

Caribbean Canadian Feminism and Decolonial Practice in Makeda Silvera's *The Heart Does Not Bend* and *Her Head A Village*

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Abstract:

This article explores the fictional and non-fictional work of Jamaican-Canadian writer and activist Makeda Silvera (*1955) in terms of its significance for Caribbean-Canadian women's writing and Black feminism in Canada. It investigates its potential to challenge dominant discourses that, to varying degrees, have a colonial continuity both in the Caribbean and Canadian contexts. These discourses pertain to issues of racism and heteronormativity intertwined with citizenship, migration laws or an exclusionary historiography. The narrative perspectives and stereotypical representations of masculinity in *The Heart Does Not Bend* as well as the short stories "Baby" and "Her Head a Village" privilege women's voices, lesbian erotic agency and Black female embodiment.

"Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than merely settling for a shift of characters in the same weary drama."¹

Introduction

This article explores the fictional and non-fictional work of Jamaican-Canadian writer and activist Makeda Silvera in terms of its significance for Caribbean women's writing and Black feminism in Canada. It investigates its potential to challenge dominant discourses, which, in varying degrees, have a colonial origin both in the Caribbean

and Canadian context. These discourses pertain to issues of racism, to a heterosexuality intertwined with national identity, cultural politics and citizenship, as well as migration laws, historiography and *white* Canadian liberal feminism. I describe this challenge as “decolonial” practice, which has been advocated in particular by Aníbal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo.² These particular epistemes and approaches (artistic, intellectual, feminist etc.) that are directed against the “colonial matrix of power”³ and attempt to undo neo-/colonial dominance, institutionalised racism or heteronormative family structures, for example, contain decolonial potential. A “genuine change,” as Audre Lorde points out in the introductory quote, can be achieved through the recognition of the erotic in the female body, which I interpret as a lesbian erotic and which is able to break with colonial continuities – “the same weary drama.” Describing Silvera’s work as decolonial presents an approach that grounds her struggles and accomplishments in a larger history of colonial and cultural hegemony enacted by a Euro-American ‘centre’ as it is the case in particular for the Caribbean, but also for Canada due to the nation’s own colonial past and its policy of multiculturalism, which, according to critics, “depoliticizes social inequality; fosters cultural relativism and social division; creates ethnic ghettos; commodifies ethnic culture; and reinforces cultural stereotypes.”⁴ I suggest that Silvera’s novel and short stories reveal that queer bodies and same sex desire are considered as a threat to heteronormative respectability, social and community structures, and that Black women’s bodies are exposed to myriad forms of oppression in Canada’s majority *white* society.⁵

Established writers of Caribbean descent in Canada, such as Dionne Brand, Olive Senior, Claire Harris, Marlene NourbeSe Philip, Pamela Mordecai, Tessa McWatt, Nalo Hopkinson, Ramabai Espinet, Shani Mootoo, and many more, have shaped and contributed to Black Canadian feminist thought on a creative and academic level.⁶ It is due to their engagement and political activism that a distinguishable Caribbean Canadian voice is resonating in the literary market.⁷ One of these voices is Makeda Silvera.

Silvera was born in 1955 and grew up in Kingston, Jamaica. In the late 1960s she moved to Toronto and became an active member of the city’s growing Black

community. She founded *Sister Vision*, the first publishing house to specialize in the writings of Black women and women of colour in Canada. She is the editor of numerous works, such as *Fireworks* (1986), *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology* (1991), *Black Girl Talk* (1995), *The Other Woman* (1995), and author of two short story collections, *Remembering G* (1991) and *Her Head a Village* (1994), as well as the novel *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2002). Silvera is concerned with Black lesbian identity positions; she self-identifies and locates herself and her work at the intersection of multiple societal factors:

I am a woman living in a patriarchal society. I am black living in a racist society and a lesbian living in a homophobic society. I'm a Caribbean-born Jamaican, with all the stereotypes. These factors are intricately linked to who I am and occupy a large place in my work.⁸

Consequently, her literature – creative and political at the same time – cannot be separated from its individual, specific historical and spatial context. Why is this important for her writing? Because Silvera transgresses several borders of a perceived 'normativity' that excludes non-heterosexual identities, Blackness and working-class migrants, and exoticises Caribbean women's bodies. This challenges feminist literary theory to address the overlapping causes of inequalities and conditions of lived experience, rather than applying an intersectional approach as a general methodological tool for the analysis of gendered and raced oppression insensitive to those power asymmetries that, seemingly, do not affect *white* women.

The essay "Man Royals and Sodomites" (1992) is an "exploration of a Caribbean lesbian sexuality" revealing "how deep it is buried in people's family history, and the silence that surround this."⁹ Being a relic of the colonial period and imperial body politics of reproduction, it is this enforced, uncomfortable silence around homosexuality in Jamaica and the diaspora community that she attempts to break by carving out a space for queer identities.¹⁰ It is this silence that is also the central issue in her writings and repeatedly and negatively impacts many of the characters' decisions and their overall mobility. Writing from a Caribbean diaspora perspective, Silvera argues for solidarity and coalition building among homosexual

People of Colour in order to gain more acceptance and visibility within their community as well as recognition by *white* mainstream feminisms in Canada.¹¹ Silvera's active role within and contribution to a distinctive Black Canadian feminist thought finds expression in what she terms "Black women's strength" in reference to her continuing struggle against the silencing and invisibility of Black Caribbean lesbian identities and feminism both in Jamaica and Canada.¹²

The last two decades in particular have seen an increase in the theorization and academic visibility of Black feminist thought in Canada, which also incorporates Black or African Caribbean Canadian women's histories.¹³ The usage of 'Black' as unifying category seems slightly problematic as it glosses over ethnic diversity and heterogeneity among the Black population, but, on the other hand, is politically useful for self-affirmation and empowerment.¹⁴ According to Yvonne Bobb-Smith, the "opposition and resistance to a dual system of capitalism and patriarchy" is what defines a more specific Caribbean Canadian feminism. She adds that their continuous struggle "for liberation has produced a counter ideology to many ideas of women's roles in Western society."¹⁵ Different to *white* Canadian feminism, this ideological counter-discourse takes note of the often lower level of education of migrant women and lack of resources; it reevaluates the domestic sphere and family not as an oppressive, patriarchal space but as a microcosm of self-expression and freedom; it is sensitive to diversity and issues of racism.¹⁶ Silvera points this out in her book-length study *Silenced* (1983). Furthermore, acknowledging close proximity to Black feminism in the United States both intellectually (theorists and activists such as The Combahee River Collective, Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, to name but a few) and with regard to shared lived experiences, Black feminist thought in Canada is different. This is mainly due to less academic and historic visibility, the comparatively smaller number of Black persons in Canada, the different patterns of community building predominantly in metropolitan areas as well as a different migration policy that has targeted the attraction of skilled labour while discouraging reunification of families and denying racist profiling.¹⁷ Its aim is to counter homogenizing notions of Black feminism, a universal experience of oppression and a monolithic Black female body. In this respect, Canadian Black

feminist theory “must be grounded in the specific materiality of Black women’s lives, while acknowledging uprooting, movement, and reconstitution, and interrogating the dominant racialized and gendered discourse of the Canadian nation.”¹⁸ As a discipline of knowledge it recognises the important and crucial role of Black women in shaping Canadian history since the seventeenth century. At the same time, it reveals the denial of slavery as part of Canada’s national history.¹⁹ It is not restricted to a single focus on multiple and intersecting factors of oppression shaping the lives of women, rather solidarity in the common struggle is regarded as a source of strength and liberating everyday praxis.²⁰

Silvera’s sociological study *Silenced* (1983) documents one aspect of Black history in Canada from Caribbean migrant and working class perspectives, denouncing practices of economic exploitation. The study contains several interviews with women migrants from the West Indies who came as domestic workers to Canada, first in the course of the West Indian Domestic Scheme in 1955, then after the introduction of the point system in 1967. Being one of the first written documents on the gendered experience of Caribbean labour migration in Canada, it is exemplary for how these women have been denied full rights of participation as citizens and subjected to discrimination by their employers and government authorities. It further reveals the fact that emancipation of *white* middle-class women at the time would not have been possible without the inevitable support of their domestic ‘servants.’ The testimony uncovers their lived experience, miserable working and living conditions, underpayment and, in many cases, sexual harassment. Thus, the continuity of a colonial struggle against racism and oppression of African Caribbean bodies – “the humiliation of being a legal slave”²¹ in contemporary Canada – is the background against which Silvera’s work is set. *Silenced* constitutes a source of empowerment and liberation by giving a voice to women who have been placed at the margin of Canadian society, whose stories are silenced (and silent) no more.

In addition, Silvera carves out a space in which queer persons of colour are made visible, thus creating an emancipatory potential through her fictional and non-fictional work, suggesting a reorientation toward love, care, feeling and solidarity within Canadian feminist literature that creates a textual healing of non-conforming,

'dysfunctional' bodies. The coming-of-age novel *The Heart Does Not Bend* as well as the short story collection *Her Head A Village* offer a gendered vision of diaspora including women's experiences of migration, racism and sexism. Looking at the texts, I seek to link the feminist and decolonial potential in Silvera's fiction, foregrounding Black female subjectivity and "Black women's strength." Furthermore, I argue that Silvera's tendency to depict heterosexuality and in particular heterosexual men as destructive is a strategy to foreground Black women's subjectivity, empowerment and resistance and celebrate a lesbian erotic. First, the story "Her Head A Village" addresses the interdependence of race, class, nation, gender, sexuality and family that impacts the creative work of a Black woman writer. My aim is to show how narrative strategies convey intersectionality, proving that the different axes are equally relevant for both individual histories and dismantling unequal power structures in specific contexts. Secondly, my reading of *The Heart Does Not Bend* places emphasis on the protagonist's coming of age, the homoerotic body as well as the narrative representation of masculinity. Reading the main character and her relationships through Lorde's "The Uses of the Erotic" deconstructs heteronormative gender roles and sexuality. Finally, the analysis of the story "Baby" discloses a fictional reality of homophobia, destructive masculinity and sexism within the Caribbean community in Toronto.²²

Voicing Oppression in "Her Head A Village"

The short story "Her Head A Village" is part of Silvera's second short story collection of the same title including eleven stories that explore issues of racism, immigration laws, gender, family relations, homosexuality and violence in the Jamaican diaspora in Toronto. "Her Head A Village" revolves around the thoughts of a Black woman writer, who is working on a paper entitled "Writing as a Dangerous Profession" for a Third World Women Conference. It is told from a third person, homodiegetic perspective interrupted by a polyphony of voices. The voices the writer hears in her mind belong to an imaginary crowd of village people: "Her head was a noisy village, one filled with people ... with many concerns and opinions."²³ Among them are her

children, cousins, Maddie (her aunt and “woman of the spirits”), a group of idlers and gossipers, office and factory workers. Due to the vocal interferences and the proximity to the narrator, the reader being figuratively in her head, the story creates intimacy between reader and narrator and a sense of confusion.

The text reflects on the simultaneity of inequalities that affect the writer’s everyday life and career:²⁴ “she wanted to explain ... that what made writing dangerous for her was who she was – Black/woman/lesbian/mother/worker...”²⁵ Her writing is constantly interrupted, because she is trying to listen to the multitude of voices in her head telling her about their competing ideas and concerns, what to write about and what to leave out. The villagers are complaining about the writer’s lifestyle, that she calls herself a “feminist” now, about her idle time, about her not working in a factory and her choice of lovers. One point of their critique relates to the luxury of writing and the problem of *representation*, which Gayatri Spivak famously elaborates on in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”²⁶ Here is the question of who speaks for whom, but also a discussion of her privileged position as an intellectual: “What about the danger of your writing being the definitive word for all Black women? What about the danger ... of selling out? Make it clear that you, as a Black woman writer, are privileged to be speaking at a panel like this.”²⁷ Allowing, or letting the villagers speak sets the writer apart, consolidating power relations along the dividing lines of class and education. Although her sexuality is a factor of exclusion, her social and intellectual status, in this case, seems to privilege her over the working class villagers, who embody a perspective ‘from below.’ This illustrates that knowledge production concerned with multiaxial differences, which aims to dismantle categorical hierarchies from within a “liberal white bourgeois society,” needs the inclusion of the grassroots level and not solely high elitist theory.²⁸ The Black woman writer’s privilege, however, does not automatically imply that she is heard in either space.

Competing issues that, according to the writer, need to be focused on in Black women’s writing, are the essential support of family, woman as lover, the economics of writing, cultural biases, racism and police harassment, which in particular affects the lives of People of Colour in Canada. These are also influencing factors of Silvera’s approach of “Black Women’s strength,” which she expressed elsewhere and

that is reminiscent of Alice Walker's "womanism."²⁹ However, the writer is unable to bring her thoughts to paper because she is afraid she cannot do justice to all these issues simultaneously and will not be heard. Wanting to be all-inclusive and worrying about the multifaceted layers of 'reality,' this is a blatant critique of the dominating postcolonial and 'Third World' nationalist narratives and *white* middle-class feminisms which fail to do so. Additionally, since these discourses presuppose "historical social identities ... of colonial origin and character," she is searching for an alternative option that engenders a decolonial thinking aware of colonial continuities, but reaching beyond fixed categories.³⁰ "All I want to do is to write something about being a Black lesbian in a North American city. One where white racism is cloaked in liberalism and where Black homophobia...' They [the villagers] were not listening."³¹ Hence, the writer's own writing blockade, her voicelessness, emblemizes the consequences of the individual's experience of multiple victimisation.

Silvera expresses the necessity of an intersectional approach when discussing hegemonic structures and capitalist, neoliberal issues. By including the different voices, each representing one specific societal factor that the woman writer in the story eventually interconnects, Silvera offers a narrative strategy to transmit this approach. Furthermore, she clearly criticises heteronormativity promoted by patriarchal nationalist discourses, which control and punish women's racialised, sexed bodies: "This woman thing can't go into the paper. ... No one will write about women lovers. These are not national concerns in Third World countries. ... These ... are white bourgeois concerns!"³² Although stated otherwise, sexualities belong to the sphere of the political, as well as being the most policed arena in the private sphere. Of further interest here is the juxtaposition of lesbian sexuality and *whiteness*, to which I will return. The village people are judging that "Your sexuality is your personal business. We don't want to hear about it, and the forum [for Third World women] doesn't want to know."³³ In foregrounding women's homosexuality as constitutive for the political sphere, Silvera counters nation building processes and formulations of citizenship, which are constructed as a dominant patriarchal domain, privilege race over gender and exclude women's issues and sexuality, not to mention lesbian desire. The story concludes with a conciliatory note: "All this shouting ... won't solve

anything – it only make us tired and enemies. We all have to live together in this village.”³⁴ This strong voice belongs to Maddie who, pleading for solidarity and mutual understanding – two constituents of Silvera’s decolonial practice –, takes the pen and begins to write.

The Erotic as Empowerment

The diasporic *bildungsroman*, *The Heart Does Not Bend* falls into the categories of Black Canadian and African Caribbean diaspora fiction that complements Paul Gilroy’s conceptualization of the “Black Atlantic” by adding a Jamaican Canadian feminist and literary perspective. The title of Lorde’s poem “There Are No Honest Poems About Dead Women” constitutes the epigraph to the novel. Lorde (1934-1992), whose parents were Caribbean immigrants in New York and who grew up in Harlem, was a (self-defined) Black lesbian feminist, writer, mother and civil rights activist. With the poem, Silvera introduces some of the book’s main subjects, such as death and resentment –which will not be dealt with in this article – and the second most important character, Molly’s grandmother Maria, whose death marks the beginning of the story. In dedicating her novel to Lorde, she also writes the novel explicitly into the tradition of a radical Black lesbian feminism. The novel narrates the story of the family Galloway in five generations (from the 1960s up to well into the 1990s), circling around the protagonist Molly’s individuation, her sexual identity, as well as her family’s history of migration and displacement from the African continent, to Jamaica and North America. For Molly, Kingston and Toronto constitute the major localities of home and belonging, the most important points of reference and identification for Black female subjectivity. First-person narrator Molly retrospectively narrates her coming-of-age and ‘not-coming-out,’ which is complicated by the conflicting relationships to her grandmother, mother and daughter, the difficult migrant life in Canada, as well as the social stigmatization and silencing of her and her uncle’s homosexuality.

The novel opens with the funeral of grandmother Maria Galloway and the reading of her will. Her death initiates Molly’s retrospective account of her childhood.

She grows up with her grandmother and two uncles, Mikey and Freddie, in Kingston during the time of Jamaica's independence and official formation of the creole nationalist cultural identity in the 1950s and 60s. Molly is socialized into normative gender behaviour, in a society where respectable moral codes prescribe that women are not supposed to drink heavily, girls do not fight in the streets, and "man do not lie wid a man as one lies wid a 'oman" – and a woman not with another female.³⁵ At the age of fourteen, Molly and her grandmother move to Toronto to join her mother and the rest of the family. This happens after Maria's repeated alcohol excesses, which Molly cannot endure any longer. Maria communicates later that their departure was due to Mikey's open homosexuality and the shame he brought to the family. This relocation, however, negatively affects Molly's sense of self. After several years of adjustment problems and the feeling of confinement she meets Rose, a Grenadian woman, and falls deeply in love with her, very much to Maria's dislike, since for her homosexuality is shameful and a sin, a view based on biblical and Jamaican norms of respectability.³⁶

Molly's socialisation and individuation from girlhood to becoming an adult woman is shaped by various important relationships.³⁷ The sisterhood and bond of solidarity among girls in their process of becoming woman constitute a typical feature for woman-centred coming-of-age narratives. Two influential persons are Molly's childhood friends Petal and Punsie who influence Molly's sexual awakening and bodily perception in different ways, and later strongly impact her sexual identity. This becomes apparent in her relationship with Rose when Molly realizes that "Rose was everything I had liked about Punsie and Petal" – tellingly, the petal and the rose symbolize both Molly's affinity to nature as well as her sexual maturation.³⁸ While Punsie is important for Molly in her heterosexual initiation, Petal embodies Molly's wish to push the boundaries of this heterosexuality and her desire for the 'other,' the lesbian erotic. The scene of their secret encounters when Molly and Petal are hiding in the tree house, exchanging "grasshopper juices," holding on to each other's tongues, rubbing their bodies against each other, is important for the staged corporeality.³⁹ Sexual awakening is a playful initiation into maturity, a process during which Molly discovers her sexuality and experiences her body in yet unknown ways.

Kim describes this as “fantasy of queer sexuality,” which for Molly is actually a quite real experience.⁴⁰ Molly’s relation to Petal, then, is ‘unnatural,’ deviates from heterosexual normality. This initial lesbian experience is assessed from the adult perspective of Molly, who as a girl might not have been aware of this as a sexual ‘deviation’; nevertheless, she keeps the encounters a secret. I agree with Beckford who argues: “Silvera’s use of Petal as Molly’s initiate into sexual difference is a powerful commentary on identity and difference, suggesting that difference is considered ‘abnormal,’ and is, therefore ridiculed by society.”⁴¹ Petal’s visible queerness (she is albino) transgresses socially acceptable norms of the body and is made fun of by the children in the neighbourhood – but embraced by Molly.

Molly and Rose’s relationship constitutes another transgression of accepted sexual morality. Molly’s description of Rose, their love-making, Molly’s “tongue tracing her sinuous body” is a celebration of the female body and positions lesbian sexuality at the centre of the narrative.⁴² “She was from Grenada, the Isle of Spice. Mountainous, lush, fertile. Grenadians say, ‘Throw a seed on de ground and fruits, vegetables, flowers spring up.’ Rose was all that: sensuous, lush, warm and generous.”⁴³ Again, her lover emblemizes nature and evokes Molly’s affinity, so it can be read as a reversal of what is perceived as ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’: a lesbian erotic, here seen as the ‘natural,’ crosses categorical understandings formed by heterosexuality. Audre Lorde’s ontological approach to an ideal of the erotic and self-knowledge, essentially woman-centred, which she proposes in her philosophic political essay “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” (1978), offers fruitful ground for the reading of Molly’s coming of age as well as her relationship with Petal and Rose. I conclude that the novel’s displayed homoerotics and same sex desire counters the long literary absence of Caribbean lesbian, erotic bodies. In her essay, Lorde declares:

In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic.⁴⁴

Women's bodies providing this source of power unify the spiritual and political, transcend the Cartesian logic of the body and mind duality. It is a more nuanced, deeper knowledge of the erotic, of what women are capable of feeling in order to achieve self-fulfilment, completion and eventually be empowered. Thus, the erotic unites the rational ('knowing') with what is irrational, inexplicable ('feeling'). The erotic, made up of human need, psychic (cognitive, spiritual) and emotional components, as well as bodily, sexual expression and satisfaction, has been successfully oppressed within patriarchal social structures, misnamed and abused as the mere sexual or pornographic for male gratification: "The fear that we cannot grow beyond whatever distortions we may find within ourselves keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads us to accept many facets of our oppression as women."⁴⁵ The corruption and distortion, according to Lorde, stem from within "western societies," "european-american traditions," "male models of power" and global capitalist greed for "profit," which is reminiscent of Mignolo's "modern/colonial imaginary" complementing it from a Black radical-lesbian feminist perspective as "woman-identified woman."⁴⁶

"The erotic as a source of power and information ... is a measure between the beginnings of our senses of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings."⁴⁷ This equals Molly's individuation process, her being torn apart between becoming a daughter, mother and lesbian lover. A full "attention to our erotic knowledge" enables women to live against conventions, conformity and expectations of heteronormative scripts.⁴⁸ To a certain degree, Molly is able to break out of this prescribed conformity when she is with Rose and experiences the "first taste of real independence."⁴⁹ She temporarily forgets the confinements of her home space; she forgets that her 'Jamaicanness,' her language and looks as the "odd girl out ... [who] wasn't cool enough,"⁵⁰ not *white* enough to belong, defines her as the 'ethnic other' of a visible minority within Canada's so-called multicultural society. Also, she feels independent on a personal and sexual level when she is away from her family in Texas, where she and Rose study horticulture and become lovers: "I spent some of the best years of my life at university. ... I could come and go as I pleased. ... I was free from responsibility except myself,"⁵¹ free from sexual, gendered scripts that her family

provided for her. The knowledge of what “feels right to me”⁵² links the erotic to a full understanding of herself as the ultimate goal of Molly’s subject formation. Her sexual liberation, indeed, remains hidden from Maria’s sight, who finds out nevertheless.

Yet, it helps Molly to realise two important things: first, her grandmother, who seems to be the strong matriarch, has many weaknesses and faults. This is crucial for Molly to individuate, distance herself from Maria, break out of her passivity and live her own life. Second, through the affirmation of the erotic within herself, the location where women are most powerful, she becomes aware of mutuality and interdependence: “we don’t live our lives independent of others. It’s all a give and take, and when you take, you have to give back.”⁵³ This is the most responsible, self-affirming statement the reader hears from Molly, who, after Maria’s death, finally takes up a clear position for her family, willed to make a home for herself and her daughter. The erotic, being highly relational in that the full extent of its power is reached only in “sharing deeply any pursuit with another person,”⁵⁴ eventually leads to a full knowledge of each other. This form of the erotic unfolds in Molly’s relationships with Petal and Rose – the erotic in full bloom – who connect her to her deepest feelings and inner self. This also resonates Lorde’s thoughts on solidarity, sharing, mutuality, in which for Black lesbian women lies the source for strength, happiness, liberty. The conclusion Beckford reaches in her interpretation of the novel, that “Molly is unable to individuate because she cannot develop her relationship with Rose,”⁵⁵ is, I contend, only partially correct: Molly attains the knowledge of her full capability of feeling, eroticism and satisfaction only in the relationship with Rose, who unfortunately “has a blind spot. She forgets that in some small way we are all dependent on each other.”⁵⁶ This and their ultimate separation provides Molly with an understanding of herself, which will provide her with the strength for future relationships, secure and eventually empower her: “I dash for cover under a thatch-roofed shelter, and I wrap my towel tight around me to take the chill away.”⁵⁷ Not only is she granted the authority of the closing lines in the novel, but these lines are also metaphoric for a positive turn in her life, she has found a safe harbour, being safe in her knowledge that interdependency ultimately sustains her.

The realist convention and political commitment pervading the novel can be construed as a 'queering' of the genre. The auto-diegetic narration creates a strong potential to identify and sympathise with Molly, her coming-of-age and 'not-coming-out.' Molly is not only searching for her rightfully deserved place within the family Galloway, the recognition from both her grandmother Maria and daughter Ciboney; she is also trying to define her sexuality through the relationship with Rose, the young, strong, self-confident woman from Grenada. The parallel between the narrating character and Silvera, writing from her own experiences, creates intimacy and most importantly privileges Black woman's subjectivity and voice, creating agency for characters that have often times been marginalized and silenced. *The Heart Does Not Bend* is a testimony to women's empowerment and celebration of the lesbian erotic and sensuousness, implying that in the homoerotic body lies true, genuine strength. Here, I agree with Amy Kebe who argues that "[b]y 'queering' the racist heteronormative hegemony of the nation, ... Silvera deconstructs the heteronormative myth that women's bodies are only for male consumption."⁵⁸ In addition, I suggest that the novel shows that the erotic as a "resource" is not accessible in heterosexual partnerships, because they are, and arguably so, locked into aggressive masculinity and reproduce patriarchal, oppressive structures of exploitation. Lorde even goes a step further, stating that women are unable to achieve true erotic fulfilment until they break free from "an exclusively european-american [sic.] male tradition"⁵⁹ of colonial dominance over sexuality, gender and knowledge, which Quijano, too, identifies within the "colonial matrix of power." Heterosexual relations in *The Heart Does Not Bend* as well as the two short stories "Baby" and "Her Head a Village" seem to limit women's happiness and self-fulfilment, are disappointing and destructive. The relationship of Molly's uncle, Freddie, and his Italian wife Bella is one example to illustrate this point: "One day Bella left. She left to save her life.... We all knew from way back that Uncle Freddie was a woman-beater."⁶⁰ Also, Maria expresses her frustration with her partners: "love is a terrible weakness dat mi can't afford. It hurt mi every time."⁶¹ It is in lesbian relationships that women, like Rose and Molly, are provided with power and completion: "I was always eager to return to Rose and the world we had created for ourselves. ... On our last

night ... Rose opened me with her tongue and I vowed to her, trembling, 'Ah give yuh all of me. Dis is forever.'... 'Is dis love?'"⁶²

Brand argues that the overemphasis of non-sexual, maternal or virginal Black women's bodies in Caribbean literature has been part of anti-colonial resistance to the colonial hyper-sexualisation of an exotic, seductive Black Caribbean female body.⁶³ Against this backdrop, we may consider the use of the erotic as decolonial practice that "involves profound transformations of self, community, and governance structures."⁶⁴ Silvera, consequently, in writing a sensual Black lesbian erotic explicitly into a larger literary discourse and linking motherhood to an active sexuality counters stereotypes which imply a denial of Black women's sexuality.

Imperfect Masculinities and Embodied Badness

I argue that Silvera, in order to deconstruct both patriarchal and racist power structures, deliberately and strategically applies stereotypical representations of gender conventions and aggressive performances of masculinity in order to privilege Black women's lived experience and challenge dominant ideologies, the status quo of multidimensional forms of oppression. But what kind of sexuality is acceptable in the eyes of the protagonists' family and community? Which stereotypes or embodiments of masculinity and femininity do the readers get? How are 'respectability' and 'deviations' from heteronormativity narrated? Taking up on Judith Butler's gender performativity which is "compelled by social sanction and taboo,"⁶⁵ I understand masculinity and femininity as an "ontological process of becoming aware of societal roles and expectations that are inscribed on the text of the body."⁶⁶ The typical stereotypes Silvera employs and criticises are those that, according to Lewis, have been prevalent in scholarly literature about Caribbean men, which he very critically examines:

the Caribbean male as powerful, exceedingly promiscuous, derelict in his parental duties, often absent from the household and, if present, unwilling to undertake his share of domestic responsibilities. The Caribbean male also

comes across in this literature as possessing a propensity for female battering, and a demonstrated valorization of alcohol consumption.⁶⁷

The Galloway family's men, namely Oliver, Freddie, Peppie, Mikey and Vittorio Oliver, overly embody the stereotypical male in the forms of the irresponsible, violent, cheating, dishonest, effeminate or cowardly man. Silvera thus ridicules constructions and performances of gender, criticizing patriarchal social structures that favour this kind of manhood, spoiling and turning men into such, as especially Maria does. The negative images of masculinity are enacted by Freddie, who abuses his girlfriends, fathers babies and refuses to take care of them, and by Vittorio's careless lifestyle and criminal record. This, of course, needs to be read, on the one hand, in the context of garrison policies and party clientelism in postcolonial Jamaica, the glorification of the 'gun man' among the urban working class, where the display of strength oftentimes guaranteed survival.⁶⁸ On the other hand, extra-textual references to Canada's discriminating surroundings, which stigmatise the Black male body, and social and economic marginalisation, which may lead to crime, seem intended here.⁶⁹ Davis, with reference to a racialised Canadian society, comments: "The redefinition of black masculinity as a celebration of the reputational traits of physical strength and sexual virility are clearly not enough to protect black men. It highlights their vulnerability and leaves them susceptible."⁷⁰

The three brothers Freddie, Peppie and Mikey embody opposing forms of masculinity and sexuality: "'Him different from him born,' [Maria] repeated. 'When Peppie a fly kite and knock marble, Mikey playing dolly house wid Glory.'"⁷¹ Also, Maria's comment on Mikey's fragile physique, his unmanly voice and indifference towards women hint at his effeminate homosexual masculinity. Musical elements are included to aestheticise the differences between Mikey and Freddie. Molly notes that the one loves "rocksteady, Duke Reid and Sir Coxstone, Prince Buster and street dances. Mikey loved American R&B... and Frank Sinatra ballads."⁷² Freddie's preference for Western movies and John Wayne is a further example of the celebration of heroes and guns, the so-called "rude body narrative."⁷³ This underlines not only the link of Freddie to a performance of urban badness, but also the impression that the queer body is an 'import' from North America, threatening the

nationalist construction of ‘Jamaicanness.’ Maria condemns queer sexualities as “white people’s ting,” a legacy of Jamaica’s colonial history and contemporary North American dominance, and as the reason for the country’s corruption, political and economic decline – the “battokrisy.”⁷⁴ The short story “Baby” picks up the similar idea of a perceived link between homosexuality, *white* culture and migration: in Toronto, a group of Jamaican men is gossiping about two Caribbean women who, once in Canada, “get influence in dis lesbian business ... adopt[ing] foreign ways.”⁷⁵ They state that same sex desire does not exist in the Jamaican community, especially not in the working class, but is a direct result of transnational circulations.

By naming his son Vittorio Oliver after his own father Oliver, who used to beat Maria and is “still running wid de woman and de rum,”⁷⁶ Freddie creates a lineage of destructive heterosexual masculinity. Kim rightly argues that Maria, too, fails in her attempt “to interrupt the pattern of destructive masculinity.”⁷⁷ The fact that Maria bequeaths all her belongings and property to her grandson, a male heir, thus punishing the other family members, proves her ingrained sexism, her preference for the men in her family. Vittorio is not punished, gets away with his behaviour, is even rewarded by a society that is unaccommodating to deviant, non-normative bodies, while situating the heterosexual male body as the most representative, prioritized social body. The reiteration and enacting of gender roles, hence of political and cultural structures enforces social scripts of respectable citizenship and heteromascularity. However, Silvera succeeds in creating a space for lesbian erotic agency by celebrating the sensuous homoerotic body and love making. The narrative, in particular, silences heterosexual acts and refuses to depict heterosexual masculinity in positive terms. In the depiction of irresponsible manhood and destructive masculinity, *The Heart Does Not Bend* criticizes patriarchy and transgresses heteronormative codes of respectability. The novel’s partially stereotypical illustration of gender roles and embodiments of hetero- and homosexual identities, a strong virility contrasted with an effeminate maleness, is a strategy to challenge essentialising notions of hegemonic masculinity.

The short story “Baby” is a further example of the representation of destructive masculinity that intersects with an anti-homosexual attitude. Glancing into the lives of

the couple Baby and Asha, two Jamaican women who live in Toronto, the story examines the social stigmatization of homosexual persons and homophobic violence, suggesting that for Black lesbians living in a majority *white* society forms of discrimination are myriad. Also, the story does not fall short of a critique of the socio-political and economic circumstances in Jamaica: “Oh, what joy, what pain, that sugar cane. Turning to molasses, turning to rum, turning to export, sweetening white tongues while black tongues taste ash.”⁷⁸ While the region relies on the cane for revenue, the text hints at the historic continuum of dependency and exploitation.

“Baby” is narrated from a third person perspective with an alteration in the point of view, switching from the two lovers, to a group of Caribbean men and then to the perspective of one single man who stalks and ultimately fantasises about killing the women. These various perspectives and insights into the goings-on add a sense of voyeurism, turning the reader into the eye-witness of an attempted murder. The story opens *in medias res* in the morning after a fight between Asha and Baby and their following make-up sex. The two have been fighting about their relationship, class issues, and living up to one’s sexuality. Asha does not admit her sexual identity, Baby feels betrayed and trapped in the closet. Baby herself is a strong, out-lesbian, with “no education or family behind [her] name. ... I want out. ... live like a normal person, not in a closet,”⁷⁹ where social conventions tell her she belongs. Baby’s character is in stark contrast to her name: she is not a small, helpless, dependent child, but strong and “ready for war. ... And if I have to fight for the right to enjoy it, then I will.”⁸⁰ She demands equal sexual rights as part of her citizenship status and the right of recognition as a lesbian and Black woman: “I can’t stop my life because some people hate Blacks. And I am bloody well not going to stop living my life because another group hates lesbians.”⁸¹ Asha, on the contrary, who works as a teacher, is educated and a ‘well-established’ member of the middle-class, who feels under pressure to keep her homosexual identity a secret. She considers herself as a role model for the Black youths at her school. Having a respectable job, making a living; there seems to be no space for a queer sexuality. She is afraid, even ashamed that colleagues or parents might see her with her girlfriend in public. Asha’s profession and class do not accept a sexuality ‘out of the norm,’ a norm constructed

by intersecting societal factors. This fear of stigmatization makes the coming out more of an option for some than for others, depending on their position in the social strata.

While the two of them are fighting they are being observed by a neighbour, a Jamaican man, who has seen them frequently at a Caribbean restaurant and meeting point for locals. There he overhears conversations among a group of men who gossip about Asha and Baby, their perceived difference, their lives and sexuality, “nastiness. Satan work.”⁸² They do not conform to notions of respectability, which the men comment on: “Dem need a good fuck.... Let [them] feel the real thing. ... Man fi woman and woman fi man. None of this nastiness, none of this separation.”⁸³ The man plans to put an end to this “lesbian business” and during that night breaks into their apartment, a “shiny black gun” in his hand that symbolizes his masculinity and destruction. Standing in front of the bedroom door, his violent fantasies of rape and murder and desire to punish the women’s bodies are revealed, thus demonstrating dominant heterosexual virility. He masturbates and leaves – the plan to stop “all this nastiness”⁸⁴ unaccomplished, in fact a sign of a weak masculinity.

In the portrayal of the two women characters Asha and Baby, Silvera privileges Black women’s agency to the same extent to which, as Kebe puts it, “she articulates a powerful counter-discourse to homophobic and ethnocentrist notions of masculinity that consider lesbianism a threat.”⁸⁵ While we as readers obtain a very detailed characterization of the two women, the depictions of male characters remain superficial. By not giving a name to the violator and creating an anonymous crowd of men – stereotypically reducing them to their “manhood” – Silvera strategically universalizes the notion of a destructive masculinity, the dominance of patriarchal power. Non-conforming, queer bodies and female same sex desire are considered as a threat to heterosexual masculinity, social and community structures demanding “Man fi woman and woman fi man.”⁸⁶ Silvera’s work is thus complementary to Collins’ statement: “For Black lesbians homophobia represents a form of oppression that affects their lives with the same intensity as does race, class, and gender oppression.”⁸⁷ “Baby” is a demonstration of the social marginalization and threat

Lesbians of Colour are facing not only because of their social status and Blackness, and in this case 'Caribbeanness,' but also because of their sexuality which challenges those norms that in order to promote a fertile, reproductive body pathologise queer sexualities.⁸⁸ If we understand this kind of body politics to have its origin in the "modernity/ coloniality" period,⁸⁹ I suggest that a decolonial practice necessarily needs to delink institutionalised forms of citizenship and cultural identity, from exploitive heterosexist, gendered, racialised and capitalist hegemonies.

Conclusion

Makeda Silvera's work is an attempt to deconstruct the "coloniality of power," meaning the colonial continuity of relations of domination and social stratification based on race, gender, sexuality, class, knowledge, access to power, education and wealth. This implies a necessary reconfiguration of social, economic and political conditions to engender a way of thinking across and beyond fixed categories. The narrative perspectives and focalizations in *The Heart Does Not Bend* and the short stories "Baby" and "Her Head A Village" privilege Caribbean women's voices, lesbian erotic agency and Black female embodiment. Thus, she radically undermines the link between Jamaican cultural identity, heterosexuality and virile masculinity, a link that needs to be re-negotiated both in Jamaica and the diaspora. Reading the novel with Audre Lorde's approach of the erotic places Silvera's work in a larger Black feminist tradition that is now increasingly visible in Canada. Her political agenda as a lesbian feminist, publisher and creative writer constitutes an example of decolonial practice within Black Canadian feminism: it not only demands a space for queer People of Colour, but also challenges *white* hegemonic power structures in that Silvera is daring us to be conscious of multiaxial differences, which simultaneously affect each individual's life, albeit in different ways, meaning oppression for some and privileges for others.

Silvera's experiences of migration, racism, sexism and homophobia, the struggles with her family, Jamaican constructions of respectability, but also her family's strict Christian moral values, are integral parts of her writing. She demands:

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“a rhythm that is uniquely ours – proud, powerful, and gay. Being invisible no longer. Naming ourselves, and taking our space within the larger history of Afro-Caribbean peoples. A dream to be realized, a dream to act upon.”⁹⁰ Her academic and creative work, which she frames with the term “Black women’s strength” – focusing on oral histories and lived experience, unveiling racism and sexism within hierarchical power structures as well as heteronormative constructions of sexuality – engages with Caribbean women’s histories of resistance and resilience and their contemporary condition in Canada. She draws from her own experience as well as from others’ in the struggle for the liberation of working class women from the West Indies in Canada and recognition of equal rights of lesbian Women of Colour. Makeda Silvera has actively shaped Black Caribbean Canadian feminist thought. With her work, she provides answers to the questions, “[w]hat happens when specific gender roles as well as sexual orientation do not find a space of acceptance within the dominant patriarchal society?”⁹¹ What happens when specific racial and sexual inscriptions do not fit into the dominant mainstream culture?

Endnotes

¹ Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 2007 [1984]), 59.

² On the origin of the decolonial option Mignolo states, “decolonial thinking emerged at the very foundation of modernity/coloniality, as its counterpoint. And this occurred in the Americas, in Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean thinking. It later continued in Asia and Africa, unrelated to the decolonial thinking of the Americas, but rather as a counterpoint to the re-organization of colonial modernity with the British Empire and French colonialism.” Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto,” *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Culture Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 2 (2011), 46.

³ The “colonial matrix of power” includes the European-North American control not only over economy, authority and knowledge, but also over gender and sexuality, both too often neglected categories, cf. Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007), 168-78. Quijano further argues that race, as a social construct, is a primary factor for the classification and stratification of the world’s population. He adds, “[t]he racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality.” Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000), 533-580, 533.

⁴ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002), 209.

⁵ Prior to Canada's official multicultural pluralism in 1971, newly arrived migrants and residing minority groups were meant to join the dominant British group assimilating their ethnic identities to "Anglo-conformity". Leo Driedger, *Race and Ethnicity: Finding Identities and Equalities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25. Today, multiculturalism defines ethnic groups such as Blacks as a visible minority against a predominantly *white* background which often entails a position in unequal relations of dominance. I write *white* in italics to indicate a socially constructed norm and (my) position of structural advantage which includes privileges and usually goes unmentioned. Black is the self-designation of Black persons, likewise also People of Colour. The capital letter indicates that it is a political and empowering identification, cf. Susan Arndt and Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard, eds., *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht. (K)Erben des Kolonialismus im Wissensarchiv deutsche Sprache* (Münster: Unrast).

⁶ Emily Allen Williams, ed., *Beyond the Canebreaks: Caribbean Women Writers in Canada* (Trenton, Asmara: Africa World Press, 2008).

⁷ By no means do I wish to diminish the contribution by writers such as Austine Clark, or Dany Laferrière, Neil Bissoondath or Cyril Dabydeen in shaping Caribbean literature in Canada. For a more in-depth discussion on Caribbean-Canadian literatures see George Elliot Clarke, "Does (Afro-)Caribbean-Canadian Literature Exist?," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 14, no.1-2 (2005), 260-302; Michael Bucknor and Daniel Coleman, "Introduction: Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 14, no.1-2 (2005): i-xliii. See also the work by Rinaldo Walcott, sociologist and critic in Black diaspora cultural studies, who has published extensively on Black Canadian culture and writing with a focus on queer sexuality, masculinity, coloniality and citizenship.

⁸ Elizabeth Ruth, "In Conversation with Makeda Silvera," *Herizons* 16, no. 4 (2003), n.p.

⁹ Makeda Silvera, ed., "The Characters Would Not Have It," *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1995), 407.

¹⁰ The entanglement of heterosexuality and citizenship in the Caribbean is "linked to desires for 'respectability' and 'decency' that are completely based on a western epistemological frame of reference – and, more specifically, on a colonial, pseudo-Victorian mutation of this order." Aaron Kamugisha, "The Coloniality of Citizenship in the Contemporary Anglophone Caribbean," *Race and Class* 49, no.2 (2007), 35. See also: Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship From Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012); Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹¹ Mohanty defines solidarity as "mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests [which] foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together." Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

¹² Makeda Silvera, "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean lesbians," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992), 521-33.

¹³ The collections *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms*, edited by Njoki Nathani Wane, Katerina Deliovsky, and Erica Lawson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002) as well as *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspectives on Black Feminist Thought*, edited by Njoki Nathani Wane and Notisha Massaquoi (Toronto, Canada: Inanna Publications and Education, 2007) are just two examples of recent publications in the field, offering a variety of essays that explore histories, struggles, resistance, and possibilities of/by/for Black women in Canada. An earlier key text in the field that uncovers the history of Black women in Canada since the nineteenth century is the anthology *'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (1994) edited by Peggy Bristow (Toronto [et al.]: University of Toronto Press, 1994) with contributions by Afua Cooper, Dionne Brand, among others.

¹⁴ On this point, see for instance Bucknor and Coleman, "Introduction", ix-xi. Walcott, on the contrary, argues, "it is around Canadian blacks of Caribbean descent that definitions of blackness in Canada

are clustered. The hyper-visibility of Caribbean blackness makes indigenous black Canadians invisible.” Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who?: Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 46.

¹⁵ Yvonne Bobb-Smith, “Caribbean Feminism versus Canadian Feminism,” in *Feminisms and Womanisms: A Women’s Studies Reader*, edited by Althea Prince and Susan Silva-Wayne (Toronto: Women’s Press, 2004), 167.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 167-68.

¹⁷ Cf. Delores V. Mullings, “Situating Older Caribbean Canadian Women in Feminist Research: A Reflection,” *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme* 23, no. 2 (2004), 134-139, 136. On the “colour line” in Canada, see Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), esp. chapter one. On community building and migration policies, see Mensah, *Black Canadians*.

¹⁸ Notisha Massaquoi, “Future Imaginings of Black Feminist Thought,” in *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspectives on Black Feminist Thought*, edited by Notisha Massaquoi and Njoki Nathani Wane (Toronto: Innana, 2007), 7.

¹⁹ An important documentation is *The Hanging of Angélique* by Afua Cooper: “From 1628 to 1833, slavery was a legal and acceptable institution in both French and British Canada and was vigorously practiced.” Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007), 70. Cooper offers a detailed description of the nation’s history of slavery paying special attention to the role of enslaved women. Mensah emphasises the long-standing history of Jamaican migration to Canada: “[O]ne of the first large groups of Blacks to enter Canada was the Maroons of Jamaica, who landed in Halifax in 1796. Also, during the First World War, Jamaican Blacks were among those recruited to work in the coal mines ... and the shipyards”. Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 98.

²⁰ Njoki Nathani Wane, “Black Canadian Feminist Thought: Drawing on the Experiences of My Sisters,” in *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms*, edited by Njoki Nathani Wane, Katerina Deliovsky, and Erica Lawson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002), 29-53.

²¹ Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Talks with Working Class Caribbean Women about Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto: Sister Vision, 2000 [1983]), 12.

²² The article builds on Alison Donnell’s work on queer subjectivity and sexuality in Caribbean writing as well as on Michael A. Bucknor’s extensive studies on masculinities and the body in Caribbean-Canadian literature; see Alison Donnell, *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary and Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 2006); Alison Donnell, “Caribbean Queer: New Meetings of Place and the Possible in Shani Mootoo’s Writings,” *Contemporary Women’s Writing* 6, no.3 (2012), 213-32; Alison Donnell *Caribbean Queer: Desire Dissidence and the Construction of Literary Subjectivity* [in progress]; Michael A. Bucknor, “Staging Seduction: Masculine Performance or the Art of Sex in Colin Channer’s Reggae Romance *Waiting in Vain?*” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 6, no.1 (2004), 67-81; Bucknor, Special Issue on “Dangerous Crossings: Caribbean Masculinities and the Politics of Challenging Gendered Borderlines,” *Journal of West Indian Literature* 21, no.1-2 (2012).

²³ Makeda Silvera, “Her Head a Village,” *Her Head a Village* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1994), 11-18, 11.

²⁴ For a more concise discussion of the “entangled inequalities approach” including the origin of the terminology its limits and possibilities see Julia Roth, “Entangled Inequalities as Intersectionalities: Towards an Epistemic Sensibilization,” *desigualdades.net Working Paper Series*, No. 43 (Berlin, 2013), http://www.desigualdades.net/Recursos/Working_Paper/43_WP_Roth_Online.pdf

²⁵ Silvera, “Her Head,” 17.

²⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak.” *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66-111.

²⁷ Silvera, “Her Head”, 15.

- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: Women's Press, 1991 [1983]).
- ³⁰ Quijano, "Coloniality of Power," 533-34.
- ³¹ Silvera, "Her Head," 15.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid., 17.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 18.
- ³⁵ Makeda Silvera, *The Heart Does Not Bend* (Toronto: Vintage, 2002), 187.
- ³⁶ Suzanne LaFont, "Very Straight Sex: The Development of Sexual Morés in Jamaica," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2, no. 3 (2001): paragraphs 1-71. She argues that morality based on heterosexual conduct developed in a dialectic relation between the colonisers and colonised. On respectability, religion and heterosexuality see Deborah Thomas, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).
- ³⁷ Sharon Morgan Beckford, *Naturally Woman: The Search for Self in Black Canadian Women's Literature* (Toronto: Inanna, 2011), 242.
- ³⁸ Silvera, *The Heart*, 164.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 53.
- ⁴⁰ Christine Kim, "Postcolonial Romance, Ghostly Love Stories, and the *Heart Does Not Bend*," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 39, no. 2 (2006): 57-73, 72. She argues that Petal is Molly's imaginary friend, of which I am not convinced.
- ⁴¹ Beckford, *Naturally Woman*, 245.
- ⁴² Silvera, *The Heart*, 169.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 162.
- ⁴⁴ Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 53.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 58.
- ⁴⁶ Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13. Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 59. The term "woman-identified woman" is the title of a document written by The Radicalesbians and is considered the founding text of the U.S.-based lesbian feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. The Combahee River Collective broke with the movement and formed a separate group in 1975.
- ⁴⁷ Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 54.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 56.
- ⁴⁹ Silvera, *The Heart*, 165.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 90.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 165-166.
- ⁵² Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic" 56.
- ⁵³ Silvera, *The Heart*, 263.
- ⁵⁴ Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic", 56.
- ⁵⁵ Beckford, *Naturally Woman*, 222.
- ⁵⁶ Silvera, *The Heart*, 263.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 264.
- ⁵⁸ Amy Kebe, "Rewriting Gender and the Nation in Makeda Silvera's *Silenced* and *The Heart Does Not Bend*," *Beyond the Canebrakes: Caribbean Women Writers in Canada*, edited by Emily Allen Williams (Trenton, Asmara: Africa World Press, 2008), 292.
- ⁵⁹ Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic", 59.
- ⁶⁰ *The Heart*, 153.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 79.
- ⁶² Ibid., 169, 173.
- ⁶³ Dionne Brand, *Bread out of Stone: Recollections, Sex, Recognitions, Race, Dreaming, Politics* (Toronto: Vintage, 1994), 27.

⁶⁴ Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*, 7.

⁶⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988), 519-31, 520.

⁶⁶ Linden Lewis, "Unsettling Masculinity in the Caribbean: Facing a Future Without Guarantees," *The International Working Group on Gender, Macroeconomics and International Economics*, Working Paper No. 06-9 (2005), 2.

⁶⁷ Linden Lewis, ed., "Caribbean Masculinity: Unpacking the Narrative," in *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 107.

⁶⁸ Clinton Hutton, "Oh Rudie: Jamaican Popular Music and the Narrative of Urban Badness in the Making of Postcolonial Society," *Caribbean Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2010), 22-65.

⁶⁹ "A current perceived crisis of gun violence in Toronto's black communities has led to an increasing criminalization and marginalization of black men and Jamaicans, in particular. Jamaican men have come to represent for many white, as well as middle-class black Canadians, a deep fear of black masculinity-the kind of masculinity that has to be kept in check and guarded lest it upset the delicate balance of this liberal democratic state." Andrea Davis, "Translating Narratives of Masculinity Across Borders: A Jamaican Case Study," *Caribbean Quarterly* 52, no. 2-3 (2006), 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷¹ Silvera, *The Heart*, 28.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 31. Rocksteady and ska are musical genres having their origin in Jamaica's urban ghettos. Hutton connects the popular music of the time to masculinity and 'authentic' expressions of urban badness (cf. Hutton, "Oh Rudie").

⁷³ Cf. Hutton, "Oh Rudie," 44.

⁷⁴ Silvera, *The Heart*, 228. "Batto-" or "batty" derives from "buttocks." "Battyman" is a Jamaican patwa term of abuse for a gay person.

⁷⁵ Makeda Silvera, "Baby," in *Her Head A Village*, 64-73, 71.

⁷⁶ Silvera, *The Heart*, 71.

⁷⁷ Kim, "Postcolonial Romance," 67.

⁷⁸ Silvera, "Baby," 66.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 71-73.

⁸⁴ All *ibid.*, 71.

⁸⁵ Kebe, "Rewriting Gender," 291.

⁸⁶ Silvera, "Baby," 73.

⁸⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, London: Routledge, 1991), 193.

⁸⁸ In order to achieve social control over the body (in a Foucauldian sense of bio-power), to condition the body to be more compliant, and productive, individuals are socialized into a heteronormative power matrix (Butler), internalizing certain structures of a so-called "normality." Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (1994), 5-23.

⁸⁹ Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience," 46.

⁹⁰ Silvera, "Man Royals," 532.

⁹¹ Beckford, *Naturally Woman*, 5.