

Indian discourses Carnival is a low cultural form showcasing African vulgarity, promiscuity and generally immoral behaviour. S.K. Ragbir's 'Aftermath' (1982a), which I have discussed elsewhere, is a literary reminder of that view. Indian women writers, however, register a different regard for this aspect of African culture and in so doing re-interpret conservative Indian constructions of Carnival, Africanness, and Indian women's sexuality. Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen's 1997 poem, 'When the Hindu Woman Sings Calypso', bring Indian women's re-interpretation of their relationality with Carnival into sharp focus. The poem is a tribute to Drupatee Ramgoonai whom I mentioned in chapter two. Drupatee is the first Indian woman to enter the mainly African male arena of calypso and was heavily criticised by conservative members of the Indian community who objected to her involvement in Carnival and her overt delight in her sexuality.

Drupatee retreated from calypso in the early 1990s but has since re-emerged and performs a song entitled 'Real Unity' with Machel Montano on his 2000 album '2000 Young to Soca'. Montano and his band Xtatik are certainly among the most innovative young calypsonians/musicians in the Caribbean today and 'Real Unity' is their first commentary on Indian/African relations. Embedded in the tradition of Carnival party calypsoes as opposed to social and political commentary calypsoes, this song intertexts with Drupatee's previous incarnation in calypso through her familiar refrain 'this is jam! This is a soca tassa jam!' And Drupatee unapologetically retains her delight in the sexual suggestions that are characteristic of the party calypso genre as she and Montano assert:

> Nothing wrong with wining on an Indian girl
> Nothing wrong with wining on an Chinee girl
> Nothing wrong with wining on a African girl
> Nothing wrong with wining on a Syrian girl (Machel and Drupatee 2000).

The Carnival context of this song's address to Indian/African unity is foregrounded by the invitation to:

> wine down in unity
> Machel here with Drupatee
> we moving like a big family
> is real unity (Machel and Drupatee 2000).

And the ability of Carnival to welcome the Indian cultural presence into its syncretism is privileged in the song's sustained and coherent use of Hindi and the fact of Montano singing in Hindi. The song's title, meanwhile, subverts the national unity slogan of the ruling UNC and suggests itself as a representation of real unity. Ramkissoon-Chen's 'When the Hindu Woman Sings Calypso' celebrates Drupatee's involvement in calypso and takes a special delight in Drupatee's expression of her sexuality:

> Her song resounds, her
> hips gyrate, knees bend.
> Her trousers balloo
> like a rich-clad Mogul's
> their shimmer sliced
> their folds open.
>
> Her midriff's bare
> looped white with pearls
> her body sinuous
> with the dance of muscle.
> She stoops as for a limbo number
> head held backward from the rod-fire.
> Leaves of flame
> play on her bodice (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997f, 68-69).

Contrary to Drupatee's critics who argued that calypso was alien to Indian women, this poem suggests that singing calypso is consistent with Indian women's history. It recalls matikor celebrations 'near standpipe and river' where 'girls and women/danced to tassa drumming/of pre-nuptial celebrations'. The poem suggests that *matikor* was the training ground for Drupatee's experiment with calypso, thus establishing a continuity between *matikor* and Carnival, and between constitutive elements of Indian and African cultural identities. At the same time, Drupatee's movement into calypso, into an African cultural space, is imaged as a movement away from oppressive elements of Indian tradition so that the Indian woman's traditional *purdah* is now strings of rhinestone on Drupatee's forehead, the calypsonian's hair is 'frizzled/to a buss up shot' and 'the long tresses of/a long tradition/seared in the electricity/of the mike's cord length'. The poem's consideration of Indian female sexuality

and the elements of Indian tradition that suppress expressions of that sexuality, suggests an emancipatory relationship between Indian female identity and Africanness.

The steelband, integral to Carnival and an enduring symbol of African resistance and creativity, is another feature of Trinidadian cultural experience that Indian women writers select for tribute. Joy Mahabir's 'Fire and Steel' (Espinet 1990a, 45) pays tribute to the steelband as the quintessential expression of, and sexualised metaphor for, Caribbean creativity (Kanhai 1999c, 219), while Lelawattee Manoo-Rahming, a Trinidadian woman now living in the Bahamas, uses the steelband as a metonym for home, a national cultural symbol that, when played in Miami by the Miami Pan Symphony, precipitates an overwhelming nostalgia for the landscape of urban Port of Spain, a familiar language, and the Africanness of Trinidad. 'Steelpan in Miami' (1998a) represents the steelband and the Africanness it proclaims as integral to the poet's cultural identity:

> Last night I drove
> over plain Miami
> far in the Southwest
> to Miami Pan Symphony
> Pan Yard not under open skies
> not bounded by mountain peaks
> Cierro del Aripo and El Tucuche
> but swallowed in the stomach
> of a boxy warehouse
>
> Steelpan music cornered
> muffled by dense
> con crete pre fab walls
> not ringing out over
> Queen's Park Savannah
> not jingling like running water
> in East Dry River
>
> …And when the music died
> a farewell so warm like Miami heat
> a Trini voice bidding

'Drive safe eh'

an incantation from the streets of

Port of Spain

a familiar song so strange

in this multilingual

Caribbean city in the frying pan

handle of North America (Manoo-Rahming 1998a).

Carifesta, the Caribbean Festival of Arts, which conservative Indian commentators have also dismissed as an African festival that showcases African culture and excludes Indian influence (Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha 1998, 7), is similarly celebrated by Indian women writers. Manoo-Rahming's 1998 'Carifesta Five – Rebirth' contains a collage of images that the poet uses to identify herself with all the histories of all the peoples of the Caribbean. She embraces differences and speaks of her belonging to the Caribbean society of steelpan, reggae, soca, zouk, lighted deyas, Maha Lakshmi, Dessalines, Garifuna, Invader and Destroyer, Lokono, Shango and Hanuman. There is no estrangement here, only delight in contributing to, and belonging to, an interactive Caribbean cultural tradition. Indeed, in Ramkissoon-Chen's 1997 'A Happy Moment-Then Reality', Carifesta is about 'Indo-African fusing' and this poet uses the rhythmic conversation between a tassa drummer and bongo-man to represent that fusion. Again this interactive Indian/African space is sexualised by the deya, which 'flickers an approving eyelash', and the heat generated by the bongo-man's rhythm:

A fezzed tassa drummer greets,

his pleated pantaloon billowing. Uphill

the bongo-man beats out heat

for Indo-African fusing.

The deya flickers an approving eyelash.

The flambeau is a slave barrack lamp.

...In this Carifesta

we forget Vulcan's churn

in the belly of Soufriere.

We erase his yawns

smoking out life and home

the tents an evacuee

shelter, the beds a bundled burlap.

The tempest is a wild beast

its feet soaked in waves.

Its howl of breath shatters, the doors

of our minds re-opening

on the dark interiors (Ramkissoon-Chen 1997a, 68).

The endurance of relationships between Indian and African women, a theme I have addressed in the works of Samuel Selvon and Merle Hodge, reappears in fiction by Indian women writers. In the last chapter I suggested that the role of the *sas* may help to explain why inter-generational (mother/daughter for the most part) bonding, so prominent in African women's writing in the Caribbean, is for the most part absent in the fiction of Indian women writers. There is evidence, however, of a different configuration of female bonding, that between Indian and African women.

Rosanne Kanhai describes this as a 'macommere' relationship in her 1995 short story of the same name. In her notes to this story, Kanhai (1995) explains that *macommere* literally translates from French Creole as co-mother, meaning the relationship between a mother and godmother of a child. Sometimes a woman would come to be known as the village *macommere* because of her skills and experience as midwife, religious teacher, healer and masseuse, storyteller, and the source of village wisdom and information. The *macommere* relationship developed in plantation society and signals respect and camaraderie between women. Kanhai's representation of this relationship in her short story draws attention to the ethnicity of the two village women through their names; the African woman is the Creole lady and the Indian woman is called *bhowjee*. Theirs is a clandestine relationship, developed through the exchange of midwifery services and sustained by their frequent encounters at the river where both women wash. The relationship draws on the women's shared history of colonial and male domination and endures in spite of cultural taboos and ethnic loyalties. The creole woman holds many stereotypes about *bhowjee* and these are overt in the story – Indians have plenty children, *bhowjee* quickly washes in the river to rush back home, *bhowjee* is virtually locked up in the house most times and only leaves to visit her family - but even while considering these stereotypes, she is getting her flambeau ready, tying her head, and considering the risks of crossing the swelling river that separates her house from *bhowjee's*.

The creole lady is protective of bhowjee, maternal even, in her concern and sympathy for the Indian woman, much like Rita's relationship with the young Urmilla.

Elements of this bonding between Indian and African women also appear in Ramabai Espinet's 1990 short story, 'Barred- Trinidad 1987", in which the first person narrator identifies herself as an Indian among an Indian community that has not yet found a way to negotiate its new experiences and new life in this new place:

> We are lost here, have not found the words to utter our newness, our strangeness, our unfound being. Our clothes are strange, our food is strange, our names are strange. And it is not possible for anyone to coax or help us. Our utterance can only come roaring out of our mouths when it is ready, set and can go. It has not been a happy arrival and we are still so morbid (Espinet 1990b, 15).

She locates herself among the stereotypes held about Indians:

> Indians have no backbone, no stamina...Indians ain't fraid to dead. They does kill easy too. Is because they believe in reincarnation, don't doubt it...And all the time the bitches and them have all kinda money hide up and save. You see all them saddhu and babu all yuh see walking the streets. Them is millionaires, man, millionaires. How yuh think Indians have so much business in this country...And all they children does do in school is study, study...And when they can't get in the good schools they does bribe, man...They ain't know how to live, they don't even spend money on food. Is only dhal and bhaji day and night (Espinet 1990b, 15).

The narrator then subverts these stereotypes by recounting her own peasant experience in Trinidad. She is a nineteen-year-old mother of two children. She and her husband, Dass, have both been fired from the factory where they worked. Dass turns to drinking and gambling and the narrator is left to find a way of feeding her family – 'I couldn't cook good enough to sell and I had two children to mind' (Espinet 1990b, 14). Forced to seek economic alternatives, she picks up Dass's pack of Anchor cigarettes and places it atop a milk tin. Her first customer is a courteous 'tall thin Negro gentleman'. She buys two potatoes with the money to provide dinner, and buys sweets with the change. She puts the sweets in an empty bottle for sale. A 'creole woman down the road' aids the narrator in her small enterprise. She shows her how to make tamarind balls and sugar cakes. The narrator starts a parlour. This last section of the story is the least deterministic, least pessimistic of the experiences Espinet recounts in her

three-part story. The narrator exercises her agency and starts a parlour as a means towards independence and liberation from her oppressively poor circumstances.

These representations of Indian/African relations as relationships among Indian and African women is constitutive of dougla feminism; indeed Kanhai's story is clearly a fictional representation of her dougla feminism (1999a). In the last chapter I noted that fictional representations of mature, heroic Indian matriarchs were deliberate, perhaps contrived, portraits sketched by writers, like Kanhai, who themselves were challenging the Afro-centricity of the Caribbean feminism and at least in Kanhai's case, offer these portraits as representations of dougla feminism. I am alert to that consideration here as I again use fiction by Kanhai and Espinet. In this instance, however, other writers, whose works are less ideologically weighted in the service of feminist theory, seem to also represent Indian/African relations as relationships between Indian and African women. In V.S. Naipaul's short story 'Potatoes' that I addressed earlier, the only expression of solidarity that Mrs Gobin receives for her potato enterprise is from an African woman. The African woman at first greets Mrs Gobin with stereotypes – 'All you Indians smart as hell. Making money like hell, and not spending a cent. Just saving up to be rich. I don't know an Indian who ain't rich. All you people does always help one another' (V.S. Naipaul 1952, 7). However both women look each other up and down to their satisfaction and the encounter ends with the African woman extending sisterhood to Mrs Gobin – 'take me advice, sister, and leave that man alone. You'd be lucky if you get your potatoes at all. One of these days I'm going to beat that man; just watch and see' (V.S. Naipaul 1952, 7-8). The movement from stereotyping to sisterhood is brisk and progressive.

This theme of Indian/African female bonding appears consistently in the fiction of Lakshmi Persaud. Persaud's works are somewhat difficult to analyse. They are deserving of attention because Persaud is the first Indian female novelist in the Caribbean, but her three novels Butterfly in the Wind (1990), Sastra (1993) and For the Love of My Name (2000) share a characteristic reticence that render them unexciting. In all three novels, the authorial monotone is so strong that it deprives potentially exciting characters of individual voice. Persaud's inability to render working-class experience further limits her work. Her second novel, Sastra (1993), however, contains a connection between Indian women's resistance and Africanness that occasions my attention to her work in this chapter. In Sastra, Persaud represents the bonding between Indian and African women that she returns to seven years later in For the Love of My Name (2000).

Sastra Narayan is a young Hindu Brahmin woman, whose family arranges her marriage to Govind. Sastra, however, is in love with Rabindranath. The conflicts that result are managed unconvincingly; the novel is melodramatic for the most part and follows the plot of a Bollywood movie – Sastra leaves her country to be educated in Ireland; she returns to discover that her true love, Rabindranath, is terminally ill with leukaemia; she makes the necessary sacrifices and marries him; they have two children; he dies and Sastra migrates to Canada where she and Dr Lall begin a new life. Persaud does not convincingly challenge any of the fundamental prescriptions of Indianness or Indian womanhood, nor is the novel deliberately radical in its vision of Indian/African relations. The meta narrative of Sastra, at this particular conjuncture, offers a surprisingly lucid statement on Indian/African relations.

The novel is set in the 1950s, significant for the beginning of formal education for Indian girls in Trinidad. Rabindranath's family, the Pandes, is unusual in the village. Surinder Pande, Rabindranath's father, had earlier challenged colonial authority by suggesting that the Ministry of Education adjust the schools' curriculum to discard 'the crooked thinking of the colonial past' (Persaud 1993, 27). A young Brahmin widower, he employs an African cook, Milly, and scandalises the village. Surinder Pande's action is objectionable not only because he has employed an African cook, but also because he is a Brahmin and having a young, creole, unmarried woman handling his food and household items was unthinkable to his caste-conscious community. Moreover, he asks a renowned Brahmin cook, Draupadi, to teach Milly. The villagers struggled to understand the unconventional Pande – 'Milly's employment as cook was seen, therefore, as a sign that Surinder Pande had been on his own too long, and this was what happened to a man cut off from his roots, his culture' (Persaud 1993, 56).

It is through Milly's influence and the inter-ethnic magnanimity that she symbolises in the Pande household that Sastra begins to interrogate and challenge the Indian community's expectations of her. On a visit to the Pande home, Sastra contemplates Surinder Pande's employment of Milly and concludes that he pioneered a critical cultural relationship. For the first time she considers - ' "Could I be a first timer?" But try as she might she could not see herself defying her parents or her village' (Persaud 1993, 56-57). This marks the beginning of Sastra's interrogation of her gendered subjectivity which is clearly associated with the African woman, Milly. As Sastra's love for Rabindranath grows, she visits the Pande home more often and is continually exposed to Milly. By chapter seventeen of the novel, as Sastra continues to seek ways of fulfilling her love for Rabindranath, she refers to Milly as her fairy godmother. By the end of the chapter, she is able to articulate her own desire – 'And for the first time she thought that marriage was a wonderful thing, not merely a duty, a tradition, a

family ceremony, an honourable thing, but a thing of joy – an intoxication to be shared' (Persaud 1993, 175). She decides against her engagement to Govind whom her family has chosen as her husband.

Once Sastra's awakening is incomplete, Milly is made into an easy scapegoat by the older Indian village women:

> Sastra ate over there. Ma knows, she sees it in Sastra's eyes; obeah is showing in her eyes; that black woman is confusing her...that Bajan woman!...One never knows what these people would get up to! Sastra says that she cooks Indian food better than many Indians. Who has ever heard of a thing like that? How can that be? It is unnatural!...I wouldn't be surprised if that black woman encouraged this, boasting up Rabindranath before an unsuspecting Sastra, saying that an arranged marriage is an old-fashioned, foolish thing. That's how they think, but I know better (Persaud 1993, 160).

Although the novel allows Sastra to resist her parents only to fulfil the requirements of the Sita model of Indian womanhood in relation to Rabindranath - she marries him and becomes the selfless, self-sacrificing wife whose trial by fire is enduring Rabindranath's terminal illness - Persaud perhaps suggests this as one stage in Sastra's movement away from prescriptiveness, as is her emigration later.

The more significant exploration of the connection between Africanness and Indian women's resistance takes place through the figure of Draupadi whose influence survives her in the text. Through Draupadi, Persaud pairs Indian women's resistance and Indian/African solidarity and illustrates the connection explored in this thesis between Indian women's resistance to aspects of their gendered subjectivity and Indian/African relations. Draupadi is not only a Brahmin but belonged to one of the higher jatis of Brahmins. She is asked by Surinder Pande to teach Milly how to cook. The implications of this request are considered by Sastra, in retrospect:

> how someone like Draupadi, from the heart of Hindu Chaguanas, a vegetarian by principle, a devout Hindu by disposition, could have made that Hanuman leap across cultural chasms to reach out to a complete stranger. For this was what was required of Draupadi when she was told by Surinder Pande, only on her arrival, that it was his housekeeper, a young, creole, unmarried woman– making up his bed, cooking for him– whom he wished her to teach. Draupadi would only have met black people on the streets and in the market place and passed shops

> where the hot, piercing vapours of brine from the open barrels of meat they purchased– pigs feet and pigs tail in brine– would have brought her much discomfort...Wealthy Indians employed Negroes, but not as cooks...to have the hand that put those meats in its mouth touching one's pillow, one's cup, was deeply repugnant to those Brahmin ladies (Persaud 1993, 55).

Milly suggests that Draupadi's professionalism – she was a master cook – allowed her to transcend cultural barriers but Sastra is unconvinced, knowing that even that would not have been enough for her mother and other women to cross the cultural barrier.

Persaud pays considerable attention to Draupadi's movement from Brahmin insularity to her magnanimity in tutoring Milly. She is the first Indian woman in the text to have a positive, productive relationship with Africans and although she is dead before the narrative begins, the process of her growth and transformation is recorded in a letter she wrote to old Madam Tiwari. The letter records Draupadi's upheaval as she struggles with Surinder Pande's request - 'I had to remove a lifetime of thinking that had become part of myself, and in digging it out, for the root was deep and so strong, I had to pull out chunks of my own flesh. I cried out in agony to Brahma and Vishnu to show me the way, for I was being submerged in darkness...' (Persaud 1993, 165).

As Draupadi considers what is expected of her, she makes a radical connection between Indian/African ethnic solidarity and Indian women's resistance. Being asked to reach across ethnic cultural difference, she recognises, is the same as herself, an Indian woman, reaching beyond the restrictive gender boundaries in her own community:

> but to give all this to a complete stranger – a black creole lady, who could leave anytime, to what purpose? A waste, a sheer waste, Bahin. These last words – now coming from my own lips – startled me – words long lost that had come from my uncles' and pundits' mouths when they heard my father was teaching me not only Hindi but Sanskrit to a high level. 'To a girl child? What will she do with Sanskrit? To what purpose? A waste! A waste of your time, Punditji (Persaud 1993, 166).

The realisation of this connection so disturbs Draupadi that she has a nightmare in which she confronts all her subconscious fears about Africans and Africanness. The dream device allows Persaud to address the conservative Indian community's abhorrence of Africans and African cultural expression. Draupadi's dream mobilises all the major stereotypes about Africans held by conservative sections of the Indian community. Given that the novel was

published in 1993 when Indian/African acrimony was a preoccupation in national debates, the dream device also allows Persaud a safe space within which she can address these virulent stereotypes. Consistent with conservative Indian views of African culture, Persaud, in this dream sequence, deposits a frightening and repulsive Africanness in Carnival. There is physical insecurity – 'afraid to cross the road of devil masks and Jab-Jabs with their beads and bells, lashing the road, swinging the long whips and themselves from side to side' (Persaud 1993, 166) - and there is fear of African sexuality which manifests in the animalisation of Africans:

> a Black man smelling of tar and perspiration, almost naked, his
> shorts wet, his body black and sticky, the perspiration streaming
> down him; he is a tar man, Bahin, so sticky, bare; he has horns
> and a tail and a rope around his waist; a boy is holding a rope, a
> long rope, and walks behind him beating a pan; faster and faster
> now, louder and louder. He puts his hand out to me, then to Mai,
> and dances before her! Disgusting! His tail moving round and
> round, faster and faster; his body is wet and hot, streaming...I
> awoke, Bahin...and then slowly I recognised my strange
> surroundings, and remembered what was being expected of me
> in the morning (Persaud 1993, 167).

Africans are associated with pollution; Draupadi dreams that her revered bags of spices have been polluted by Africanness, causing them to rot and disintegrate; her spices have gone mouldy and are infested with weevils. The man with the tail and horns reappears, 'he laughs and laughs, whirling and jumping, running backwards and forwards into corners and cupboards...the spices become charcoal in my hands' (Persaud 1993, 167).

Draupadi emerges from the cathartic dream able to understand and acknowledge what was being asked of her:

> I had a choice of becoming a spice that was fragrant, rich,
> exciting, a warm spice that had not lost its essence or aroma for
> this young black student, or of becoming dust, charcoal, of no
> use to her...And the more I thought about it, the scales of
> ignorance, of meanness, of my narrowness, fell from my eyes;
> for the very spices that I had all my life treated with great care,
> these minuscule grains and buds, were now showing me such a
> large magnificent way' (Persaud 1993, 168).

Draupadi's epiphany, which begins with the connection she makes between Indian/African relations and Indian women's resistance and which climaxes with her magnanimity towards

Milly, contextualises Indian/African relations for the remainder of the novel. One easily identifiable metonym for the master cook, Draupadi, is food and Rabindranath's thoughts shift to food at a critical moment in the discussion of Indian/African relations. Draupadi's influence is also alive to Sastra who begins to see Surinder Pande's employment of Milly, not as deviant behaviour as the other women do, but as a radical, pioneering move. Then her thoughts too shift to food.

Sastra and Rabindranath, informed by the cross-cultural relationship crafted between Milly and Draupadi one generation earlier, are able to temper a heated discussion on Indian/African relations. During the discussion, the stereotypes about Africans purged in Draupadi's dream, re-appear, but the Indian/African cross cultural understanding achieved by Milly and Draupadi intervenes to expose them as stereotypes. Rabindranath issues this powerful commentary on the profound bond between Indians and Africans in Trinidad - 'We are inseparably bound together, like Siamese twins and neither of us have the good sense to know it. If either tries to destroy the other, his days are numbered too. The economy works like that too. It needs everybody to pull together; things far apart as the clouds above and the oceans beneath are connected. They hang together, bathing the land' (Persaud 1993, 84-85). Despite this almost utopian vision, Sastra ends pessimistically; both Milly and Rabindranath are dismissed as idealists, relations between Indians and Africans deteriorate, Rabindranath is terminally ill and Milly migrates to the United States.

Whatever its artistic and technical demerits, Persaud's representation of the relationship between the African woman Milly and the Indian cook Draupadi in Sastra, and the relationship between the African woman, Dorothy Gittens, and the Indian woman, Subah, in For the Love of My Name, published in 2000, are the only existing portraits of relationships between mature Indian and African womanhood. In other works considered in this chapter, the Indian women - Urmilla, Mrs Gobin - are invariably younger, naïve and without adult female guidance. Their relationships with older, wiser African women provide maternal guidance and protection. In Sastra this relationship is differently configured.

Literary production by Indian women is still limited. My efforts in this dissertation have been to recover some obscure texts by little known writers while also referencing new works that have emerged since Poynting's 1985 bibliography was compiled. My readings of the texts, both old and new, argue that Indian women's writing is more significant in its thematic considerations than is suggested by the limited production and meagre critical attention (Poynting 1985 and 1986; Ramchand 1998). Indian female identity in Trinidad is historically defined in relation to Africanness and I have been concerned to examine how

Indian women writers re-assess and re-construct that relationality. These works converge with other creative and intellectual currents that in a variety of other ways draw attention to the gendered configuration of Indian/African relations in Trinidad. Merle Hodge's work is noticeable in this regard and I have explicitly addressed her feminist considerations of Indian/African relations in this dissertation. I want to point here to two other representations of Indian womanhood and Indian/African relations that help to illustrate the variety of contexts in which similar discussions are taking place.

Trinidadian lyricist David Rudder, whose 1999 'The Ganges and the Nile' I referenced in chapter two for its representation of Indian/African unity, is respected in the Caribbean for his calypso commentaries on culture and society. His 'Rally Round the West Indies' (1987) is now a cricket anthem in the region and his work has been critically acclaimed by literary critic and calypso historian, Professor Gordon Rohlehr. Two songs by David Rudder provide representations of Indian women's resistance and Africanness that are useful to discuss here. His 1995 'The Ballad of Hulsie X' was a thinly disguised political commentary on the political phenomenon that was woman MP Hulsie Bhaggan. Bhaggan was originally an activist in a non-governmental organisation, the Guaymare Villagers Association, formed to protest government's attempt to compensate and disperse villagers in favour of a north/south highway in the late 1980s. She was co-opted by the then opposition UNC and elected as an opposition MP in a by-election. From within the UNC, Bhaggan launched a political offensive against UNC political leader and now Prime Minister Basdeo Panday that so threatened the UNC's chances in the upcoming 1995 general election, that Panday and other executive members of the party mobilised a counter-attack that resulted in Bhaggan's expulsion. Her political transformation into an Independent candidate was short-lived; in 1990 Bhaggan responded to a spate of rapes and robberies in Central Trinidad, the political code word for the Indian community, by suggesting that African men were raping Indian virgins. The conservatism in the charge, which Bhaggan never publicly recanted, squashed her political opportunity - already endangered in the male-dominated two-party political system- and she has since retreated from public attention. Calypso reaction to Bhaggan's charge for the most part sexualised and raped her in song. Rudder's offering distanced itself from the popular tenor of the season and documented the particular threat to the UNC that Bhaggan, an Indian woman, represented. In his song Rudder humorously invokes 'Hulsie X', which a Bhaggan supporter had inscribed on a placard, to satirise the connection between Bhaggan's opposition to the UNC and black liberation discourse contained in the supporter's banner. I reproduce the song in its entirety here:

CHORUS

To be continued

Get them out

We used to be a raggamuffin monarchy

But now we are a parasite oligarchy

we used to be a raggamuffin monarchy

now is only parasite in the party

get them out

get them out

Well this is the tale, oh such a tale

Of a girl called the sugar-belt queen

If you breathe too hard in she central yard

She bound to be on the scene

And so the people get mean

And they went to their queen

And beg she to intervene

They say oh queen! There's a scourge in the land

It was an African sex machine

And so she rant and she rave and she misbehave

This girl called Hulsie X

And so the grey haired man

Turn to Wade and Ram

And ask the boys what's next?

They say listen Manday

She breaking away

This girl called Hulsie X

They say she do a dollar wine on the party line

Well that get Manday vex

CHORUS

Well she say Manday was too thin on crime

So she decide to make him fart

She bypass him three times with she operation

That eh good for he heart

Then Manday try every trick that he know

She stick like a pepper in he tail

She you, Mr Manday!

You call me a coward?

I should put you in a sugar cane jail

And so the heavyweight man

With the Human Rights hand

Pelt a jab at Hulsie X

The ex-party whip

He say she on a trip

And that get Manday …

We have the Balisier boys like puppet and toys

and up come Hulsie X

Listen Mr Manday

You eh see, we is a mannish clan

You too soft with the opposite sex (David Rudder 1996).

The following Carnival season, 1996, Rudder selected another portrait of Indian womanhood from Trinidad's sometimes bizarre political landscape and this time commented on Indian women in the mainly-African PNM. Rudder's portrait of then Speaker of the House of Representatives, Occah Seapaul, and long time PNM cardholder Marjorie Beepatsingh, focuses on the relationship between resistant Indian womanhood and African gender ideologies, and the threat that this Indian female identity implies for the Hindu orthodoxy. Rudder's 'Madame Occahontas' (1996) recounts the constitutional crisis occasioned by Seapaul's refusal to step down as Speaker of the House. The PNM government's attempt to legally manoeuvre her out of the chair were forestalled by her refusal to have the matter tabled in the House. The government eventually declared a twenty-four hour state of emergency in order to remove her from office. Rudder's commentary on the crisis, always nonplussed by the bizarre turn of events, locates Seapaul within a PNM tradition of resistant women and delights in the comeuppance she engineers for both PNM and UNC male politics. The title of the song 'Madame Occahontas' humorously references Seapaul's Indian ethnicity

through Walt Disney's 'Poccahontas' which was being screened at the time. As a further explanatory note, balisier is the symbol of the PNM and 'rough neck O'Halloran' and 'slapperman Solomon' are former influential PNM Cabinet ministers accused of corruption. Again I reproduce the song here:

CHORUS
She take she wig and she fly it in they face
Madame Speaker, well I think you out of place
Westminster dreadlocks flying in they face
She take she wig and she fly it in they face
She turn, she twist, she twist it and she turn
I not going to stop till all you learn!
She say I not going to stop till the Balisier burn!

Big, big war in the House of the Balisier
One of the warriors break away
Because bad-john thing is part of their tribal lore
From the days of rough neck O'Halloran
Right down to slapperman Solomon
So in the tradition Occahontas declare a war
Well then the chief call a council
So as to make an example
They say Hear! Hear!
The council declare
We love you, my dear
But you must get out of here
She say boys doh bother
This is me not meh brother
She say no!no! Tell them the speaker say so!

With she Westminster dreadlocks
She put the government in a headlock
I talking about Madame Occahontas
You touch the woman chair you get your head buss

Getting on woman

CHORUS

The whole thing start with a legal brief

That's a Balisier with a brand new leaf

When you put them together

It mean the country have pain

She send a man for a Haitian sugar boat

You know he come back with a tractor

That wouldn't float

What can I say, friend?

Haiti, I'm sorry again…

Meanwhile the Balisier army

Send in the battle hard General Attorney

The general say ray!ray!

the people out there

they say you gotta leave

but she say, no way!

I not going home

What about the chappy with the big loan?

She say no!no!

Tell them the Speaker say so.

CHORUS

Well the big chief started to wrench

He say, I want that woman off the bench!

So then they summon a witch doctor to come with a …

Then they wait till she gone to bed

The only time that she don't move dread

And they fashion a nightmare she couldn't dream

Then the Balisier braves declare

As they gather in Woodford Square

I hear them say

Yeah!Yeah! the people declare

We say you gotta leave

Sister, get outta here!

The troops from the port

They come out and they control the north

Man, it was left, right

Government boots in the night

Well all right

Now that you done with this thing

Hire Marjorie Beepatsingh

What?

She badder than Occs and they kinda resemble

And so the House is now a Carnival

And Marjorie is the Queen of the bacchanal

She is the rightest one

Because she will make Manday tremble

I lie? (David Rudder 1996).

These portraits of Indian womanhood are as new as the political involvement of Indian women in Trinidad and they exemplify the diverse approaches that converge in considerations of the role of Indian women in Indian/African relations. The fact that Indian women's relationship with Africanness is a working subject for calypso indicates a broad social engagement around these questions.

While I have for the most part concerned myself with literary representations of the relationship between Africanness and Indian women's gendered resistance, I am equally interested in the implications of this for feminist activist mobilisation. Despite the fact that some of the essay and fiction writers mentioned in the dissertation - Rosanne Kanhai, Ramabai Espinet, Ruth Sawh, Leelawatee Manoo-Rahming - live and work from outside Trinidad, many other women involved in these deliberations continue to reside at home and are active members of the women's movement. It seems to me that an analysis that focuses simultaneously on gender and ethnic identity can intervene progressively in the oppositional politics of Indian/African relations in Trinidad. This intervention will depend on African women's negotiation of the charge of Afro-centricity and Indian women's response to the

Indo-centric nationalism that is currently being perpetuated in Trinidad. The fate of dougla feminism will depend on these negotiations.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have been concerned to explore the political and theoretical potential of dougla identity. In particular, I have argued that dougla feminism, emerging from ethical extrapolations of dougla identity and from attention to the undeniably gendered configuration of Indian/African relations, can potentially interrupt the circular and self-sustaining discourses, deployed by sections of both the Indian and African communities, that result in the denial of positive Indian/African cross-cultural interaction.

I have conducted the investigation with the hope that finding ways of reading may help us to find ways of relating. I have demonstrated my thesis by way of readings of texts that address Indian/African relations. Drawn from Caribbean fiction, calypso narratives and newspaper commentaries, the body of writing under consideration is by no means exhaustive. I have concentrated on texts that represent the complex gender matrix of Indian/African relations and which help to illustrate and further discussions of Indian/African interaction. In this regard, the interpretative possibilities explored in the thesis support a political intervention. I believe that the questions raised here are crucial to the future of Indian/African relations in Trinidad and to the scholarship on Trinidad and the wider English-speaking Caribbean. In particular, the question of how Indian women are deployed in Indian/African antagonism; my consideration of the Afro-centricity of the regional women's movement; and my analysis of how dougla feminism will have to negotiate with an ascendant Indian cultural nationalism, are difficult and provocative issues. Before I conclude, I would like to probe a related issue that I believe will also require creative negotiation.

Caribbean women's writing over the past few decades has received wide attention for its diverse explorations of women's gendered, ethnic and national identities. Olive Senior, herself among the celebrated Caribbean writers, commented in 1988 that "on the whole, it is the women writers who are displaying the most versatility" (in Rowell 1988, 489). Similarly, in his examination of Francophone Caribbean writers, Professor A. James Arnold concluded that:

> What I see emerging is a far greater freedom on the part of
> women writers as regards locale and setting of their novels and
> plays, whereas the male *creolistes* at present appear to be driven
> by an ideological overdetermination to conform to the same
> teleological project: a certain locale is required, whereas others
> are no longer legitimate; a certain use of Creole is

mandated...and finally, a certain gendering of characters, narrators and even the symbolic geography of their fiction is rigorously imposed – and then theorised – in such a way that those who envisage their creative project differently can be dismissed as somehow not truly serious. The inescapable conclusion...is that in the French West Indies today there are two literary cultures: one, theoretically driven and linguistically constrained, gendered in terms of an age-old inheritance...; the other, practiced by a disparate group of women writers who seem to have in common their total disregard for these same considerations (1995, 40).

While it has been a central aim of this thesis to explore both the creative and the political dimensions of a certain body of Caribbean writing, this project for the most part has been strategically confined to Trinidad and is politically embedded in the cultural productions of the contemporary period. I am also aware that the representations that the thesis focuses on in terms of the interrogation of dougla feminism has not permitted extensive discussion of one of the more significant 'freedoms' to emerge in recent writings from the region – namely the representations of homosexuality. Homosexuality is a difficult topic to insert in Caribbean literary criticism. Timothy Chin, in an article that argues for a politics that recognises the heterogeneous and contradictory nature of all cultural formations, draws attention to the fact that 'Caribbean literary production has traditionally maintained a conspicuous silence around issues of gay and lesbian sexuality' (Chin 1997). For the most part, Caribbean literature, in its inattention to gay and lesbian sexuality, reproduces a pervasive homophobia in Caribbean societies. Although anti-gay sentiment in Jamaica has been so sensationalised through the recent Buju Banton 'battyman' controversy that one has to guard against generalisations – for example, there is no basis for Chin's suggestion that anti-gay violence is alarmingly persistent in the contemporary Caribbean (1997, 140) – one must concede that gay and lesbian expressions, while not assaulted in most Caribbean countries, are othered and often ridiculed. Indeed, there is disregard for considerations of homosexual identity in the Caribbean women's movement and currently little interest for it in feminist scholarship.

Despite the neglect and even dismissal of homosexuality and its cultural representations, I wish to suggest that this is not a dimension of difference that we should ignore in an examination of Indian/African relations. Indeed, locating the emergence of Indian women's writing within the wider context of Caribbean women's writing forces one to consider the relationship between dougla feminism and representations of homosexuality that are emerging prominently in the works of Caribbean women writers – Michelle Cliff; Maryse

Condé; Makeda Silvera – and in the scholarship on Caribbean literature – Timothy Chin (1997), Arnold (1995), Thomas Spear (1995). Furthermore, it has not passed me by that Rosanne Kanhai's suggestion of a *macommere* relationship between the Indian woman, Bhowjee, and the Creole lady, in her fictional representation of dougla feminism, connects linguistically with homosexual identity. *Macommere*, variously spelt *MaComere*, *makumeh*, *macoome* and *macomeh*, literally translates from French as co-mother, referring to the relationship between a mother and godmother of a child. Also prominent in its meaning is homosexual or a 'womanish' man. Indeed, the editors of the recent journal of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars (ACWWS), MaComere, specifically de-emphasise the homosexual signifieds of the word, choosing to highlight 'the female connotations of the word': 'The word is spelled in this way instead of in the clearly Creole manner...so that the female connotations of the word are highlighted and those meanings which apply to males (a womanish or gossipy man, a homosexual) are less obvious' (Pyne Timothy 1999, i). I would seek to reverse this denial of the word's potential to address different sexualities even while embracing its potential to describe progressive and liberatory relationships among heterosexual women. Even if one were to suggest that Kanhai may be engaged in a similar project of women-centred scholarship, I would suggest that Shani Mootoo's Cereus Blooms at Night (1996) leaves us in no doubt that contemplations of dougla feminism will inevitably have to engage with homosexuality in order to broaden its understanding of women's negotiations of their gendered, ethnic, sexual and national identity.

Mootoo's novel, her first, is so immediately confident, so artistically secure, and its creole voice so enchanting, that it demands attention. Cereus Blooms At Night (1996) is one of a small number of recent Caribbean texts in which representations of male and female sexuality are unconventionally overt. Buxton Spice (1998) by new Guyanese writer, Oonya Kempadoo, is another that represents Lula and her young friends coming to terms with their adolescent sexuality with a directness and candour that is unusual among the many Caribbean novels of childhood. In representing the children's sexual coming of age, Kempadoo mixes children's sexual curiosity with their characteristic mischief as in their interrogation of the rancid Uncle Joe – 'You lolo, Uncle Joe. What you would do wid your *lolo*?' (1998, 9). Lula's sexual curiosity climaxes early in the narrative:

> This day, he [Iggy] blocked me by the small fridge in the school
> room...I was scared stiff, must be what the word *fri-gid* means –
> frozen, your heart beating up inside and legs quivering, all
> freeze-up...he pressed the hardest piece of flesh against my

> burning, shivering bunge. Right hard against my bone. The brute
> was surprised by the big hard mound I had too, made him look
> down to where the heat was coming from. But it made him bore
> his hard lolo on me more...His other hand pushed up and
> grabbed my clammy panty. Same time the twitching in my
> bunge made one big blink and I felt a warm liquid wet his
> fingers (Kempadoo 1998, 35).

This sexual experience, occurring so early in the narrative, allows Kempadoo to explore other aspects of sexuality that inform the children's development. Rumshop Cockroach and Clinton, for example, have a brutal relationship that links violence to sexual desire. The children eavesdrop while, during a rowdy physical battle, Rumshop Cockroach's sobs take on a new tone. They conclude 'he fucking she now' (Kempadoo 1998, 71). Lula is also influenced by some of the village women's delight in sex and their sexuality:

> My sister's friend...she liked sex so much, all the boys in that
> school and every friend she brought to our house had a familiar
> way of touching her. Bullet had it that way too. They so big bout
> their sexiness, was a joy to watch one a'them plunk herself down
> on the bench – big legs all over the place, big lips smiling, eyes
> squinged-up laughing (Kempadoo 1998, 69).

Kempadoo thus represents a liberatory delight in frank expressions of male and female sexuality. Meanwhile another 1998 publication, Aelred's Sin by Trinidadian Lawrence Scott – whose previous novel Witchbroom (1993) was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize - opens the doors on the erotics of homosexuality. Set in the Ashton Park Monastery in the 1960s and the 1980s, the narrative reconstructs the tortured emotional life of Brother Aelred who struggles to reconcile his homosexual impulses with Catholic moral austerity. The reconstruction of Brother Aelred's life in the monastery connects him with the African slave boy, Jordan, and so opens a discussion, new in Trinidad literature, about colonial sexuality and homosexual erotics. Clem Maharaj's The Dispossessed (1992), which I have discussed at length in this thesis, is another earlier and more tentative probing of homoerotics in a rural, cane-cutting estate village community.

Mootoo's Cereus Blooms at Night (1996) is among this emerging body of work that addresses sexuality with such unusual candour as to allow for rare representations of homosexuality. The novel is a layered, densely textured work that unravels as its progresses, a narrative technique that works to gradually strip away layers of silence in order to allow characters space to be themselves and their stories of sexual development to emerge. Tyler,

the narrator, develops a rare affinity for one of his patients, Mala Ramchandin, an insane old woman found in a decaying house. The defining event in Mala's history is her grandparents' decision to relinquish their son, Chandin, to be brought up by missionaries. In this early post-indentureship period, Chandin's parents believe that the missionaries would provide their son with an education that would in turn release him from a future of toil. The decision proves to be disastrous. Far from empowering Chandin, the missionary education first ruptures his relationship with his parents, and then destroys him. He is represented as the miscreated colonial who is useful to the missionaries because he converts 'heathen' Indians, but is unsuitable to woo their daughter.

Chandin's parents, like Miss Coolie in Olive Senior's 'The Arrival of the Snake-Woman' (1989), retain their cultural identity while making relevant gestures to the missionaries but the young Chandin is unable to similarly negotiate colonial impositions and the missionary education estranges him from his parents, his source of cultural identification: 'He was embarrassed by his parents' reluctance to embrace the smarter-looking, smarter-acting Reverend's religion' (Mootoo 1996, 30). When Chandin realises that he is unable to marry Lavinia, the reverend's daughter, he contrives to return to the security of the Indian community through the Indian woman, Sarah: 'Chandin wanted nothing more than to collapse in the security of a woman, a woman from his background, and Sarah was the most likely possibility' (Mootoo 1996, 45). But Sarah is not what Chandin thinks her to be. Instead of the cultural model of dutiful wife and mother, Sarah abandons her two daughters, Asha and Mala, and runs off with Lavinia. Sarah's departure precipitates a long period of violent sexual abuse of her daughter, Mala, by her father, Chandin.

Read within the parameters of criticism on black women's writing more generally, the novel is fairly conventional and could be grouped with other canonical texts such as Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1983) and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1970) as a narrative of self-empowerment in which the female protagonist learns to survive abuse and neglect to become a liberating consciousness. In Cereus Blooms At Night (1996) Mala's orphaned consciousness finds creative expression in her zealous protection of natural life and in her 'mothering' of her sister, Asha, whose escape she plans and successfully executes. She empowers Tyler, the homosexual narrator, and Otoh, the girl-turned-boy, allowing them both to express and articulate their differences. The sympathy is generated by their common persecution and both Tyler and Otoh find in Mala the acceptance they crave. Mala liberates Ambrose too from his half-dead existence. She is the symbolic cereus and her orphaned but

liberating consciousness, its bloom. However, I want to suggest some other interpretative possibilities that emerge from the material context of the narrative.

Born in Ireland, raised in Trinidad and now living in Canada, Mootoo materially situates the book in Trinidad (the fictional Lantanacamara) and her characters are drawn from the Indian community. I want to suggest that the significance of this text emerges if we read it alongside Indian women's writing from Trinidad. In chapter seven I suggested that there is little evidence of mother/daughter bonding, and more generally inter-generational bonding, in the fiction of Indian women writers. Mootoo's representation of the **significant** mother/daughter bond in <u>Cereus Blooms at Night</u> is unusual in this context. Interestingly too, Mootoo develops the theme of inter-generational bonding through the relationship between Tyler and his grandmother, Cigarette Smoking Nana, and later between Tyler and Mala who functions as his surrogate mother. The relationship between Otoh and Mala is similarly represented. It seems to me that Mootoo suggests these relationships as creative alternatives, not only to the history of colonial rupture from geographical, cultural and historical motherlands, but also as alternatives to the historically fractured relationship among Indian women of different generations. In writing new models of bonding and new models of gendered and sexual subjectivity, Mootoo's narrative suggests dimensions of difference which must be accounted for in future studies of the politics of Caribbean identity. Like Mootoo's narrative which seeks to write that which is seldom attended to, it has been my project in this thesis to examine the politically and culturally sensitive issues of cross-cultural representations and relations in the context of contemporary Trinidad. By addressing the difficult and provocative issues around dougla feminism, it has been my aim to find ways of talking about areas of contact and communication between two groups which may open up more ethical relations and representations.

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This bibliography was prepared in accordance with the guidelines set out in the MHRA Style Book, 5th edition, 1996. Please note that all short stories and articles from the *Guardian Weekly Magazine* are archived on microfilm and page numbers are not visible. Also, calypsoes are referenced by the calypsonian's sobriquet. Some calypsonians do not have sobriquets.

Key to Bibliography

I   **PRIMARY SOURCES**

Novels

Short Stories

Poems

Calypsoes

Interviews

Plays

Works in Progress

II   **SECONDARY SOURCES**

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Articles in Books

Articles in Journals and Periodicals

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