MARIA CRISTINA FUMAGALLI

"The Smallest Cell Remembers:" *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* and Marlene Nourbese Philip's Journey Back to Africa

Memory and the painful but necessary process of re-membering one's history, one's identity and one's language are central to Marlene Nourbese Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*:

> Hold we to the centre of remembrance
> That forgets the never that severs
> Word from source[1]

Crucially, memory and the act of re-membering are also fundamental to Caribbean creolization: Kathleen Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, in fact, take creolisation to signify a new space "at the crossroads of forgetting and remembering, of an elusive past to be re-imagined and an uncertain future."[2] Wilson Harris adds an extra dimension to creolisation—or creoleness as he calls it—when he defines it as "a cross-cultural nemesis capable of becoming a saving nemesis"[3] because it throws "bridges across chasms, to open an architecture of space within closed worlds of race and culture."[4] In "Creoleness: The Crossroads of a Civilization?" he focuses on the "creolization of [this] chasm," that is the appropriation (but not the purely formal appropriation) of cultural artefacts by a different culture through what he calls "involuntary associations."[5] Harris uses the word "chasm" to "imply that within the gulfs that divide cultures […] there exists […] a storage of creative

possibility that, once tapped may energize the unfinished genesis of the imagination." "In that energy," Harris continues, "eclipsed bridges and potential bridges exist between divorced or separated or closed orders and worlds, bridges that are sometimes precarious, never absolute."[6] In this article I will investigate the relationship between memory/re-membrance, metamorphosis and Caribbean creolisation as articulated by Nourbese Philip in *She Tries Her Tongue*. I will argue that, through their "voluntary" and, in particular, their "involuntary" associations, the poems in this collection can be read as instances of what Harris defines as "bridges" thrown across "closed worlds of race and culture."[7]

It makes sense, I feel, to begin with what we may call *voluntary* associations. In a letter to me, Nourbese Philip has admitted that, at the time of writing *She Tries Her Tongue*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* "influenced [her] tremendously […] *She Tries* is in some sort of dialogue with the *Metamorphoses*."[8] The line that constitutes the title of Philip's collection is to be found in John Dryden's translation of Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the story of the nymph Io is told.[9] After raping Io, Jupiter transmutes her into a beautiful heifer depriving her of the faculty of speech. Io's story ends well with the re-transformation of the heifer into a woman: as Dryden writes, emphasising the drama of utterance, "she tries her tongue, her silence softly breaks, / And fears her former Lowings when she speaks." Overall, apart from the title, Philip's collection contains other references and allusions to Ovid's poem: in the penultimate poem of the book, for example, Philip mentions Philomela,[10] who was raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law (significantly, her tongue was cut out) and later transformed into a bird (Book VI). Io and Philomela share a similar destiny: they are both raped and they both have to struggle to acquire (or to re-acquire) a language, a way of communicating with the rest of the world.[11] Sadly, their stories resonate with the experiences of the African slaves in the New World: deprived of their African tongues they had to "find"

a new language to express themselves and, in particular, they echo the predicament of the many black female slaves raped by their white masters.

As a matter of fact, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, many female characters are submitted to unbearable and inexplicable cruelties by both men and gods. Just before they are metamorphosed, their grief either explodes into a cry or implodes in an inner, secret lament. In Book V, for instance, the nymph Arethusa loudly and desperately begs the goddess Diana to help her while Cyane nursed "silently in her heart a wound that none could heal." Philip refers to their stories in "And Over Every Land and Sea," the first section of *She Tries Her Tongue,* and the title of this section is once again a quotation from Book V of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The seven poems that constitute "And Over Every Land and Sea" are all preceded by an epigraph/citation from Ovid but, since Dryden did not translate Book V, Philip quotes from Mary M. Innes' prose version. Philip concentrates on the myth of Ceres and Proserpina, mother and daughter. One day, while Proserpina was gathering flowers, Pluto, king of the underworld and brother of her father Jupiter and her mother Ceres, kidnapped her and brought her down to the kingdom of death while "with wailing cries the terrified goddess called to her mother, and to her comrades, but more often to her mother." The nymph Cyane unsuccessfully tried to stop Pluto, but the God utterly dismissed her words, so, humiliated and full of sorrow for the rape of the goddess, Cyane dissolved into the waters of which she had been the spirit. In the meantime, Ceres "with panic in her heart," roamed over the earth in search of her daughter, but in vain. When she arrived by Cyane's pool, the nymph, willing to tell Ceres the truth but unable to speak because of her recent transformation into water, displayed on her surface Proserpina's girdle, which happened to have fallen in her pool during the goddess's passage. Ceres, full of rage and grief "as if she had only then learned of [Proserpina's] loss," started blaming the whole earth that opened up to receive her daughter. Ceres called the earth ungrateful and undeserving of her gift of corn

and turned it into a sterile desert. Later, with the help of the nymph Arethusa, she discovered that in fact it was her brother Pluto who had kidnapped her daughter. Full of indignation, Ceres decided to go to Jupiter, father of the girl and brother of Pluto, and offered to overlook the abduction provided that he would grant immediate freedom to Proserpina. Although reluctantly, Jupiter agreed, on the condition that, while in the kingdom of death, Proserpina had not eaten anything. Unfortunately this was not the case─Proserpina had indeed eaten some seeds from a pomegranate─and she was condemned to spend part of each year in the underworld.

The quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that engage in a dialogue with Philip's poem refer to Ceres' search for Proserpina. "Where she, where she, where she / be, where she gone?"[12] are the opening lines of "Questions! Questions!" the first poem of this section that creolises the myth adapting it to a Caribbean (diasporic) universe. The mother's search for her daughter—"crazy or no crazy I must find she"[13]—is mirrored by the daughter's search for her mother in the second poem, "Adoption Bureau:" "She whom they call mother, I seek."[14] The desperation behind the mother's search for her daughter and the daughter's search for her mother can be all too easily "translated" into the experience of African Caribbean people (Philip's target audience) who have suffered and are still suffering from the dismemberment of families by slavery and diaspora. Philip, once again, cleverly capitalises on these similarities. In Philip's collection, the daughter's search for her mother (expressed in standard English) and the mother's search for her daughter (in Creole) soon fuse and become one: in the mother's words: "She gone—gone to where and don't know / looking for me looking for she."[15] If mother and daughter share the same destiny they also depend upon the same determination: "she going find you, if you keep looking."[16] In the poem "The Search" mother and daughter find themselves face to face in a dreamlike dimension:

> all day long she dreaming about wide black nights,
> how lose stay, what find look like.

> A four-day night of walk bring me
> to where never see she:
> is "come child, come," and "welcome" I looking—
> the how in lost between She
> and I, call and response in tongue and
> word that buck up in strange;
> all that leave is seven dream-skin:
> sea-shell, sea-lace, feather-skin and rainbow-flower,
> afterbirth, foreskin and blood-cloth—
> seven dream-skin and crazy find me.[17]

In the poem that follows, mother and daughter are brought together, so close that they almost become one: "i suckle her / suckling me."[18] The poem is entitled "Dream-skins" and is a dream sequence: "Dream-skins dream the dream dreaming: / (*in two languages*)."[19] It is divided in eight sub-sections, one for each "dream-skin." For the epigraph of "Dream-skins," Philip employs the words that the nymph Arethusa uses to describe her own passage through the underworld in Ovid's poem: "the earth opened up a way for me and, after passing deep down through its lowest caverns, I lifted up my head again in these regions, and saw the stars which had grown strange to me." Arethusa's journey can be read as a descent and exit from hell: from an African Caribbean point of view, it may be taken to represent the awakening from the hellish, dark nightmare of history and of the Middle Passage. While travelling underground, Arethusa saw Proserpina in the underworld and then revealed to Ceres that her daughter had become the queen of the "world of shadows." "Sightings," the sixth poem in "And Over Every Land and Sea," deals with the daughter's desperate attempt to re-member a mother visible only in a dreamlike world where all the senses are both alerted and confused:

> [...] I did once
> smell that smell
> [...]
> the voice of her sound, or didn't I once
> see her song, hear her image call.[20]

Nostalgia dominates at this point: in the epigraph to the last poem Ceres says, "the daughter I have sought so long has now at last been found—if you call it 'finding' to be more certain that I have lost her, or if knowing where she is is finding her." In the concluding lines of this

section, however, Philip abandons this nostalgic and self-defeatist mood and highlights the necessity to create a "space" (she calls it "sacred ground") where all wounds can be cured:

> the oozing wound
> would only be healed
> on sacred ground.[21]

Interestingly, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* all the characters who contribute to the creation of this "healing space" and try to help (to re-member) mother and daughter are female: Cyane, Arethusa, an old woman who feeds Ceres during her wanderings, and Achelous' daughters who ask the gods to transform their limbs into wings so that they can search for Proserpina over the sea. In "And Over Every Land and Sea," therefore, Philip not only appropriates the myth of Ceres and Proserpina and creolises it, creating an alter/native[22] version, but she dedicates the whole collection to "all the mothers" aiming to re-member and re-describe both history and the world from the point of view of women. In Ovid's poem, Ceres' and Proserpina's story is also told by a female, Calliope, the muse of epic poetry and daughter of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. Memory, as anticipated, has a crucial importance for Philip because

> when the smallest cell remembers—
> how do you
> how can you
> when the smallest cell
> remembers
> lose a language[23]

Memory is also valued for its (very ambivalent) connection with history: "Without memory can there be history?"[24] During the Second Caribbean Women Writers' Conference in 1996, Philip declared that one of her favourite quotations is James Joyce's "History is a dream from which I am trying to awake."[25] In *Centre of Remembrance: Memory, and Caribbean Women's Literature*, the published proceedings of the conference, Philip amends this by adding that for her "history is not so much a dream from which [she] is trying to awaken as a nightmare."[26] In *She Tries Her Tongue* this nightmare is vividly represented and not only in

"And Over Every Land and Sea:" for example, in "Discourse on the Logic of Language," Philip refers to Dr Broca—who "devoted much of his time to 'proving' that white males of the Caucasian race had larger brains than, and were therefore superior to, women, Blacks and other peoples of colour"[27]—and inserts two edicts dating back to the time of slavery that she reports in the same poem:

> *EDICT I*
> *Every owner of slaves shall, wherever possible, ensure that his slaves belong to as many ethnolinguistic groups as possible. If they cannot speak to each other, they cannot then foment rebellion and revolution.*
>
> *EDICT II*
> *Every slave caught speaking his native language shall be severely punished. Where necessary, removal of the tongue is recommended. The offending organ, when removed, should be hung on high in a central place, so that all may see and tremble.*[28]

If history is a nightmare, according to Joseph Campbell, myth instead is a dream everyone has, just as everyone also dreams her or his own personal myths: in other words, "dream is the personalised myth, myth the depersonalised dream."[29] As we have seen, in Philip's "And Over Every Land and Sea" mother and daughter meet precisely in a dream and in *She Tries Her Tongue* as a whole, Philip, who recognises the strategic value of myth as a "verbal method" to translate her "i-mage into meaning"[30] succeeds in dreaming and creolising a depersonalised dream/personalised myth and in producing an alter/native epic. As a matter of fact, in Philip's opening sequence the encounter between mother and daughter takes place in a dream and within the field of force of myth but, ultimately, one can say that this encounter takes place *in the poem*. In order to fulfil its function—that for Philip is "to speak to the essential being of the people among whom and for whom the artist creates"[31]—poetry must bring into being a space, a "sacred ground" on which all wounds can be healed, as Philip herself suggests in "And Over Every Land and Sea." Dreams, myths and Philip's version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (which, as Antonio Benítez-Rojo would say, is "in a state of creolization")[32] do open what Harris calls "an architecture of space within closed worlds of

race and culture" where mother and daughter, past and present, Africa and the Western world, Creole and standard English can finally meet on an equal basis and generate something new and powerful. In "The Absence of Writing or How I Almost became a Spy," her afterword to *She Tries her Tongue*, Philip describes the way in which this space is created: "Fundamental to any art form is the image," or rather Philip's "i-mage." For "i-mage," drawing on the "Rastafarian practice of privileging the 'I' in many words," Philip means "the irreducible essence—the i-mage—of creative writing."[33] The i-mages created by the artist are crucial because, when they speak to the essential being of the people, they can definitely contribute to "altering the way a society perceives itself and, eventually its collective consciousness."[34] In fact, Philip points out, it is through poetry, story-telling and writing that

> the tribe's experiences are converted and transformed to i-mage and to word almost simultaneously, and from word back to i-mage again. So metaphorical life takes place, so the language becomes richer, the store of metaphor, myth and fable enlarged, and the experience transcended not by exclusion and alienation, but by inclusion in the linguistic psyche, the racial and generic memory of the group.[35]

Obviously, for this process to succeed, experience must be incorporated in language and language must serve for "the re-creation of those i-mages."[36] For all authentic writers and poets the choice of a language through which to give a form to their thoughts and feelings is always a crucial one, but for West Indian writers and poets the dilemma is made more complex by the fact that, to use Philip's terminology, English is their "mother tongue" as well as their "father tongue."

In her effort to "throw bridges" in order to make her "father tongue" her own, Philip accepts the challenge to re-create i-mages adequate to the Caribbean English experience in a language that has, for a long time, been a "foreign" language. This is the only way of healing the wound inflicted on her own people by the loss of the African mother tongues and names, the imposition of silence and the superimposition (*via* the foreign language) of a foreign

consciousness. This process of appropriation of the father tongue, Philip wrote in 1983, can succeed only by "consciously restructuring, reshaping and, if necessary, *destroying* the language" [my italics].[37] However, most importantly, five/six years later (in 1988-1989)—that is, following the experience of writing *She Tries Her Tongue* and of engaging with Proserpina's and Ceres' myth (and its diverse sources)—Philip recognises instead that her latest poems have taken her a long way towards the goal of *decentring* the language [my italics]:

> This is not the same thing as destroying a language which is a far harder thing to do. Also, destruction connotes great sturm und drang when, in fact, what works just as well at times is a more subtle but equally profound approach.[38]

In other words, Philip seems to suggest that despite the "anguish of English" and despite the fact that English is both a "mother tongue" and a "father tongue," "some sort of balance" between the two can be and should be achieved. As an example of this balance, Philip refers to "Discourse on the Logic of Language"[39] where she decentres, restructures and reshapes not only the language but also the page-bound tradition to which it belongs. The first and third page of this poem are organised in a very peculiar way: at the centre of the page she places a poem dealing with mother tongue and father tongue:

> English
> is my mother tongue.
> A mother tongue is not
> not a foreign lan lan lang
> language
> l/anguish
> anguish
> – a foreign anguish.
>
> English is
> my father tongue.
> A father tongue is
> a foreign language,
> therefore English is
> a foreign language
> not a mother tongue.
>
> [...]

I have no mother tongue
[...]
and english is
my mother tongue
is
my father tongue
[...]
english
is a foreign anguish.[40]

On the right-hand side of the page Philip inserts the two edicts from the time of slavery representing the nightmare of history that I have previously quoted, and on the left-hand side, running along the page vertically, we can read about a dream of mythical beginnings, an alter/native "genesis:"

Significantly enough, therefore, Philip's own attempt to find "some sort of balance," to negotiate between mother tongue and father tongue is inscribed on the page between two contrasting forces or "histories." According to Laurens Van Der Post,

> History as a record of the past has been told almost entirely in terms of its outer eventfulness and, in a sense, this is the least of history. History progresses on two levels, a manifest one and a profound one which is irresistible but not fully expressed, demanding to make itself known through the way we shape our lives in the world without, and through the failures and disasters brought about because this hidden, inner eventfulness is not fully recognised and given its due role in the human spirit and its societies. There is no dimension of history of which this is more true than the way the feminine half of the human spirit has been dealt with by masculine-dominated societies [...] the result of this neglect [is visible] in the decay of the feeling and caring values of life.[41]

In "Discourse on the Logic of Language," Philip both records the history of outer events and re-members the usually neglected inner history (or rather her-story) of feeling and caring values while foregrounding "the loss" of her and her own people's "history" and of her and her own people's "word."[42] As anticipated, "her-story" runs vertically along the page and can only be read if one is prepared to look at the page from another angle, both figuratively and literally. The mother tongue then subverts the (page-bound) western tradition: the poem displays what Benítez-Rojo calls a "great rhythmic complexity" and Philip's collection as a whole is characterised by a "polyrhythmic density that gathers rhythms from the whole world."[43] For Philip, as we have seen, the process of "reshaping" and "restructuring" the language simultaneously depends upon and promotes the creation of artistic alter/native "i-mages" and the *alter*ation/creolisation of the collective consciousness of the society that these i-mages address. It is noteworthy that when Philip quotes again from Ovid (Book XV) in the first poem of the final section of *She Tries Her Tongue*, instead of resorting to Mary M. Innes' translation for the Penguin classics as for "And Over Every Land and Sea," she returns to Dryden's version. While Innes translates Ovid's *Omnia mutantur, nihil interit* (v.165) with "All things change, but nothing dies," Dryden writes "All things are *alter'd*, nothing is destroyed" [my italics]. The verb "to alter," from the Latin *alter* meaning "other," adds an extra alter/native dimension to the line that seems definitely appropriate to Philip's needs and to the process of creolisation that her poetry encapsulates and that Benítez-Rojo has defined as "a discontinuous series of recurrences, of happenings, whose sole law is change."[44]

Significantly, her concluding remarks in the afterword to *She Tries Her Tongue*, situate Philip precisely where Balutansky and Sourieau have positioned creolisation, that is at the "crossroads of forgetting and remembering, of an elusive past to be re-imagined and an uncertain future:"[45]

> while I continue to write in my father tongue, I continue the quest identified in 1983 to discover my mother tongue, trying to engender by some *alchemical practice* a *metamorphosis* within the language from father tongue to mother tongue [my emphases].[46]

The forced marriage of Proserpina and Pluto in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* can be taken to mirror (from a West Indian perspective) the forced marriage between African and English tongues and African and English cultures. However, Philip seems to suggest that, from this cultural and linguistic rape, it is possible to create a fresh, decentred, *altered*, *altering* and *alter/native* culture and a language that is both "in a state of creolization" and capable, borrowing Philip's words, "of great rhythms and musicality; one that is and is not English and one which is among the most vital in the English-speaking world today."[47] After all, the Nymph Io at the end "tries her tongue" and "her silence soflty breaks" and in "And Over Every Land and Sea," the mother's search for the daughter and the daughter's search for the mother contain the hopeful image of a new plant sprouting "from the mouth" suggesting both regeneration and transformation:

> a plant sprouts there—
> from the mouth
> mine
> wise black and fat she laughs
> reaching for the tree
> frees the butterfly
> in-lodged.[48]

"Of bodies chang'd to various forms, I sing" is the famous opening line of *Metamorphoses*[49] and in Ovid's poem everything revolves around transformation and change. In the story of Ceres and Proserpina, however, only minor characters undergo experiences of this kind: the nymph Cyane who dissolves in water, a child who teases Ceres and whom the

goddess transforms into a tiny lizard, the spiteful Ascalaphus who is turned into an owl, and Arethusa, whose story is only obliquely related to Proserpina's. The truth is that there is another, deeper and more mysterious "metamorphosis," a spiritual transformation, that is engrained in Ceres' and Proserpina's myth. As Ovid records, but in particular as emphasised in the Homeric "Hymn to Demeter" (Demeter is the Greek equivalent of Ceres), Demeter's grief and rage for the loss of her daughter cause a famine on earth that, if not stopped in time by Zeus's decision to let Persephone (Greek for Proserpina) return to her mother, might have annihilated the human race: "The ground released / no seed, for bright-crowned Demeter kept it buried."[50]

The Homeric "Hymn to Demeter" is a very good example of Wilson Harris's "involuntary" association (Philip never alludes to it in her collection) and, most importantly, it can really illuminate from within both Ovid's poem and *She Tries Her Tongue*. In *The Myth of the Goddess*, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford point out that in the Homeric hymn, Demeter is the Corn Mother, the goddess of the harvests and fertility, while her daughter Persephone is "the seed in whom the corn, her mother, is continually reborn."[51] As a result, in Greek mythology the stories of Demeter and Persephone are inseparable: Persephone, in fact, "is often called simply 'Kore,' which means maiden and is also the feminine for *koros* 'sprout,'"[52] that is the new incarnation of the mother plant. As the goddess of agriculture and hence of life and death, Demeter contains both the lower and the upper worlds. The story of Demeter and her daughter Persephone therefore elucidates the paradox that "what dies above the earth falls below and comes back anew, different yet the same."[53] Being imagined as mother and daughter, the two worlds of the living and of the dead, far from being polarised are instead "joined at the root," thus expressing the idea of rebirth, the ultimate transformation or metamorphosis.[54] Therefore, the fact that Persephone, having eaten from the pomegranate, must spend part of the year underground with her kidnapper, further

reinforces the idea that upper and lower worlds are reunited in cyclical regeneration. To quote Ovid once again: "All things are alter'd, nothing is destroyed." It is noteworthy, moreover, that the Homeric "Hymn to Demeter," source of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, foregrounds her-story like Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue*: as Helen Foley reminds us, the text is "framed by the separation and reunion of mother and daughter" and at the centre of the Homeric narrative one finds "the female experience of the goddesses Demeter and Persephone, as well as the disguised Demeter's interactions with the mortal women of Eleusis [where the goddess dwells for a while during her search for her daughter]."[55] The "Hymn to Demeter," besides, ends with Demeter visiting the kings of Eleusis to reveal to them "the conduct of her rites" and to teach "her Mysteries to all of them, / holy rites that are not to be transgressed, nor pried into, / nor divulged"[56] thus founding the Eleusinian Mysteries, the most important of the Greek mystery cults. The exact rites are still unknown (the rituals were a secret known only to the initiates) but there is consensus among the scholars that they were associated with fertility and the sowing of grain. Demeter's emblem, in fact, is an ear of wheat and many marble reliefs at the Eleusis sanctuary as well as most of the painted vases representing the mysteries have one or more sheaves of corn as a recurrent decoration.[57] The Eleusinian Mysteries, besides, accepted "initiates of both sexes" and in other cults of Demeter such as the Thesmophoria, "women played the central or exclusive role."[58]

But there is more. In the journal that she kept while working on *She Tries Her Tongue*, Philip wrote:

> I am laying claim to two heritages—one very accessible, the other hidden. The apparent accessibility of European culture is dangerous and misleading especially what has been allowed to surface and become de rigueur. To get anything of value out of it, one has to mine very, very deeply and only after that does one begin to see the connections and linkages with other cultures.

If we follow Philip's advice and "mine very, very deeply" into Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Homeric "Hymn to Demeter," the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Thesmophoria, we can

unearth another fascinating "involuntary" association, one that truly creolises the chasm that divides cultures and throws a bridge between the two heritages Philip is laying claim to in *She Tries Her Tongue*. Many ancient and contemporary scholars argue that the Eleusinian cult and the Thesmophoria are of Egyptian (that is African) origin. In *Aeschylus and Athens*, for example, G. Thomson suggests that the Thesmophoria came from Egypt and Cashford and Baring reinforce this point quoting Herodotus as a source.[59] Cashford and Baring declare that "elements of the Mystery cult at Eleusis originated from Egypt as did much of Greek philosophy" and they also refer to Plutarch and Herodotus who agree in linking the Eleusinian Mysteries with solemn Egyptian assemblies in honour of Isis.[60] Cashford and Baring also draw interesting parallels between Persephone and Osiris "whose prostrate body sprouted shoots of wheat" and who "was actually identified with the grain."[61] In their notes, Cashford and Baring acknowledge the influence of the still controversial *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* where Martin Bernal argues that the development of Greek civilisation was heavily influenced by Afroasiatic civilisations and asserts that this knowledge had been deliberately obscured on racist grounds.[62] It cannot be the purpose of this article to enter into this debate but, if we believe Bernal and the widespread ancient testimony maintaining that Greek Mysteries had come from Egypt, then Nourbese Philip's search for a mother tongue and mother culture actually comes full circle encompassing both her European and her African heritage. The "voluntary" but especially the "involuntary" associations established by *She Tries Her Tongue* throw bridges across different cultures creolising the chasms that separate them, thus revealing the existence of those "connections and linkages" that Philip set off to re-member at the beginning of her quest. "When the smallest cell remembers" (or cares to re-member), the extraordinary potential that lies within what Harris calls "a storage of creative possibility" can therefore be unleashed with intriguing results.

Notes

[1] Marlene Nourbese Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (London: The Women's Press, 1993), 70. Subsequent references are given as "Philip."

[2] Kathleen Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, eds., *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida/Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998) 9.

[3] Wilson Harris, "Creoleness: The Crossroads of a Civilization?" in A. J. M. Bundy, ed., *The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination: Selected Essays of Wilson Harris* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 239. Also published in *Caribbean Creolization*, 26.

[4] Harris, "Creoleness: The Crossroads of a Civilization?" 238. In *Caribbean Creolization*, 25.

[5] Ibid., 241. In *Caribbean Creolization*, 28.

[6] Ibid., 239. In *Caribbean Creolization*, 25-26.

[7] Ibid., 238. In *Caribbean Creolization*, 25.

[8] Marlene Nourbese Philip, personal communication, February 3, 1999.

[9] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, John Dryden trans. (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 32.

[10] "Might I …like Philomela …sing / continue / over / into / …pure utterance," 72.

[11] According to Ovid, Philomela "gazed steadfastly at the ground, and her gestures conveyed what her voice could not." Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Mary M. Innes trans. (London : Penguin, 1955), 151. The quotations in English from Book V of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* all come from the above translation (125-133).

[12] Philip, 2.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 3.

[15] Ibid., 4.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 5.

[18] Ibid., 6.

[19] Ibid., 6.

[20] Ibid., 9.

[21] Ibid., 10.

[22] "Alter/native:" for this pun I am indebted to Edward Kamau Brathwaite, "Caliban's Guarden" (*Wasafiri* 16, 1992), 2-6 (4).

[23] Philip, 41.

[24] Ibid., 71.

[25] See James Joyce, *Ulysses,* ed. Hans W. Gabler (London: Penguin, 1986), 28. Actually Joyce's term is "nightmare" not "dream."

[26] Marlene Nourbese Philip, "In Matter of Memory," in Joan Anim-Addo, ed., *Centre of Remembrance: Memory and Caribbean Women's Literature* (London: Mango Publishing, 2002), 3.

[27] Philip, 31.

[28] Ibid., 30, 32.

[29] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Bollingen Series XVII, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton U.P., 1968), 13.

[30] Philip, 78.

[31] Ibid., 78.

[32] Antonio Benítez-Rojo, "Three Words toward Creolization," in Kathleen Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, eds., *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*, 55.

[33] Philip, 78. Ovid's work may be of special interest to Philip because it consists of *epyllia* or miniature epics, and the epic scope that the reference to Ovid brings in is certainly very adequate for Philip whose poetry, as we will see, wants to be the expression of both personal feelings and collective needs.

[34] Philip, 78.
[35] Ibid., 80.
[36] Ibid., 86.
[37] Ibid., 87.
[38] Ibid., 88.
[39] Ibid., 88-89.
[40] Ibid., 30, 32.
[41] Sir Laurens Van Der Post, Foreword to Anne Baring and Jules Crashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* (London: Penguin, 1993), ix.
[42] Philip, 91.
[43] Benítez-Rojo, 59.
[44] Benítez-Rojo, 55.
[45] Balutansky and Sourieau, 9.
[46] Philip, 90.
[47] Ibid., 89.
[48] Ibid., 7.
[49] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, John Dryden trans., 3.
[50] Helen Foley, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 1994), 18.
[51] Baring and Cashford, 364.
[52] Ibid., 368.
[53] Ibid., 369.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Foley, ed., 126**,** xii.
[56] Ibid., 26.
[57] See the illustrations in Baring and Cashford, 364-390.
[58] Foley ed., xii, 72
[59] G. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens* (New York, 1972), 119-23 qtd in Foley, 103; Baring and Cashford, 374.
[60] Baring and Cashford, 372; Herodotus, *Histories* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1996), 141.
[61] Baring and Chasford, 389.
[62] For a full account of the controversy regarding the African origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries (and of Classical civilisation in general) see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, (London: Vintage, 1987) vol. I, "Introduction", 69-70 and vol. III chapter VI, *passim*, and *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to his Critics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 386-389.