Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

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THE REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMA AND TRAUMA COPING STRATEGIES IN GRACE NICHOLS'S POETRY

Merve SARIKAYA-ŞEN

Ph.D. Thesis

Ankara, 2016

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KABUL VE ONAY

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Prof. Dr Burçin Erol (Başkan)

Prof. Dr Huriye Reis (Danışman)

Doç. Dr Hande Seber

Doç. Dr Nurten Birlik

Yrd. Doç. Dr Margaret J-M. Sönmez

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ÖZET

SARIKAYA-ŞEN, Merve. Grace Nichols'ın Şiirinde Travma ve Travmayla Başetme Yollarının Temsili. Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2016.

Bu çalışma, Grace Nichols'ın *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983), *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984), *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989), *Sunris* (1996) ve *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005) koleksiyonlarında travmanın ve travmayla başetme yollarının ele alınmasında kademeli bir evrilme süreci olduğunu savunur. *I is*, *The Fat* ve *Lazy Thoughts* Afro-Karayipli insanların Karayipler'deki kölelikleri boyunca ve Birleşik Krallık'taki diasporik yaşamları süresince yaşadıkları travmayı ve travmayla başetme yollarını temsil ederken, *Sunris* ve *Startling the Flying Fish* Afro-Karayiplilerin travmasını daha yapıcı bir biçimde ele alır. *I is*'de travmatik yaşantıyı temsil etmek için dört farklı yöntem kullanılır; travmanın bastırılması, travmanın sürekli bir sorun olarak ortaya çıkması, travmanın sürekli dışa vurulması ve travmatik pastoral. Ayrıca, Nichols iki farklı travmayla başetme yöntemi sunar; travmadan hayal gücü ya da intikam fantazileriyle uzak durmak ve dini ve/ya da manevi inançlara dayanmak. *The Fat* ve *Lazy Thoughts*, Afro-Karayiplilere özgü travmatik geçmişin, İngiliz Afro-Karayip diasporasının 1960'lar sonrası yaşantılarındaki mirasını temsil eder. Bu koleksiyonlarda, Nichols nostaljiyi ve grotesk görüntüleri travmayla başetme mekanizması olarak kullanır. *Sunris* ve *Startling the Flying Fish* başlıklı koleksiyonlarda, Nichols Afro-Karayiplilerin travmatik geçmişlerine daha olumlayıcı bir tutumla yaklaşır. *Sunris*'te Trinidad ve Tobago Karnavalı, *Startling the Flying Fish*'te ise mitlere özgü yeniden anlatım yöntemi travmayla başetme yöntemi olarak kullanılır. Böylece, bu çalışma Nichols'ın şiirinin travmatik Afro-Karayip geçmişinin gölgesinde kalmayacak şekilde, bu geçmişi tanıdığını ve bu geçmişle uzlaşmaya yöneldiğini savunur.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Grace Nichols, *I is a Long Memoried Woman*, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish*, travma, travmayla başetme.

ABSTRACT

SARIKAYA-ŞEN, Merve. The Representations of Trauma and Trauma Coping Strategies in Grace Nichols's Poetry. Ph.D. Thesis, Ankara, 2016.

This study argues that there is a gradual evolution of the treatment of trauma and trauma coping strategies in Grace Nichols's *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983), *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984), *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989), *Sunris* (1996), and *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005). *I is*, *The Fat Black*, and *Lazy Thoughts* represent Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences and their trauma coping mechanisms during their slavery in the Caribbean and later in their diasporic lives in Britain. *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* treat the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past in a more constructive way. *I is* presents four different ways of representing Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences; repression, haunting, acting out, and traumatic pastoral. Also, the collection presents two different strategies of coping with trauma; dissociation in the form of escape through imagination or revenge fantasies as well as religious beliefs and/or spirituality. *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* represent the legacies of the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past in British Afro-Caribbean diaspora's lives in the post 1960s. In these collections, Nichols employs nostalgia and grotesque images as trauma coping strategies. In *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish*, Nichols adopts a more affirmative attitude towards the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. In *Sunris*, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, and, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, mythical retellings act as trauma healing mechanisms. Thus, this study indicates that Nichols's poetry recognizes the Afro-Caribbean past as traumatic and moves towards a reconciliation with it and the construction of an envisaged future that includes but is not overshadowed by it.

Keywords

Grace Nichols, *I is a Long Memoried Woman*, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish*, trauma, trauma coping.

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of interest in literary representations of trauma is a recent phenomenon associated with a surge of interest in trauma theory. Roger Luckhurst convincingly argues that today's world is "saturated with trauma", traces of which can be found in government inquiries, celebrity culture, academic monographs, and bestseller lists (2). Evidently, the last thirty years mark both the emergence of trauma studies and a great increase in the number of literary works dealing with trauma.[1] Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau cogently argue that from the 1980s onwards, the representations of trauma in literature have noticeably augmented in a cumulative response to the dismal outcomes of the two world wars, the wars of decolonization, international terrorism, ethnic discriminations, and sexual and physical abuse ("Introduction: Traumatic Realism" 3). More importantly, Onega believes that the rise of interest in literary works representing trauma is a direct result of the belief in the agency of literary texts to heal trauma ("Affective Knowledge" 84).

The application of trauma theory in understanding literary texts evinces diverse but at the same time potentially controversial principles, especially for the analysis of postcolonial literary texts. In this regard, Stef Craps contends that trauma theory disregards the traumatic experiences of subordinate groups and exclusively gives voice to the Western society, and at the same time addresses trauma and recovery as universal phenomena: "They [primary trauma texts] tend to ignore traumatic experiences and histories of currently sub-ordinate groups both inside and outside Western society, and/or to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity" (2). However, traumatic experiences of subordinate groups must be recognized "on their own terms" (3).[2] This implies that the employment of trauma theory for the traumatic experiences of non-western people may entail a different approach from that used for western subjects. Accordingly, whether in fiction or poetry, the analysis of the representation of traumatic experiences of non-western groups (such as Afro-Caribbeans during slavery and the after-effects of these traumatic experiences in the following generations) necessitates a thorough and culturally accurate formulation. In contemporary British poetry, Grace Nichols is one of the important poets to represent Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences of slavery and diasporic life in Britain and trauma coping strategies adopted by them, notably in her poetry collections—*I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983), *The Fat Black Woman`s Poems* (1984), *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989), *Sunris* (1996), and *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005).[3] Since this study focuses on those of Nichols's adult collections that predominantly represent trauma and trauma coping strategies, her children's poetry and her last adult collection, *Picasso I want My Face Back* (2009), which offers various examples of ekphrastic poetry and focuses on art, landscape, and memory, are not included in this study. Consequently, this study adopts a different approach in its analysis of Nichols's poetry as trauma poetry representing non-western predicament of Afro-Caribbean people and their non-western trauma coping mechanisms. Hence, this study argues that Nichols's *I is*, *The Fat*, *Lazy Thoughts*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish* represent traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people during slavery and the slave trade and their after-effects in the lives of the British Afro-Caribbean diaspora, as well as these people's trauma coping strategies in the Caribbean and Britain. This study indicates very strongly that Nichols moves from recognizing an Afro-Caribbean past as traumatic to a strategy of reconciling with it and building a future that includes it but is not impeded by it. In this context, Nichols's first collection, *I is* (1983), represents Afro-Caribbean slaves' traumatic experiences caused by the slave trade and slavery in the New Land and their ways of coping with these traumas. As argued below, in *I is,* trauma is represented through repression, repetition, haunting and traumatic pastoral while healing is represented through a return to religion and spirituality and through dissociation in the form of escape through imagination and revenge fantasies. Different from *I is,* which focuses on Afro-Caribbean people during the Middle Passage and slavery, in Nichols's two following collections, *The Fat* (1984) and *Lazy Thoughts* (1989), the focus is on Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain after the 1960s. In fact these two collections represent the fact that, in that period, the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain were haunted by the traumatic experiences of their ancestors and developed trauma coping mechanisms such as nostalgia and grotesque to deal with their trauma. Evidently, *The Fat* and *Lazy*

Thoughts show how different trauma coping strategies were adopted by Afro-Caribbean people in different places and times.

Similarly, Nichols's later collections, *Sunris* (1996) and *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005) represent the continuity of Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past into the present as well as their trauma coping means. In this regard, far from wandering away from Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* rewrite the traumatic history of slavery and the slave trade. In doing this, *Sunris* has resort to the healing power of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival while *Startling the Flying Fish* draws on the power of mythical retellings. Moreover, different from Nichols's earlier collections, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* adopt a more affirmative and decisive attitude in their reconciliation with the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Accordingly, in *Sunris* Nichols presents us with an Afro-Caribbean speaker named Sunris who attends the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and moves beyond her ancestors' traumatic past of slavery and the slave trade. Similarly, in her attempt to create a new outlook, Nichols, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, presents us with Cariwoma as a mythical being who has the power to connect the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with the present and the future and thus achieve a reconciliation with the entire Afro-Caribbean traumatic heritage. Besides, Cariwoma has the agency to connect the sufferings of Afro-Caribbeans with those of others such as the Aztecs. On these grounds, the representation of trauma and trauma coping strategies in Nichols's poetry collections analysed in this study attests to the fact that reading literary works that represent Afro-Caribbean people's trauma and healing deserve proper recognition and comprehensive analysis.

Grace Nichols stands out as one of the most significant contemporary women poets of Caribbean origin in Britain. Nichols was born in Georgetown, Guyana in 1950 and grew up in a small village on the Guyanese coast. When she was eight, she moved to the city with her family, which was the source of her only novel *Whole of a Morning Sky* (1986). She attended the University of Guyana and gained a diploma in Communications (Dawes 135; Simone A. James Alexander 716). As a part of her studies in Communications, she visited some remote areas of Guyana, which influenced her writings and started her interest in Guyanese folk tales, Amerindian myths, the

Aztecs and the Incas (Ray 399). She worked as a teacher and journalist before moving to the UK with her partner John Agard in 1977[4].

Despite the variety and richness of Nichols's work, it remains relatively unexplored in terms of trauma theory. After winning The Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1983, Nichols came to public notice. From that point onwards, her poetry has received critical attention mainly from the perspective of gender and postcolonial studies that theorize representations of postcolonial identity and the female body. For example, Gudrun Webhofer seeks to understand the representation of identity in terms of gender and race in a selection of poems written by Nichols and Goodison. Similarly, Cara N. Cilano, in her dissertation explores Nichols's construction of postcolonial identity, especially in *I is*. Another dissertation that analyses *I is* from the perspective of postcolonial identity is Catherine R. Restovich's which explores it as an example of postcolonial Afro-Caribbean female writing. Similar to Restovich, Özlem Türe Abacı, in her M. A. Thesis argues that *I is*, as an example of Anglophone Afro-Caribbean poetry, deals with Afro-Caribbean painful past through "the strategic purposes of language variance and mimicry" (63) as well as postcolonial shared memory in "constructing identity and negotiating the notions of home and belonging" (101). In later studies, such as Maija Naakka's M. A. Thesis, Nichols's collections have been analysed to see how otherness is constructed through the black female body. From a different perspective, Susheila Nasta focuses on the "creolisation of cultures and languages that define the syncretic nature of the Caribbean history" in *I is* (xvi). As for *The Fats*, Nerys Williams argues that Nichols presents a "speaker who negotiates the problems of everyday living in London" (36). In a seminal study on Nichols's writing, C. L. Innes argues that, in *The Fat*,

> the persona of the fat black woman responds lustily, assertively, and unashamedly to British (and Western) concepts of feminine beauty and behaviour, challenging the judges' preference for the slim and ethereal winners of Miss World contests, issuing invitations to would-be lovers, dismissing ballet and the ballroom for the boogie-woogie. Some poems also cheerfully challenge Western intellectual discourse, whose categorizations of African women can be seen as part of an overall project to justify its patriarchal hegemony. (327-328)

Similarly, Innes believes that Nichols's following collection, *Lazy Thoughts*, "moves from challenging concepts of femininity that exclude women who are black and joyfully well-fleshed to challenging internalized ideals of the good housewife, obsessed with the care of the house" (329). In other words, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* have been analysed with regard to the agency of female body and writing. Nichols's *Sunris* remains relatively unexplored when compared to her previous collections. Fiona Darroch reads *Sunris* in terms of postcolonial religion in contemporary Guyanese poetry and argues that Nichols provides readers with "a map of how religion should be understood in Guyanese fiction and poetry" (128). Similar to *Sunris*, *Startling the Flying Fish* has received very few critical approaches and those extant are mainly in companions to contemporary British poetry. For example, Ian Hamilton and Jeremy Noel-Tod describe *Startling the Flying Fish* as "a mythological story of the Caribbean" (443). Evidently, Nichols's later collections have not received much critical acclaim and analysis when compared to her earlier works. Moreover, her poetry has been analysed mainly in terms of their postcolonial and/or gender related elements but not in terms of their trauma and trauma coping representations.

Nichols's poetry collections analysed in this study—*I is*, *The Fat*, *Lazy Thoughts*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish*— belong to significant body of contemporary British poetry which variously explores the representation of the trauma of Afro-Caribbean slavery and the Middle Passage. Among poetry collections written by poets of Caribbean origin in Britain who invest their poems with trauma and trauma coping strategies in representing slavery and the slave trade are Kamau Braithwaite's *The Arrivants* (1973) and *Middle Passages* (1992), David Dabydeen's *Slave Song* (1984), and Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990).[5] Evidently, there are many poets of Caribbean origin in Britain. This situation is directly related to the plurality of voices and forms that characterize British poetry since the 1980s. Michael Hulse, David Kennedy, and David Morley, in their Introduction to *The New Poetry* (1993)[6], define and celebrate the plurality of voices and forms in British poetry after the 1980s as follows: "Throughout the century, the hierarchies of values that once made stable poetics possible have been disappearing. In the absence of shared moral and religious ideals, common social or sexual *mores* or political ideologies, or any philosophy on the conduct of life, plurality has flourished" (15, emphasis in the original).[7] The new poetry with its plurality in its forms and voices was "the beginning of British poetry's tribal divisions and isolation, and a new cohesiveness—its constituent parts 'talk' to one another readily, eloquently, and freely while preserving their unique identities" (16). In other words, although different voices found the opportunity to speak out, they still kept their uniqueness. The change in the new poetry attests to Eagleton's argument that "the marginal becomes somehow central" in contemporary British poetry (46). In a similar vein, James Acheson and Roman Huk argue that contemporary British poetry was characterized by

> the compelling presence of growing numbers of women poets, black poets from a range of differing cultural communities, poets writing out of postcolonial experience or submerged traditions in Scotland and Wales, regional and working-class poets, and poets of all inflections writing in experimental, oppositional and/or 'poststructuralist' forms (3).

This is mainly because Britain was characterized by its multiculturalism which challenged the idea of a centre and paved the way for the pluralism of poetic voices in the 1980s. Hence, poets of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and Caribbean origin could find the opportunity to express themselves. Although open to a plurality of voices, contemporary Britain in the 1980s was not very much of a home to poets of different origins, especially those from the Caribbean. Jahan Ramazani argues that poets of Caribbean origin in Britain "have been unhoused by modernity and colonialism, by war and politics, by education and travel, even perhaps by their own artifice" (604). In other words, in the 1980s, for poets of Caribbean origin, Britain was a country in which they could not develop a sense of belonging. Such a sense of exile and lack of belonging to Britain are traceable in the poems written by poets of Caribbean origin such as Fred D'Auguiar, David Dabydeen, and Grace Nichols whose poetries also reflect their vulnerability and deep sufferings rooted in their traumatic ancestral past (Hulse *et. al* 18-19).[8]

Consequently, since the beginning of her literary production, Nichols has been concerned with representing the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and its legacies in contemporary Afro-Caribbean diasporic life in Britain. Therefore, in order to understand Nichol's trauma poetry, we need to analyse the application of trauma theory in understanding literary texts, which was an interest and an approach that started to gain prominence in the early 1990s. In fact, the analyses of literary representations of trauma are mainly based on a psychological understanding of trauma. However, the origins of the word "trauma" go back to physical wounds. Luckhurst explains that the word trauma "derives from the Greek word meaning wound" and that it was used in English in the seventeenth century in medicine to refer "to a bodily injury caused by an external agent" (2). In the nineteenth century, the term was extended to describe stressing conditions. Especially, these were associated with the afflictions of women newly starting their careers and urban dwellers who were exposed to new means of mass transportation and industrial manufacture (Baer 9). In the 1860s, an interest in 'psychic' trauma began when railway accidents gave rise to long-lasting and painful effects on victims who had not been physically injured. As Kirby Farrell asserts, "[i]n 1866, the British surgeon John Erichsen published *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System*, which held that physical shock to neural tissue could result in mental injury" (7). Thus, the concept of trauma started to extend from physical to psychic grounds in the late nineteenth century.

This study adopts trauma theory based on a psychological understanding of trauma and conducts an extensive research to arrive at a thorough understanding of the trauma and trauma coping strategies presented in Nichols's poetry. Therefore, as argued below, this study elaborates on and adopts the arguments of the forerunners of trauma research in the psychical domain who were Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud, and Josef Breuer and carries further research into literary trauma theory that has been developing since the 1990s. At the start of psychological investigations into trauma, Charcot drew strong correlations between hysteria and trauma while his student Janet analysed dissociative states resulting from trauma. Charcot's more famous colleagues, Freud and Breuer wrote works, such as "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" (1893), "Project for a Scientific Psychology," (1895), "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" (1914), "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), which are among most important works cited in trauma studies. Besides these forerunners of psychological trauma theory, this study mainly draws on literary trauma theory which has been developing since the 1990s.

In the late nineteenth century, Charcot, a French neurologist working with traumatised subjects in the Salpetrière hospital, was the first to study the relationship between trauma and mental illnesses. Exploring the causes of hysteria and dissociative symptoms, Charcot found out that hysteria had psychological not physical origins and that it was not limited to women only but inflicted men as well. Charcot analysed six males suffering from hysteria associated with "serious and obstinate nervous states which present themselves after collisions" (221). His aim was to underline the fact that male hysteria was possible although it remained "often unrecognized, even by very distinguished physicians" (221). Charcot argued that "it is usual for these diseases [such as paralyses, contractures, fainting and amnesia] to localise themselves at first in parts where the wound, the contusion, or the sprain is produced" (33). Gradually, however, such symptoms diffused over the nervous system. Charcot explained that they did not have physical but psychical origins and added that "these motor paralyses of psychical origin are as objectively real as those depending on an organic lesion" (289). Among the most important symptoms of such neurotic symptoms was "traumatic retrograde amnesia" (376) which meant that the traumatised subject has "no memory of what had happened to him" (xxxi). Ruth Harris, in her Introduction to Charcot's study, explains traumatic retrograde amnesia by giving an example. After a road accident, a man is unconscious for nearly six days. When he wakes up, he develops traumatic retrograde amnesia; he does not remember the accident at all but suffers from paralysis in his legs. He believes that this is because his legs have been crushed. The terror he has experienced during the accident makes him erase the traumatic moment in his mind and offer an alternative story in its stead. Thus, he unconsciously avoids remembering the traumatic moment (xxxi).

While Charcot emphasized amnesia, it was Pierre Janet who underlined "dissociation" as the underlying tenet of trauma. According to Janet, traumatized individuals "seem to have lost their capacity to assimilate new experiences as well. It is […] as if their personality development has stopped at a certain point, and cannot enlarge any more by the addition of new elements" ("L'amnésie continue" 138). Elaborating on Janet's arguments, Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart argue that "lack of proper integration of intensely emotionally arousing experiences into the memory system results in dissociation" (163). Consequently, in an attempt to escape from the overwhelming effects of the affects associated with the traumatic experience, the traumatized subject basically represses the trauma to the unconscious, which results in the splitting or dissociation of the conscious and the unconscious mind. In fact, dissociation or splitting of the mind is what constitutes the present situation of the traumatized subject. In keeping with this, the traumatized subjects "undergo affective numbing or avoid reminders of trauma. Re-experiencing and avoidance/numbing may coexist or alternate" (Steele et al. 241). As Leys states, "owing to the emotions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed" (2). As Leys continues, "all the symptoms characteristic of PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder]—flashbacks, nightmares and other re-experiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence or tendency to hypervigilance—are thought to be the result of this mental dissociation" (2). The traumatized subjects, therefore, cannot remember the traumatic event in precise details but are haunted and/or possessed by it. Therefore, it is not easy to locate the causes and cures of trauma.

Following in the footsteps of Charcot and Janet, Freud and Breuer underlined the "repression" of traumatic affects. Drawing on the similarities between hysteria and traumatic neurosis, Freud and Breuer argue that hysteria and traumatic neurosis are not limited to physical degeneration but develop out of psychological reasons:

> the operative cause of the illness is not the trifling physical injury but the affect of fright—the psychical trauma. In an analogous manner, our investigations reveal, for many, if not for most, hysterical symptoms, precipitating causes which can only be described as psychical traumas. Any experience which calls up distressing affects—such as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain—may operate as a trauma of this kind. ("On the Psychical" 5-6)

What is distinctive to trauma is that the traumatic event is "absent from the patients' memory when they are in a normal psychical state" (7) because they repress it in the unconscious. In other words, "repression" of traumatic affects is the determining characteristic of Freud's definition of trauma. Drawing on Freud's arguments of the repression of traumatic affects, Luckhurst contends that "a psychical trauma is something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated by usual mental processes" and, therefore, "it falls out of our conscious memory, yet is still present in the mind like an intruder or a ghost" (499).

Problematizing the complex status of the traumatic experience, in "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895) Freud underlines the "belatedness" of trauma, too. He coins the term *Nachträglichkeit* which refers to the fact that "a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by *deferred action*" (356, emphasis in the original). In other words, the traumatizing event is repressed to be reactivated after a period of dormancy by a second traumatic event that triggers the traumatic symptoms of the first. In this regard, the dialectic between two events constitutes trauma; the past traumatic event is available, sometimes in fragmentary and incomplete form, through a deferred action of understanding and interpretation (Leys 20). Since the traumatic event is not intrinsically traumatic, we can say that what turns an event into traumatic experience is the way in which the traumatized subject confers meaning on it. Evidently, Freud moves from an understanding of trauma as germane to the collapse of memory to the perception of trauma as the repression of traumatic affects to be activated after a period of inactivity.

In *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud describes this process as including an "incubation period" or "latency", which is the chronological gap between the traumatic event and the emergence of its symptoms triggered by a second event. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud makes the ground-breaking claim that Moses was an Egyptian because "the name Moses derives from the Egyptian vocabulary" (13). Moses was not only "the head of a throng of culturally inferior immigrants"—the Israelites—but also their "law-giver and educator [as] […] the man who forced them to adopt a new religion, which is still today called Mosaic after him" (31). However, Freud continues, Moses was murdered by the Israelites. This murder, a severe act of violence, was repressed by the perpetrating society only to be reactivated later. In fact, nearly one hundred years later, the Israelites—who had killed Moses—came to a place called

Meribat-Qades where they met Semitic tribes and started worshipping their god, Yahweh. Most importantly, the leader of these Semitic tribes was also called Moses. Gradually, these Semitic tribes and the Israelites formed a union (54-61). However, as time passed by, the Israelites started turning back to their Mosaic religion:

> the religion of Moses did not appear without leaving any trace; a kind of memory it had survived, a tradition perhaps obscured and distorted. It was this tradition of a great past that continued to work in the background, until it slowly gained more and more power over the mind of the people and at last succeeded in transforming the God Jahve into the Mosaic God and in waking to a new life the religion Moses had instituted centuries ago and which had later been forsaken. (113)

Further, “a feeling of guiltiness had seized the Jewish people” because they remembered their shameful act of killing the Egyptian Moses (138). The chronological period between repressing the memories of killing Moses and remembering it centuries later is what Freud called latency or the incubation period. Hence, Freud describes traumatic neurosis as follows:

> It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a ‘traumatic neurosis’. This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptom is called the ‘incubation period’, a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease […]. It is the feature one might term *latency*. (109-110, emphasis in the original)

Adopting Freud’s ideas, Onega and Ganteau explain that “it is only after this second event that the symptoms of the trauma are expressed in the form of nightmares or flashbacks” and the traumatic event is “experienced again with full force but perceived as incomprehensible and belonging in the present” (“Introduction” *Ethics and Trauma* 11). Consequently, such a latency period or *Nachträglichkeit*, results in “obliterating the distinction between past and present and disrupting the linear model of temporality” (10). In other words, temporality no longer applies to traumatic experiences.

According to Freud, the traumatised subject incessantly “acts out” the symptoms of trauma. From 1895 to 1914, Freud did not analyse traumatic neurosis but after the shell-shock of World War I, his interest in trauma was regenerated. During that time, soldiers who were physically healthy but refused to return to the battlefield were treated as runaways and idlers. Although physically well, these soldiers “not only suffered memory gaps, but also repeatedly re-experienced extreme events in flashbacks, nightmares, and hallucinations months or even years afterwards” (Luckhurst 500). Freud explains that what is distinctive to such delayed remembering is acting out one’s traumatic experiences. In other words, instead of remembering the traumatic experiences, the traumatized subject acts out or relives the repressed memories as if they belonged to the present time. The traumatized subject

> does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it *out*. He produces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it [...] he cannot escape from this compulsion to repeat; and in the end we understand that this is his way of remembering. (“Remembering, Repeating” 150, emphasis in the original)

Freud notes that, as the memory of the traumatic event is repressed in depth, “the patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it […]. He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of […] something belonging to the past” (“Beyond the Pleasure” 18). Therefore, the traumatized subject acts out the traumatic memory in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, hallucinatory visions etc. repeatedly and unconsciously instead of recollecting it merely as a memory of the past. However, as Onega and Ganteau explain, the effect of this delayed remembering and acting out is not healing in itself (“Introduction” *Ethics and Trauma* 11).

Contemporary approaches to the possibility of healing trauma are informed by Freud’s arguments of “working through”. The concept of “working through” appears first in Freud’s “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through” (1914), and later in his “Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety” (1926). As suggested above, in “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through”, Freud elaborates on the repression and repetition of traumatic experiences. Besides, Freud also argues that trauma can be cured by working it through, which involves making the traumatised subject remember previously repressed traumatic affects. According to Freud, the traumatised subject is prone to repeat his/her traumatic experiences incessantly and might resist working it through but the analyst must be patient in allowing him/her to enter the healing phase:

> One must allow the patient time to become more conversant with this resistance with which he has now become acquainted, to *work through* it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis. Only when the resistance is at its height can the analyst, working in common with his patient, discover the repressed instinctual impulses which are feeding the resistance; and it is this kind of experience which convinces the patient of the existence and power of such impulses. The doctor has nothing else to do than to wait and let things take their course, a course which cannot be avoided nor always hastened. ("Remembering, Repeating" 155, emphasis in the original)

Freud goes on to say that only through this way of working through the traumatic experiences that the analyst can achieve "the greatest changes in the patient" (155). Similarly, in "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety", Freud goes on to argue that working through is "the period of strenuous effort" (159) which aims at relinquishing the repetitions of traumatic affects.

Freud's conceptualisation of mourning is among the most important tools used to account for the phase of "working through" in studies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[9] In "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud defines mourning as "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). Freud notes that

> [p]rofound mourning, the reaction to the loss of someone who is loved, contains the same painful frame of mind, the same loss of interest in the outside world— insofar as it does not recall him— the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing him) and the same turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of him. (244)

The way to mourn is to realize that the loved object/idea does not exist anymore but usually the mourners are not ready to accept this fact. It is only when "each single one of the memories and expectations […] is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it […] [that] the work of mourning is completed, the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (244-245). Freud argues that the ego gives up the object by "disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it" (257).

Drawing on Freud's conceptualisation of mourning, LaCapra associates successful mourning with working through traumatic experiences. What makes LaCapra's arguments different from Freud's suggestions is his description of mourning not simply as individual grieving but as a social process:

> Mourning is […] a homeopathic socialization or ritualization of the repetition compulsion that attempts to turn it against the death drive and to counteract compulsiveness—especially the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes of violence—by re-petitioning in ways that follow for a measure of critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal. (*Writing History* 66)

LaCapra argues that working through entails memory work which helps "to distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then, which is related to, but not identical with here and now" (66). Furthermore, working through is a way to "assist in restoring to victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers" (66). Thereby, mourning allows for "critical judgement and a reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others" (70). Therefore, working through is a social process entailing "not simply alterity in the abstract but actual others—possibly empathic, trustworthy others" (76). It is only in working through that "one acquires the possibility of being an ethical and political agent" (143-4). Thus, LaCapra's arguments have an ethical and political medium through which the traumatized subject not only comes to terms with trauma but also gains the possibility to alter the others around.

In their later writings, Freud and Breuer correlate the phase of "working through" with the concept of "abreaction": "From a theoretical point of view one may correlate it [working through] with the 'abreacting' of quotas of affect strangulated by repression" ("Remembering, "Repeating" 155-156). For the treatment of the traumatized subjects and attenuation of traumatic experiences, Freud and Breuer underline the importance of raising the repressed memories from the unconscious to the consciousness through articulation which "serves as a substitute for action; by its help, an affect can be 'abreacted' almost as effectively" ("On the Psychical Mechanism" 8). In other words, abreaction is a purging of the excess of affects moulded by the traumatic event by putting them into words. If the traumatized subject cannot react to the traumatic experience "in deeds or words, or in the mildest case in tears, any recollection of the event retains its affective to begin with" (8). Consequently, the symptoms of trauma can only disappear through a process of abreaction aimed at making the subject recall and place the event in its proper time of occurrence which provoked the trauma, by reliving its accompanying affects through a thorough description and expression of that event in minute details (6). In other words, abreaction is a cathartic method of talking traumatic experiences out, in order to heal them.

Freud and Breuer's concept of abreaction, which requires putting traumatic experience into words with the aim of working it through, was also explained by Janet. In this regard, Janet's most important contribution was his distinction between "traumatic memory" and "narrative memory".[10] Janet argues that traumatic memory is "a fixed idea of a happening" which does not allow for "the recital which we speak of a [narrative] memory" (*Psychological Healing* 663). In other words, the traumatized subject is unable to put his/her traumatic experience(s) into words. This is mainly because the traumatized subject "remains confronted by a difficult situation in which he has not been able to play a satisfactory part, one to which his adaptation had been imperfect" (663). However, Janet believes that the traumatized subject needs to be involved in an "action of telling a story" which is, in fact, the "narrative memory" (661). This requires the traumatised subject "not only [to] know how to [narrate the event], but must also know how to associate the happening with the other events of his life" whereby an "organisation of the recital of the event to others and to [him/herself]" and "the putting of this recital in its place as one of the chapters in [his/her] personal history" become possible (661-62). In other words, Janet contends that the healing of the traumatised subject can only begin when he/she manages to organize the fragmented remains of his/her traumatic experience successfully and put them in a chronological order so as to narrate and integrate them into his/her life. As argued below, the possibility of narrating trauma and thus integrating it into one's life has made it appealing to literary critics and creative writers alike since the 1990s.

The ground-breaking work on traumatic neurosis carried out by Freud, Janet, and early psychoanalysts provided a solid basis for trauma studies until the early 1980s when trauma was officially recognized by the medical professors. The American Psychiatric Association acknowledged trauma for the first time only in 1980 after the experience of US veterans of Vietnam who returned home with inerasable psychological wounds. As officially defined by the American Psychiatric Association, trauma is the reaction to an event "outside the range of usual human experience" (236) which involves a "recognizable stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone" (238). Drawing on this definition, Irene Visser states that trauma "refers not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage. Trauma thus denotes the recurrence or repetition of the stressor event through memory, dreams, narrative and/or various symptoms known under the definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)" (272). The symptoms of PTSD include not only "nightmares, flashbacks, depression, but also an increased sensitivity to cynicism, depersonalization, and distinct changes in spirituality or worldview" (272). More importantly, however, these symptoms are diverse and include contrasting specificities from unresponsiveness to extreme vigilance: "The traumatic event may intrude repetitively on everyday activities and sleep, but there may also be a total absence of recall. Symptoms may appear chronically or intermittently; immediately or many years after the event" (272).

The transmission of this elaborated concept of trauma from the medical world to interdisciplinary studies came forward in the early 1990s with two very important publications: *American Imago* (1991), a quarterly journal featuring articles that explore Freud's legacy across the humanities, arts, and social sciences and Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), an edited volume exploring trauma through essays and interviews with film makers, sociologists, and literary theorists as well as reprinting essays from *American Imago*. Caruth, one of the most important critics in trauma studies based on Freudian psychoanalysis, explains that the aim of the volume is to "examine the impact of the experience, and the notion, of trauma on psychoanalytic practice and theory, as well as on other aspects of culture such as literature and pedagogy, the construction of history in writing and film, and social or political activism" ("Introduction" *Trauma: Explorations* 4). Accordingly, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* sets out to develop an interdisciplinary approach towards the concept of trauma, which shapes our current knowledge of it. As Caruth contends, "the more we satisfactorily locate and classify the symptoms of PTSD, the more we seem to have dislocated the boundaries of our modes of understanding" and hence a variety of disciplines inclusive of "psychoanalysis and medically oriented psychiatry, sociology, history, and even literature all seem to be called upon to explain, to cure, or to show why it is that we can no longer simply explain or simply cure it" (4). Evidently, although at first trauma was mainly associated with extremely unusual events, it has now become a powerful and complex paradigm that infiltrates contemporary approaches to history, literature, culture, and critical theory.

Drawing on Freud's concepts of belatedness and repetition compulsion, Caruth underlines the unknowability and ungraspability of traumatic experience. Caruth defines the traumatic experience as "the inability fully to witness the event as it occurs, or the ability to witness the *event* fully only at the cost of witnessing oneself" (7, emphasis in original). In this regard, Caruth brings to the fore the belatedness of trauma:

> There is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event […]. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. (4)

Accordingly, Caruth underlines the fact that traumatic experience is suggestive of a paradoxical structure because "the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (*Unclaimed Experience* 92). Echoing Freud's acting out phase, Caruth problematizes the relationship between the traumatic experience and consciousness; the traumatic event cannot be fully recognized at the time of its occurrence but continues to reappear recurrently in different forms. Hence, to Caruth, what inhabits all traumatic experience is its unaccountability. Since the traumatic event cannot be grasped fully, any attempt to account for it would result in "the collapse of its understanding" ("Introduction" *Trauma: Explorations* 7). Emphasising "latency" rather than "repression", Caruth argues that it is the latency of the event that gives meaning to "the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience […,] its [trauma's] blankness—the space of unconsciousness—is paradoxically what precisely preserves the event in its literality" (8). Accordingly, Caruth relates this peculiarity of trauma to the relationship between trauma and history: "A history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence […] what trauma has to tell us—the historical and personal truth it transmits—is intricately bound up with its refusal of historical boundaries; that its truth is bound up with its crisis of truth" (8). To Caruth, then, the truth of trauma is inaccessible and ungraspable, which, paradoxically, constitutes our knowledge of it.

Drawing on Freud's suggestions that traumatic memories are 'not remembered' but 'relived', Caruth underlines the fact that traumatised subjects develop "amnesia" for the past. In Caruth's words, "while the images of traumatic re-enactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control […] the vivid and precise return of the event appears […] to be accompanied by an *amnesia* for the past" (*Trauma: Explorations* 151-2, emphasis in the original). Caruth's interpretation of traumatic experience as attended by "amnesia" for the past is related to Charcot's argument that traumatised subjects suffer from *traumatic retrograde amnesia* where time before the traumatic experience is lost (Charcot 376).

The theories of Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, usually associated with postmodernism and deconstruction, have also focused on the unknowability and unrepresentability of traumatic experience. Regarding Auschwitz as a moment of rupture challenging the paradigms of conventional history, Lyotard argues that the historian "must break with the monopoly of history granted to the cognitive regimen of phrases, and he or she must venture forth by lending his or her ear to what is not representable under the rules of knowledge" (*The Differend* 57). In this regard, recalling Freud's ideas about the paradoxical status of the traumatic experience, Lyotard privileges avant-garde, modernist art that has been haunted by what it has repressed in its representations of trauma by arguing that "what art can do is bear witness not to the sublime, but to this aporia of art and its pain. It does not say the unsayable, but says that it cannot say it" (*Heidegger and 'the Jews'* 47). Similarly, Derrida refers to 'aporetic thinking' in analysing the representations of trauma in literary texts. It is Derrida's contention that each text he studies tends to disclose "many aporetic places or dislocations" (*Aporias* 15). Hence, as Luckhurst argues, Derrida sees "the aporia as a blocking of a passage, a stalling or hesitation, a foot hovering on the threshold, caught between advancing and falling back, between the possible and the impossible" (6).

Similar to Caruth, Derrida, and Lyotard, Dori Laub also underlines the difficulty of putting traumatic experience into words. In "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle", he analyses the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust and argues that there is "an imperative need to *tell* and thus come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself" (63, emphasis in the original). However, this is inevitably difficult for traumatized subjects because "there are never enough words or the right words. There is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in *thought, memory,* and *speech*" (63, emphasis in the original). Consequently, the traumatized subjects choose to remain silent about the reality of their traumatic experiences, which results in the distortion of their stories and they even have doubts about the reality of these events (64). Accordingly, what lies at the heart of their experience is "the collapse of witnessing" (65).

Evidently, there is an aporetic understanding of trauma which precludes verbalization. However, the tenets of unknowability, ungraspability, and unspeakability of trauma proposed by Caruth, Derrida, and Lyotard along with many others stand in stark contrast to the possibility of putting trauma into words and thus enabling healing and recovery. Dori Laub and Daniel Podell, in "Art and Trauma", take Freud's and Janet's conceptualisations of working through and abreaction further in arguing that it is only through art that the healing process of the traumatized subject begins. They contend that because of “the real failure of the empathic dyad at the time of traumatisation and the resulting failure to preserve an empathic tie even with oneself”, the traumatized subject suffers from the feelings of absence and rupture which can be described as “the empty circle” (as coined by an analytic patient, Mrs. A, the child of two Holocaust survivors 992). According to this view, “[a]rt has the ability to revive the enshrouded past of a trauma through a dialogue in the present” (993). By providing a witnessing ‘other’ that recognizes the existence of the traumatic event in the present time, the artist has the possibility to render “a structure or presence that counteracts the loss of the internal other, and thus can bestow form on chaos. Through such a form the artist can ‘know’ trauma” (993). Felman and Laub also highlight the observation that, in accessing trauma, art and literature have a crucial role “as a precocious mode of witnessing—of accessing reality—when all other modes of knowledge are precluded” (*Testimony: Crisis* xx).

Literature, then, heals trauma by casting a narrative pattern on the traumatic experience. In this regard, Onega draws a similarity between psychoanalytic treatment and the traumatized subjects’ need to share their traumatic experiences through literary writings. Onega asserts that what constitutes traumatic experience basically is “the repression of affects” and “the desire to express affective knowledge” (“Affective Knowledge” 83). The healing of the traumatised subject “cannot be achieved in isolation as it requires the recovery of the repressed memories through hypnosis and the establishment of an analysand-psychoanalyst relationship that may be compared to the I-you relationship of narrator-narratee in testimonial writings” (84). Echoing Freud, Onega underlines the prominence of giving voice to the repressed traumatic memories through narratives and thus “working through” them in Freudian terms:

> If the symptoms of trauma are manifested in total or partial amnesia, temporal disorientation, and the compulsion to repeat or ‘act out’ the traumatic event in the form of intrusive thoughts, hallucinatory images, or disturbing dreams, the process of ‘working through’ of trauma requires the transformation of these fragmentary and painful ‘mnemonic residues’ into a temporally ordered and comprehensive narrative capable of conferring meaning onto the true nature of the events not only for the traumatised narrator/witness but also for the narratee/the sociocultural group. (84)

It is, evidently, through narrative that the traumatic experience is conveyed in the structure of a temporally ordered story which not only helps the traumatized narrators or witnesses to overcome it but also helps build a relationship with the reader and sociocultural environment. In Onega's words, "the collective component implicit in the need of an adequate addressee to abreact trauma points to the double function of trauma narratives both as cathartic instruments of individual healing and as transmitters of trauma to those who have not directly experienced it" (84).[11]

Consequently, it seems that the representation of trauma in art, especially in literature, is of great significance. However, the representation of trauma does not necessarily mean that literary works describe or copy something existing out there. In fact, trauma narratives might present traumatic content when they represent trauma. Laub and Podell argue that "only a special kind of art, which we shall designate 'the art of trauma,' can begin to achieve a representation of that which defies representation in both inner and outer experience" (992). Drawing on Laub and Podell's arguments, Onega and Ganteau underline the paradoxical nature of trauma representation and presentation:

> It is precisely because of the difficulty to represent trauma through the idiom of traditional realism, on account of the inaccessibility of the causes of trauma and of its absent memory, that new forms have been devised so as to achieve faithfulness perhaps not of representation—a term associated with duplication and a more traditional aesthetics—but of presentation. Tentativeness of presentation seems to be the condition of faithfulness to the symptoms of trauma. ("Introduction" *Contemporary Trauma* 7)

Therefore, Onega and Ganteau further argue that trauma narratives "must renounce the possibility of describing the unassimilated traumatic memory and build their impossibility into the textual fabric, performing the void instead of anatomising it" (10). In other words, trauma narratives "test the limits of representation by testifying to a traumatic content and through an act of witnessing. In such circumstances, they may be said to *present* or *perform* (*poiesis*)—as opposed to represent (*mimesis*)" (11, emphasis in the original). In this sense, trauma narratives challenge the unrepresentability of trauma by presenting it while at the same time representing it. More importantly, however, trauma narratives "reach towards the pole of anti-mimesis (predicated on the impossibility to represent directly the void of trauma) without completely relinquishing the limits of mimesis" (11). In other words, trauma narratives "never completely jettison the mimetic [representation] even while they tap the incommensurable powers of the inassimilable" (Onega and Ganteau, Introduction *Trauma and Romance* 7). Hence, literary representations of trauma are characterized by such a contraction between representation and presentation, which warrants the unrepresentability of trauma.

The dynamic relationship between trauma theory and literary knowledge enabled trauma and literary critics to analyse and gain new insights into literary texts. One of the forerunners to analyse literary texts in terms of trauma representation is Geoffrey Hartman. In his seminal article, "Trauma within the Limits of Literature", Hartman argues that "literary verbalization […] remains a basis for making the wound [trauma] perceivable and the silence audible" (259). Elaborating on Hartman's work, Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer-Ortin state that "the main purpose of [Hartman's] discipline was to uncover the traumatic traces in the textual elements of literary works" (1). In contemporary art and literature, there is a great interest in trauma representations which "disclose silenced accounts of history, experiment with the ways in which trauma can be represented, and attempt to deal with these experiences of human suffering" (3). The representation of trauma in literature is similar to the traumatic experience, which acts like a revenant in the life of the traumatized subject. Ganteau and Onega state that "the haunting presence of trauma, its ubiquity, and concomitant elusiveness or ungraspability have come to dwell in contemporary literary production, in the selfsame way as a spectre haunts an individual or a community, through its intermittent though endlessly reproducible visibility" ("Introduction: Traumatic Realism" 4). The literary representations of trauma work not only to put the trauma into words but also give crucial information about the vital problems of individuals and society.

Besides, Hartman pays attention to the relationship between traumatic knowledge and literary knowledge, especially with regard to Romantic poetry. Hartman argues that trauma theory "does not give up on knowledge but suggests the existence of a *traumatic* kind, one that cannot be made entirely conscious, in the sense of being fully retrieved or communicated without distortion" ("On Traumatic Knowledge" 537, emphasis in the original). At this point, literary representations of trauma gain significance because they address "the negative moment in experience" by "provok[ing] symbolic language and its surplus of signifiers" (540). Literature achieves such representation of the negative and/or traumatic experience "in the form of perpetual troping of it [the traumatic experience] by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche" (537). Literary works such as Blake's hyperbolic visions and Coleridge's post traumatic story of the Ancient Mariner act as powerful mechanisms to "heal traumatic wounds" (537). Accordingly, Hartman reminds readers of Blake's *The Book of Urizen* (1794), a revision of the primal scene of Genesis, in which Blake presents us with an enigmatic chaos in the heavens; we see that the god Urizen is expelled and/or segregated from the heavens. In fact, the book is a Creation myth that begins before Creation. Therefore, "Creation is itself the catastrophe" and we fall into this "parody-world made in the image of Urizen" (538). In *The Book of Urizen*, there is also the ancestor figure called Albion who dreams of "a state of unity and self-integration" but is precluded by "a constricted imagination" (538). Drawing a similarity between Albion's and our dreams of achieving unity and peace after experiencing traumatic events, Hartman states that "we too ask, like Blake's dreaming giant […]: what happened? Where did the trouble begin? Why is my fantasy-life murky and fearful: why can't I be rational *and* imaginative? We try to get back to a genesis-moment that seems to have started a fatal chain reaction and manacled both body and mind" (538, emphasis in the original). Similarly, according to Hartman, Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is "a remarkable externalization of an internal state" (541). Similar to Blake's hyperbolic visions, Coleridge's poem "points to something more real than the reality we ordinarily inhabit" (542). As is well known, after killing the albatross, the Ancient Mariner was left in such a vast solitude that even God is absent (Coleridge 370-419). When he meets the wedding guest, the only thing left for the Ancient Mariner is to narrate his traumatic story: "Coleridge makes it clear that the Mariner's narrative is compulsive as well as compelling" (Hartman 542). In this regard, Hartman finds the Mariner's need to narrate his story similar to a traumatized subject's need to put his/her trauma into words. Besides, Hartman finds another peculiarity of "The Ancient Mariner" that makes it a representation of trauma:

its temporal disjunction and/or belatedness (542-543). As argued above, in traumatic experiences, the traumatized subject fails to register the traumatic event at the moment of its happening which returns belatedly. In the Ancient Mariner's case, the traumatic experience of killing the albatross returns belatedly and repeatedly, which accounts for his repetitious story. Thus, Hartman shows that trauma theory can be used as a hermeneutic device to shed light on literary works.

Although pluridirectional, the application of trauma theory to literary texts tends to produce dispute over its reliability and validity. This is mainly because trauma theory is usually associated with modernist and postmodernist aspects of literary texts. For example, Patricia Moran states that modernist narrative with an "emphasis on interiority, memory, psychological verisimilitude, and personal isolation, and its development of fragmented, non-linear plots, provides an ideal medium for the transcription of traumatic experience" (3). However, as Visser contends, such an approach to the application of trauma theory is rather "reductive and Eurocentric" (278). Rather than directly applying trauma theory to postcolonial literary texts, Visser underlines the significance of giving due recognition to "indigenous cultural traditions" (278).

Evidently, the application of western based trauma theory for postcolonial literary texts is problematic.[12] One of the leading critics to underline the limits of trauma theory's usefulness in understanding postcolonial literary texts is Anne Whitehead. In an article on Wole Soyinka's fiction, Whitehead questions if trauma theory can understand the traumatic experiences of non-western peoples,[13] and highlights three basic differences between western and non-western cultures in terms of trauma theory. Firstly, while the extant trauma theory "operates on the basis of a strongly individualist approach to human life, with a marked emphasis on the disengaged self and on intrapsychic conflicts", non-western cultures function through "alternative notions of the self and its relationship to others" ("Journeying Through" 14). Secondly, Whitehead refutes the idea that the forms of mental disorder formulated by western trauma theorists work in the same way in non-western contexts where "the idioms of distress vary considerably; the emergence of a particular symptom does not necessarily mean that it has the same meaning or significance across different cultures” (14). Lastly, trauma discourse conceptualized by the West “risks ignoring local concepts of suffering, misfortune, and illness and eliding those discourses of loss and bereavement that may fulfil the role for the local community” (14). Therefore, the functions of local perspectives such as rituals, beliefs, and understandings as well as those of social and cultural practises in the process of suffering and recovery need to be understood and taken into account while considering non-western predicaments.

Furthermore, and more importantly, Whitehead contends that the differences between western and non-western societies mentioned above have significance in a specifically literary context, as can be observed in postcolonial texts. Firstly, postcolonial texts may “articulate the effects of trauma in terms of the individualist self” or “emphasize alternative notions of the self and its relation to the wider community” (15). Secondly, trauma theory may not directly map onto the postcolonial text. Finally, postcolonial texts may verbalize “local, non-western concepts of suffering, loss, and bereavement or alternatively of recovery and healing” (15). Whitehead concludes that “Soyinka forces us to encounter a response to trauma that asserts the relevance of localized modes of belief, ritual, and understanding, thereby undermining the centrality of western knowledge and expertise” (27). In other words, Whitehead observes that postcolonial literature as exemplified by Soyinka presents the possibility of healing trauma through religious and/or spiritual means as well as through rituals whereby regeneration becomes possible. Drawing on Whitehead’s observations, Visser states that western trauma theory is “inadequate for an engagement with indigenous literatures that explores [sic.] trauma” in a non-western context (279). Therefore, when approaching postcolonial texts in terms of their trauma representation, the significance of cultural rituals as well as beliefs and spirituality needs to be considered in order to understand non-western modes of healing. In other words, rather than its containment in accounting solely for the traumatic experience, trauma theory needs to focus also on local ways of resilience or working through in order to understand non-western traumatic experiences and ways of dealing with trauma represented in postcolonial literary texts.

Among the most important traumatic experiences represented in postcolonial literary texts are the eighteenth and nineteenth century European-led enslavement of African and Caribbean people and its legacies in the lives of following Afro-Caribbean generations. The representation of Afro-Caribbean people's slavery and its legacies has been widely explored and different terminologies have been used to define their trauma of slavery. LaCapra, for example, states that Afro-Caribbean slavery "nonetheless presents, for a people, problems of traumatization, severe oppression, a divided heritage, the question of a founding trauma, the forging of identities in the present, and so forth" (*Writing History* 174). According to LaCapra, a founding trauma is "the trauma that is transformed or transvalued into a legitimating myth of origins" which is the result of "a crisis or catastrophe that disorients and harms the collectivity or the individual" (xii). The founding traumas, in LaCapra's words, "become the valorised or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or a group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity" (23). The fall of Adam and Eve, the life and crucifixion of Christ, and the Holocaust are among the most important examples of founding traumas that LaCapra gives (xiii). Although LaCapra mentions Afro-Caribbean slavery as an example of a founding trauma, his general emphasis is on the Holocaust.

Afro-Caribbean slavery can be understood as a form of "massive trauma" or "cultural trauma" as defined by Michel Balaev and Jeffrey Alexander respectively. Balaev defines massive trauma as follows:

> a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender, due to the timeless, repetitious, and infectious characteristic of traumatic experience and memory. Conversely, individual trauma can be passed to others of the same ethnic, racial, or gender group who did not experience the actual event, but because they share social or biologic similarities, the traumatic experience of the individual and group become one. (152)

Balaev's definition of massive trauma resonates with Alexander's definition of cultural trauma. Alexander contends that "cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1) In this sense, Alexander's description of cultural trauma seems to have affinities with Erikson's definition of collective trauma above. However, collective and cultural traumas are not necessarily the same because collective trauma destroys the prevalence of communality while cultural traumas are more related with constructing a change in collective identities.

What is distinctive to cultural trauma is its transmission to the following generations through a socially mediated process whereby the sense of collective identity is altered. According to Alexander, such transmission is possible by raising an awareness of the traumatic event with the efforts of individuals who may or may not have directly experienced the traumatic event but still recognize its importance for the society at large (10-11). Alexander calls this transmission a "trauma process", which refers to "the gap between [traumatic] event and [its] representation" (11). Throughout the trauma process, there are members and/or agents of a social group who create a "narrative" and make "claims" about traumatic events (11). In this way, these agents demand "emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution" (11). Drawing on Max Weber, Alexander calls these agents "carrier groups" who "are situated in particular places in the social structure" and "have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims" (11). Carrier groups constitute a great variety of people from different parts of the society:

> Carrier groups may be elites, but they may also be denigrated and marginalized classes. They may be prestigious religious leaders or groups whom the majority has designated as spiritual pariahs. A carrier group can be generational, representing the perspectives and interests of a younger generation against an older one. It can be national, pitting one's own nation against a putative enemy. It can be institutional, representing one particular social sector or organization against others in a fragmented and polarized social order. (11)

Carrier groups aim to transmit the traumatic event to the public by making use of "the particularities of the historical situation, the symbolic resources at hand, and the constraints and opportunities provided by institutional structures" (12). Alexander calls this transmission "the creation of a master narrative" which involves making a convincing and thorough description of the traumatic event and its after-effects on the individuals and society as a whole (12). The creation of such a master narrative is possible through state bureaucracy and mass media as well as legal, political, scientific, religious, and aesthetic means which include literary representations (15-20). These means of transmission define cultural traumas whereby victims and perpetrators are established, responsibilities are attributed and consequences follow. In other words, cultural traumas constitute remembering and accepting traumatic events in legal, religious, scientific, political, and literary ways and integrating them into collective identity.

Accordingly, the literary representations of traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people during their slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their after-effects in the following generations are apt examples of cultural trauma.[14] One of the pioneers in defining Afro-Caribbean slavery as a form of cultural trauma is Ron Eyerman, who argues that it is a "collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of a people" (*Cultural Trauma* 1). Underlining the difference between individual trauma and cultural trauma, Eyerman states that the former affects individuals while the latter is "mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective identity" (1). In his comparison of psychological and/or individual trauma to cultural trauma, Eyerman observes that the former "involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual" whereas the latter "refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (2). Eyerman's main argument is that the cultural trauma of Afro-Caribbean slavery not only includes actual traumatic experiences of slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but also and perhaps more importantly the internalization of such traumatic experiences in the following generations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Similar to Alexander's description of trauma process and carrier groups above, Eyerman argues that cultural traumas are "*processes* of meaning making and attribution" which provide the opportunity to articulate and transmit traumatic events to the public ("Collective Identity" 106). In this articulation, there are two different carrier groups. On the one hand, there are professional carriers such as artists, writers, journalists, and political and religious leaders and, on the other hand, there are potential carriers such as family members and friends who are central to the articulation and transmission of trauma to their inheritors (106-107). The transmission of the cultural trauma of slavery to the following generations is no exception to this formula in that it is “a process which requires time, as well as mediation and representation” through literary and visual media which involve spatial and temporal distance (*Cultural Trauma* 2). Throughout its transmission, the aim is “to reconstitute or reconfigure a collective identity through collective representation, as a way of repairing the tear in the social fabric” whereby the traumatic past can be reinterpreted “as a means toward reconciling present/future needs” (4). In other words, the cultural trauma of Afro-Caribbean slavery is not necessarily rooted in directly experiencing traumatic experiences of slavery but in remembering the traumatic period of slavery through the agency of literary texts and visual media. The aim in such representations is to reconstruct the collective identity of the descendants of slavery.

Among the literary representations of Afro-Caribbean slavery and its legacies in the construction of the following collective identities of Afro-Caribbean generations is Grace Nichols’s poetry in her collections *I is*, *The Fat*, *Lazy Thoughts*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish*. Although the titles of these collections explored in this study imply that their only focus is on women, individual poems in the collections attest to the contrary. In fact, Nichols’s focus is on the entire collectivity of Afro-Caribbean slaves and their descendants in contemporary Britain. To begin with *I is,* Nichols presents traumatic experiences of black slave men and children as well as black slave women. For example, in “Without Song” (27) we witness black slave children suffering from the traumatic experiences of the slave trade and slavery in the New Land, while in “These Islands” (31) we witness the trauma inherently found all over the Caribbean Islands. Further, in “Of Golden Gods” (59) Nichols presents the traumatic experiences of previous generations such as the Aztecs in the Caribbean; and similar to representations of trauma affecting societies at large in *I is,* we observe that *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* represent trauma without limiting it to a solely female experience. For example, in *The Fat Black Woman’s Poems*, “We New World Blacks” (30), “Price We Pay for the Sun” (42), and “Sea Timeless Song” (48) present us with Afro-Caribbean people in Britain who are haunted by the traumatic experiences of their ancestors. In a similar vein, in *Lazy Thoughts* "Dead Ya Fuh Tan" (11) and "Out of Africa" (30) acknowledge not only black slave women's traumatic experiences but also those of Afro-Caribbean peoples at large. Nichols's later collections, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish,* are also not limited to the traumatic experiences of black slave women. In fact, Nichols presents Sunris and Cariwoma in *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* respectively as figures who represent not only Afro-Caribbean women but the entire collectivity. For example, in the title poem "Sunris", the collective speaker Sunris verbalizes the traumatic history of other communities (such as the Aztecs) and the traumatic suicides that took place in Sauteurs (56-69). Finally, *Startling the Flying Fish* presents us with the traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean peoples (identified as flying fish) as well as other traumatic histories such as those of South America (1-35). Such a diversity of traumatic experiences represented in Nichols's collections forces us to extend our limits beyond gender issues and embrace Afro-Caribbean people's trauma within a broad context.

Accordingly, Chapter One argues that Nichols's *I is* represents Afro-Caribbean slaves' traumatic experiences of slavery and the slave trade as well as their trauma coping strategies. In this collection, Nichols, mingles history with poetry thence creating a new hybrid form in order to versify the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean peoples. Michael Rothberg, in his analysis of traumatic experiences, states that traumatic realism is "a form of documentation and historical cognition attuned to the demands of extremity" (*Traumatic Realism* 14) and adds that it "brings together history, experience, and representation" (177) as a way to represent trauma. In keeping with this, Chapter One argues that Nichols's *I is* amalgamates historical facts of slavery with the power of poetic imagination in order to represent trauma and trauma coping strategies. Consequently, in reading *I is* as trauma poetry, Chapter One argues that there are four ways of representing trauma in the collection; repressing the traumatic event, being haunted by the traumatic event, repeating the traumatic experience, and lamenting one's trauma in a traumatic pastoral. The representation of trauma in *I is* is obviously a way of verbalizing the traumatic experience by casting a pattern and conferring an arrangement onto it. The speaker in the collection represses her traumatic experiences but is also haunted by her ancestors' collective traumatic experiences of the Middle Passage and slavery. In close connection with this, the speaker repeats her traumatic experiences and legacies. Also, in order to represent the speaker's traumatic experiences and/or memories, the collection employs the traumatic pastoral in which "both nature and humans are victims and witnesses of catastrophe", so they lack the redemptive and consolatory power of pastoral elegy (Coffey 28). In other words, the speaker in *I is* grieves over her loss of her cultural values and traditions and laments her loss in a traumatic pastoral form.

In addition to the representation of trauma, *I is* also represents trauma coping strategies. The speaker works through her traumatic experiences through two main trauma coping strategies which are a return to religion and spirituality, and dissociation. The employment of religious beliefs and spirituality attests to the fact that, in non-western cultures such as Afro-Caribbean societies, religious beliefs and spirituality play an important role in healing traumatic effects. Besides, the speaker dissociates from the reality of her traumatic experiences whereby she cures herself. Although pathological for the traumatic consciousness, dissociation also has the possibility to act as a defence mechanism because it "serves to attenuate the psychic shock both of the subject and of the socio-cultural group by presenting it in a more tolerable, displaced form" (Onega "Affective Knowledge" 85). Dissociation, thus, acts like a mechanism which helps weaken the effects of the traumatic shock through presenting it in a more endurable form both for the individual and the society s/he belongs to. In *I is,* Nichols employs dissociation in the form of escape through imagination and developing revenge fantasies. By resorting to these healing strategies, the traumatised speaker transforms from a traumatised subject into a resilient agent, thus providing the possibility of change her/his status as a trauma victim.

Chapter Two contends that Nichols's subsequent collections*, The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* represent the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain in the post-1960s, haunted by traumatic memories of their ancestors. The difficulties faced by British Afro-Caribbean migrants such as racial discrimination and alienation operated in a constant flux with their traumatic past of slavery and the Middle Passage.

According to Elaine Arnold, these unsettling experiences activated “memories of the past and the history of their [British Afro-Caribbeans’] ancestors” (2). As most scholars argue, although slavery ended nearly 150 years ago, it has continued to haunt Afro-Caribbean peoples all over the world. Joy DeGruy-Leary, in “Breaking the Chains”, states that multiple generations are affected by severe traumas such as the Holocaust which lasted for nearly twelve years (150). Comparing the effects of the Holocaust to the trauma of slavery, which lasted for approximately 250 years, DeGruy-Leary argues that slavery left inerasable impacts on the following generations because freed slaves did not have an opportunity for psychological counselling: “Our ancestors learned to adapt to living in a hostile environment and we normalized our injury. And because they didn't get free therapy after slavery, these behaviours were passed through the generations” (150). Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain are no exception to De-Gury-Leary’s formula in that they suffer from the trauma of their ancestors. As Aileen Alleyne contends, British Afro-Caribbean peoples are seized by the trauma of slavery because “collective memory with its painful imprints can continue to transmit trauma and grief through generations” (294). In other words, being black suggests vulnerability for British Afro-Caribbean peoples because the traumatic past of slavery transmitted through their collective memories is ever-present in their lives. Elaborating on the reasons of this continuity, Alleyne states that “the burden of continuing to carry the historical pain of our past in the form of a persistent post-traumatic syndrome is perhaps the peculiar result of a loud silence that denies and delays the necessary process of giving due recognition to an important aspect of humanity’s history” (294). As a result of this ever-present intergenerational baggage, British Afro-Caribbean peoples suffer from an internalized oppression characterised by “prejudices, projections, inter-generational wounds” which are “kept alive through the transgenerational transmission of trauma” (295). In other words, it is British Afro-Caribbean people’s present situation in Britain that contributes to the continuation of their traumatic ancestry.

The transgenerational transmission of the trauma of slavery can be observed in the way Afro-Caribbean individuals treat themselves and others, especially in their treatments of sexuality and feelings of loss and insecurity.[15] Wyatt, in “Breaking the Chains”, argues that the stereotypical description of Afro-Caribbean women prevails in the present and that Afro-Caribbean women react to such labelling in different ways: “many of us continue to react against it by denying our sexuality and being afraid of sex. Others embrace the stereotype [of]…oversexed Black women” (152). Besides their sexuality, the traumatic past of slavery can be traced in Afro-Caribbean individuals’ feelings of loss and insecurity. As Wyatt argues, slave owners created distinct divisions among slaves depending on various factors such as their work places (in the fields or in the houses), their skins (brown-skinned against light), their gender (males against females) along with many other paradigms (150). As a result, slaves developed a feeling of insecurity. More importantly, these feelings passed down to the following generations into the present:

> women have been taught that you can’t count on men and you can’t trust them on any level—not just sexually, but also economically, emotionally and physically. Men believe they can’t trust women, that women are trying to get into their wallets. Young Black men have learned to be aggressive and hostile toward one another. (150)

Besides, slaves were deprived of freedom and control over their lives and responded with fear and a lack of self-esteem. Thus, as Arnold states, “some of the [Afro-Caribbean] immigrants succumbed to feelings of helplessness, of anxiety, fear and anger which were contributory factors to various behaviours such as aggression, detachment, and withdrawal from society” (2). Strictly speaking, for British Afro-Caribbean peoples, the present and the traumatic past are inextricably connected because traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean slaves pervade the present and interrupt the lives of British Afro-Caribbean diaspora.

In this context, Chapter Two argues that the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean peoples represented in the first chapter continue to haunt their descendants’ lives in the present era, even though centuries may have passed since the Middle Passage and slavery. The starting point for analysing *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* collections in Chapter Two is that the latter is regarded as a follow-up to the first and both are concerned with the present situation of the second generation British Afro-Caribbean diaspora haunted by their ancestors’ traumatic history. Evidently, *I is* addresses traumatic experiences in the Caribbean while *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* reflect on the continuity of trauma in the lives of the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain. What activates their trauma is the racial intolerance and social difficulties that they are exposed to in Britain. Consequently, they suffer from the pain of unbelonging in Britain, which triggers their traumatic legacies.

Moreover, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* offer strategies for coping with trauma. However, different from *I is*, nostalgia and grotesque elements are employed in these collections. In *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts*, a nostalgic reconstruction of the Caribbean functions as a trauma coping strategy for the British Afro-Caribbean diaspora. The description of the Caribbean as an idyllic and nostalgic place they could belong to provides the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain with a productive response to their traumatic heritage. In this way, they can reconstruct their traumatic past at the expense of repressing it. Another trauma coping strategy deployed in these collections is grotesque. Chapter Two argues that, in *The Fat*, the traumatic experiences of British Afro-Caribbean diaspora's ancestors are embodied in the portrayal of the Hottentot Venus, who was the South African Sara Baartman, a slave in the nineteenth century. The fat black woman hence uses her grotesque body and gains a place for herself in society on her own terms. Similarly, in *Lazy Thoughts*, Nichols draws a portrayal of a lazy woman who has recourse to grotesque in order to work through the traumatic memories of her ancestors and gain a place for herself in Britain. Nichols refrains from "reducing the black woman's condition to that of 'sufferer' whether at the hands of white society or at the hands of black men" (Nichols "The Battle" 284-285). Thus, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* represent traumatized subjects as resilient agents who can gain a place for themselves in the host society.

Chapter Three argues that, similar to Nichols's earlier collections, her later collections *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* represent Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences but in a more decisive and affirmative way. As argued below, postcolonial literature necessitates a different trauma theory which privileges local ways of healing such as employing local rituals and affirming local culture through myths. Nichols's *Sunris* achieves this by having resort to the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in order to move beyond the traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean people. In the long title poem of

Sunris, Nichols presents the Afro-Caribbean speaker, Sunris, who has resort to four main aspects of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as strategies to cope with the cultural trauma of the Afro-Caribbean people. First, "Sunris" relies on the celebratory and hedonistic atmosphere of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival which goes back to the emancipation period. In doing so, "Sunris" reminds us of and presents us with the possibility of Afro-Caribbean people's liberation from the traumatic past of slavery and colonization. Secondly, "Sunris" uses the unifying aspect of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival whereby Afro-Caribbean people combine their agency with other traumatized groups of people. Thirdly, "Sunris" employs the musical elements of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival which are the means of keeping Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past of slavery and colonization in a more tolerable and affirmative form. Finally, "Sunris" clinches on the subversive power of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival which acts as the medium to transcend the limits of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and head towards reconciliation. In a similar vein, *Startling the Flying Fish* presents the Afro-Caribbean speaker Cariwoma's recognition and healing of her ancestors' traumatic past of slavery and colonization. On the one hand, *Startling the Flying Fish* acknowledges Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past of slavery and colonization as part of their historical reality and identity; on the other hand *Startling the Flying Fish* moves beyond Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past by generating in Cariwoma a mythical being who has the agency to connect past, present, and future and thus move beyond an Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Accordingly, Cariwoma's mythical being has two main roles in healing and moving beyond trauma. First, through Cariwoma, *Startling the Flying Fish* redefines Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic history of slavery and colonialism. In this way, *Startling the Flying Fish* presents us with mythical retellings of Afro-Caribbean people's historical reality of trauma of slavery and colonialism whereby their sufferings are defined and repositioned in the present. Secondly, Cariwoma, as a mythical being, connects Afro-Caribbean people's sufferings with those of other people from different parts of the world such as those people in South America. Thus, *Startling the Flying Fish* embraces a sense of affinity and union with the whole world in general and provokes a harmonious and peaceful relationship with the others. Evidently, both *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* recognize Afro-Caribbean traumatic history as an integral part of Afro-Caribbean history and identity and they offer an alternative cosmos of harmony and compassion. *Sunris* achieves such unity and peace by having resort to Afro-Caribbean people's local and cultural ways of healing as embodied in the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival while *Sunris* privileges the possibility of absorbing, responding to, and healing trauma through mythical retellings of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Obviously, different from Nichols's earlier collections—*I is*, *The Fat*, and *Lazy Thoughts*—Nichols's later collections, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* adopt a more affirmative and decisive manner in their efforts to achieve a reconciliation of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with its postcolonial present. Consequently, this study strongly indicates that Nichols's *I is*, *The Fat*, *Lazy Thoughts*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish* are inseparably connected with and complement each other. Their interconnectedness attests to the fact that traumatic experiences of slavery and the slave trade of the previous Afro-Caribbean community haunt the following Afro-Caribbean diasporic generations in Britain. More importantly, however, Nichols's poetry never subscribes to a representation of the traumatised Afro-Caribbean people as trauma victims but presents us with resilient subjects who manage to cope with their traumatic past and move on towards a better present and future.

CHAPTER I

TRAUMA AND TRAUMA COPING STRATEGIES IN A NON-WESTERN WORLD: *I IS A LONG MEMORIED WOMAN*

Shoshana Felman, in her analysis of Paul Celan's "No More Sand Art", argues that "as an event directed toward the re-creation of a 'thou', poetry becomes, precisely, the event of *creating an address* for the specificity of a historical experience which annihilated any possibility of address" ("Education and Crisis" 42-43, emphasis in the original). Felman compares Celan's writing to autobiographical accounts given by Holocaust survivors and highlights the importance and the necessity of narrating trauma to empathic listeners. Besides seeing narration as a collection and preservation of their testimonies, many Holocaust survivors decided to narrate their traumatic experiences to interviewers on the consideration that they could "tell the story and *be heard*" and transmit "the suffering, the truth, and the necessity of this impossible narration—to a hearing 'you', and to a listening community" (45, emphasis in the original). Celan created an addressee in his poetry while these Holocaust survivors turned the interviewers into sympathetic addressees. Evidently, narrating trauma has been an important aspect of trauma studies.

This chapter argues that Nichols's *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983) narrates Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences of slavery and the slave trade and their trauma coping strategies. On the one hand, Nichols presents us with four different ways of representing trauma, which are repressing the traumatic event, being haunted by the traumatic event, acting out the traumatic experience, and reflecting traumatic experiences onto nature in the form of traumatic pastoral. On the other hand, Nichols presents us with two ways of responding to trauma which are return to religion and/or spirituality, and dissociation in the form of escape through imagination and revenge fantasies. Traumatic experiences of slavery and the slave trade have been represented by many contemporary British writers of Caribbean origin in various literary works, Grace

Nichols's *I is* being one of the most important of all, with its specific emphasis on black slave women[16].

Nichols's *I is* has received abundant criticism since its publication in 1983, most of the reviews and commentaries focusing on the speaker as the representative of all the slave black women. Denise deCaires Narain suggests that "the black woman represented here *embodies* the memories and histories of all slave women, a kind of New World Woman" (183, emphasis in the original) while Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle find this collection "reach[ing] across time, merging continents and cultures […] recuperating the subjugating narratives of colonisation and slavery from a hitherto silent female perspective" (200). Similarly, Judylyn S. Ryan argues that in this collection, "the history of slavery is revisited and represented as a well from which new and transformative options can be drawn" (150). In addition to colonisation and slavery, this chapter makes clear that two other aspects of *I is* need further research and discussion. The first one is concerned with the representation of traumatic experiences of the African slaves, especially black slave women, during the Middle Passage and in the after-effects of the Middle Passage and slavery in the Afro-Caribbean society of following generations. In the analytical part, the trauma representation strategies employed by the collective speaker are analysed. For instance, while the speaker, in "One Continent/to Another", "Among the Canes", "Your Blessing" and "In my Name" represses her traumatic memories of sexual abuse and rape in the unconscious, the speaker in "One Continent/to Another" not only represses her individual traumatic memories but is also haunted by the collective traumatic experiences of the Middle Passage and those of her ancestors in Africa. The speaker, thus, acts out or repeats her traumatic memories as suggested in "Eulogy" in which the speaker mourns for the people she lost in the Middle Passage. Similarly, in "…..Like Clamouring Ghosts", she repeatedly acts out the traumatic memories of her ancestors in the chaotic structure of her dreams. It is not only repression, haunting, or repetition but also the employment of traumatic pastoral that helps the traumatized speaker to put her traumatic experiences and/or memories into words. In "Days that Fell", the slave woman's traumatic experiences of working as a slave under harsh conditions are reflected on nature while in "Kanaima Jungle" the slave woman is not provided with any solace by nature.

Similarly, in “These Islands”, nature provides only brutality and, in “Sunshine”, the speaker is faced with the total destruction of her culture.

The second aspect of the collection that needs to be discussed and analysed is the trauma coping strategies adopted by the speaker. There are two basic trauma coping strategies represented in the collection: return to religion and spirituality, and dissociation which is manifest in escape through imagination and developing revenge fantasies. By having recourse to these trauma coping mechanisms, the long memoried woman transforms herself from a traumatized subject into a resilient agent who employs strategies to cope with her trauma: religion and spirituality in “Each Time They Came”, “In my Name”, “Among the Canes”, “Yemanji” and “Ala”; dissociation in “Without Song”, “Web of Kin”, “Like Anansi”, “Drum Spell”, and “One Dream”; and revenge fantasies in “…..Like Clamouring Ghosts”, “I Coming Back”, “Night is her Robe”, “Love Act” and “Skin Teeth”. Clearly, violence against slaves turns them into possible perpetrators, which implies that history might repeat itself. Towards the end of the collection, in the poems “Of Golden Gods”, “New Birth”, “This Kingdom” and “Wind a Change”, the speaker realizes that she must take physical action to free herself from slavery. Not surprisingly, in “Holding my Beads” and “Epilogue” the traumatized subject tries to redress her traumatic wounds. In other words, the speaker of *I is* changes from a traumatized subject into a resilient agent. This attests to the fact that history might change direction and victims of trauma can move towards reconciling themselves with their traumatic past.

Since it is the traumatic experience of slavery and the Middle Passage that forms the background to the trauma represented in *I is,* it is important to provide an overview of the trauma experienced during the Middle Passage and slavery. The Middle Passage, one of the most massive migrations of all times, denotes the journey of the slaves destined for America who crossed the Atlantic in a journey that was called the ‘transatlantic slave trade’ or the ‘Middle Passage’ (Klein 132). The Middle Passage lasted from about 1518 to the mid-nineteenth century (“Middle Passage” 108). The so-called discovery of the New World paved the way for new trading patterns. The colonizer ships started a triangular trading route: from Europe to Africa, then from

Africa to the European colonies in the Americas, and finally from the Americas back to Europe. The second phase of this journey—from Africa to the European colonies in the Americas—is what became known as the Middle Passage (Sharp and Schomp vii). During this forced displacement from Africa to the Americas, which took more than two months, the slaves were treated brutally and, thus, traumatized both physically and psychologically (Ogundayo 156). In fact, experiences of this traumatic journey included beatings, torture, physical confinement and brutalization, rape, death, and forced mixing with other Africans so that Africans would forget their origins and humanity (156). Nathan Irvin Huggins, in *Black Odyssey* (1990), explains that the most important reason for trauma in the Middle Passage is that slaves were seen as objects rather than as human beings, and they were irrevocably separated from their families and communities in Africa (xxv).

Life on board the ships was unendurable and traumatic for the slaves who were treated as if they were merely sources of labour and available for exploitation. In fact, life during the journey over the Atlantic was characterized by unsanitary conditions, malnutrition, very few opportunities for exercise, frequent sexual assaults, suicides, and some slave rebellions (Falola and Warnock xxi). With the aim of preventing rebellion and insurrection, slaves were shackled and chained together from the moment they were captured in Africa to the coast when they embarked on the ship and during their journey over the Atlantic (101). They were shackled in pairs and men were separated from women and imprisoned below deck in slave quarters which were no more than 1.8 meters long and not high enough for an individual to sit upright (316). Many of these shackled slaves had bruises and open sores and, to make it worse, human waste and vomit produced an unbearable smell and fatal diseases in the quarters (316). Therefore, nearly five percent of chained slaves died because of unhygienic conditions as well as undernourishment on the ships (316). To protest against their suffering on the ships and the unknown future in the New World, slaves showed resilience in different ways such as committing suicide, disobeying orders, and rebelling directly (Rice 122). Jumping overboard and refusing to eat and starving to death in this way were the most common methods of suicide (122). In some cases, the enslavers would force-feed the slaves in order not to lose their property on their way to the New World (122). The slaves who attempted to commit suicide were punished in various ways such as whipping, cutting their arms and legs or filling their mouths with boiling lead but most of these punishments could not understandably bring their attempts to an end (Barcia 363).

Slaves who survived the Middle Passage went through even more traumatic experiences during their slavery in the New World. In 1980, Marimba Ani was the first scholar to use the term ‘Maafa’ in print, a Kiswahili term, to describe the horror and destruction caused by the colonization and enslavement of the Africans. Ani translates Maafa as a “disaster” (*Let the Circle* 12) while, in her later writings, she employs this concept to refer to “the great suffering of our people at the hands of Europeans in the Western hemisphere” (*Yurugu* xxi). The disaster of African slavery has also received other names that include the Black Holocaust and the African Holocaust (Sharp and Schomp vi). In this regard, a parallel can be drawn between Maafa and the Holocaust because “*Maafa* serves much the same cultural psychological purpose for Africans as the idea of the *Holocaust* serves to name the culturally distinct Jewish experience of genocide under German Nazism” (Akinyela 250, emphasis in the original). As Dominick LaCapra argues, “slavery, like the Holocaust, nonetheless presents, for a people, problems of traumatization, severe oppression, a divided heritage, the question of a founding trauma, the forging of identities in the present, and so forth” (174). This suggests that slavery and the Holocaust put their victims similar at least overlapping traumatic experiences.

Similar to the traumatic legacies of the Middle Passage, the Black Holocaust of African slavery comprised various traumatic experiences, most of which resulted from the belief that slaves were property to be exploited. In fact, slaves were seen as objects without any human rights at all. According to Paul E. Lovejoy,

> [i]ts [slavery’s] special characteristics include the idea that slaves are property; that they are outsiders who are alien by origin or who are denied their heritage through judicial or other sanctions; that coercion can be used at will; that their labour power is at complete disposal of a master; that they do not have the right to their own sexuality and, by extension, to their own reproductive capacities; and that the slave status is inherited unless provision is made to ameliorate that status. (1)

Consequently, since slaves were considered as chattel, their masters could do with them whatever they wished; they could be bought, forced to work, sold, and punished brutally or even fatally. They had neither sexual rights nor legal rights to protect them from harsh treatment or enforcement, a situation which made their lives even more difficult. To make it worse, the status of being a slave was passed down to the following generations.

Black slave men were exploited by the white men in their quests for economic and political control while black slave women were exploited not only for oppression but also for sexual gratification. In fact, black female slaves went through traumatic atrocities; rape and sexual abuse being among the most common and dreadful of all and being specific to the female experience of slavery. In other words, black female slaves were both physically and psychologically traumatized. To make it worse, far from being considered a serious crime, rape was acknowledged as the norm to suppress black women's will to resist and demoralize black men (Falola and Warnock 317). Moreover, black slave women were objectified and used as baby-making machines to increase the slave labour force (Mu'id 43). When considering black slave women, Deborah M. Horvitz suggests that all female slaves who were raped "suffered from an actual, clinical *illness* during, and in the aftermath, of that trauma. Today, that syndrome would be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder" (70, emphasis in the original). The scholars of trauma studies suggest that the trauma of rape comprises various symptoms such as shame, anger, withdrawal, helplessness, guilt, suicidal traits, revenge, feelings of worthlessness, self-blame, depression, stuttering, introversion, startled awakenings, flashbacks, hysterical crying and screaming, nightmares, confusion, and fear along with many others (Winkler and Wininger 248). Similarly, Horvitz argues that "the female body 'converts' emotional pain into physical or somatic symptoms so that the body *always* 'narrates' the story" because the body is "the conduit through which the symbolic or 'imagined' hysterical symptoms are expressed" (70, emphasis in the original). In line with this, as argued below, the bodies of black female slaves raped during the Middle Passage and slavery can be seen as the medium through which traumatic experiences of rape are put into words.

One of the most important traumatic legacies of the rape of black slave women was unwanted pregnancy followed by infanticide. Any child, whether born as a result of interracial rape or sexual intercourse with a black man, would become the master's property to be sold or exploited as a source of labour (Lee 367). Therefore, when unwanted pregnancies occurred, black slave women would often prefer to terminate their pregnancy than to give birth to a mixed-race child or they would choose to kill their new-borns rather than condemn them to slavery in the future (367). Thus, both abortion and infanticide were the means of resistance and rebellion employed by black slave women who declared some kind of control over their own bodies and over the lives of their children (367). In other words, infanticide was not because of a lack of maternal feeling but it was rather an empathetic act of freedom and a means of survival (368). For the slave master, however, infanticide meant a loss of property and of full control over his slaves (368). Therefore, black slave women were punished severely and sometimes fatally by the slaveholder if he suspected infanticide (368).

Slavery and the Middle Passage, as forms of cultural trauma, have formed the collective identity of the Afro-Caribbean descendants of the Africans who were reduced to slavery. Jeffrey Alexander underlines the fact that cultural trauma signals "the threat to collective rather than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake" (2) Traumatized individuals might repress, deny, or verbalize their traumas in order to gain relief while collectivities might respond in a totally different way: "Rather than denial, repression, and 'working through', it is a matter of symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters, and moving along from there" (3). Through narratives and coding, collectivities need to construct a "we" i.e. a collective identity dependent on "collective processes of cultural interpretation" (3). This can be done mainly through "speeches, rituals, marches, meetings, plays, movies, and storytelling of all kinds" (3). In other words, cultural traumas are "symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine" individual sufferings and actual events (3). Rather than empirical accuracy, "symbolic power and enactment" have a key role in the construction of cultural traumas because people develop "traumatic meanings, in circumstances they have not themselves created and which they do not fully comprehend" (4).

Nichols's *I is* is concerned with the cultural trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery. Although Nichols does not have first-hand experiences of slavery, these collective traumatic experiences have been transgenerationally transmitted to her. Talmadge Anderson and James Benjamin Stewart argue that since African Americans have endured more than three hundred years of enslavement, it would be a futile attempt to claim that contemporary generations are not psychologically affected and that the effects are not culturally transmitted to them (179). Indeed, as Nerys Williams points out, Nichols's poetry "is resolutely informed by her identity as a Guyanese-Caribbean" (36). In an interview with Kwame Dawes, Nichols describes her writing as inspired by her native origins:

> Africa has always been the strongest spiritual strand for me. And whenever I think of the ancestor, the ancestor is to me an African ancestor in that sense; an African woman. She may be the muse for me, I think. And from her, I get that kind of strength, because she is the woman who has been, in history, negated and voiceless, but has persisted and flowered regardless. (138)

Thus, Nichols accepts that her writing is inextricably bound with the sufferings and experiences of her female African ancestors. Her choice of a female speaker in *I is* is therefore meant to give voice to the silenced history of African ancestors, especially female slaves. In her essay "Home Truths", Nichols admits that as contained in the cycle of poems, *I is*, she became "aware that [she] was dealing with [her] whole female history" (298). The speaker, therefore, is the embodiment of the traumatic memories of all slaves belonging to various generations from the beginning of the slave trade to the present. However, *I is* is not limited to the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean female slaves but it handles the traumatic experiences of all Afro-Caribbean people in their entirety.

Hence, what Nichols does in *I is* is to present the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery through the collective identity of the long memoried woman. In fact, the collection shows how the Middle Passage and slavery constitute a blow to the basic patterns of subsequent African and Afro-Caribbean life and damage the fundamental aspects of their communality. In other words, rather than a threat to the individual identity, the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery is a threat to the collective identity of Afro-Caribbeans in *I is*. Nichols achieves this through the collective identity of the long memoried woman who describes herself as “a long memoried woman”. The title of the collection registers the speaker in capital “I” while the untitled opening poem establishes the speaker’s identity in the lower case first-person pronoun in bold letters: “**I is a long memoried woman**” (n.p.). The uncanny use of “I is” with the syntactical mistake on the auxiliary “is” instead of “am” connotes both the Caribbean English used by the slaves and the collective identity of the speaker. Linda A. Kinnahan argues that the lower case “i” goes against the grain of “the singular authoritative ‘I’ of British lyric tradition” and gives voice to “the histories of the Middle Passage and slave existence with an imagined return to Africa” (190). Rather than asserting “a unified or essentialized notion of black immigrant womanhood”, Nichols imagines “a collective but pluralistic ‘we’” (190). In other words, Nichols offers a “collective, pluralistic construction of self” (190). In addition, describing the speaker as “long memoried” suggests the collective memories transmitted to her from her ancestors. Thus, the speaker defines herself not as an individual but as the embodiment of all slaves belonging to various generations. This clearly identifies the sufferings of the speaker with not only individual but also collective wounds. As argued above, cultural trauma is concerned with symbolic construction; i.e. creating stories and characters and moving on from that point. Nichols, in this collection, re-constructs the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery by creating the long memoried woman out of her ancestors’ wounds. It is not the empirical accuracy but the symbolic power of the collection that has an important role in the re-presentation of the cultural trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery. In other words, what makes *I is* an example of the representation of cultural trauma is its being a symbolic rendering that reconstructs and imagines individual sufferings and actual events caused by the Middle Passage and slavery.

I is provides evidence that traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people are not limited to ruptures and/or aporias of meaning but have the potential to be structured and restructured in trauma literature. Magali Cornier Michael notes that *I is* uses the narrative technique of framing and, thus, provides “a creatively reconfigured format for historiography” (214). The frame narrative is “a story within a story” or “a narrative told within the framework of another setting and situation” (203) and there are different types of frame narrative used in this collection: The book-end types begin with an initially short narrative and setting, the poems tell a longer story within the exterior frame before concluding with the initial setting, while ‘Chinese-box’ types are made up of a series of stories within stories (203). Although they are formally different from each other, both types of framed narratives share common features: The exterior frame offers a normative view and a character/witness relates extraordinary experiences while the enframed narrative presents characters who contribute to the telling of the narrative which gradually becomes more interior (203). Finally, “the narrative concludes with a return to the outermost setting and offers an overt moral, itself rendered problematic by the events occurring within the enframed narrative” (204). In *I is,* the central traumatic experiences of the long memoried woman are framed by an untitled opening poem and an epilogue. The opening poem and the epilogue are in the present tense and there is a historical account in between. This implies that there are various stories within a story. In addition, the collection signposts the belatedness of the traumatic experiences of black slave women through its temporal shifts; i.e. the time shifts from present to the past, which shows that the traumatic experiences of black slave women are deferred to be reactivated in the present time. There is an emphasis on the past that has already passed for the long memoried woman but has left inerasable wounds on her psyche. In other words, through this framing technique the representation of collective traumatic experiences is consigned to a distant past. In the concluding poem, the focus is changed to the aftermath of the traumatic experiences of the long memoried woman; she now has a tongue which has sprung from “the root of the old / one” (Nichols *I is a Long* 87). Obviously, the image of the long memoried woman that closes the collection is the transformation of the traumatized subject into a resilient agent with the potential to work through her traumatic experiences. The long memoried woman, therefore, undergoes a long journey from traumatic experiences towards healing them.

In addition to its framed structure, as Michael contends, *I is,* as a “historiography in the form of poetry collection” (213), presents a series of poems blending historical facts with symbolic reconstructions. As Michael further argues, “Nichols’s choice to write the history of black women slaves in the Caribbean engages in work that revises existing histories by recuperating via creatively imagining experiences that have remained unrepresented, absent from traditional historiographies" (212). By writing this historiography in the form of poetry collection, Nichols shows that the history of Afro-Caribbean black slave women needs to be written "*other*-wise" (213, emphasis in the original). Thus, she creates a fractured narrative which accesses and attests to the fragmented Afro-Caribbean past (213). In other words, by intermingling history with poetry, Nichols creates a new hybrid form that allows her to put the trauma of slavery into words. Michael Rothberg, in his analysis of the Holocaust and trauma as a whole, coins the concept of "traumatic realism" which explores the "means and modes of representation" (*Traumatic Realism* 2). Traumatic realism is "a form of documentation and historical cognition attuned to the demands of extremity" (14) and "brings together history, experience, and representation" (177) as a way to represent trauma. Rothberg contends that "the categories of realism, modernism, and postmodernism" need to be considered as "persistent responses to the demands of history" (9). In other words, Rothberg underlines the importance of viewing these categories as "relational terms" rather than sequentially (10). Onega, in her analysis of Rothberg's concept of traumatic realism, explains that "the combination of these three modes, together with the blurring of boundaries between fictional and non-fictional genres, is aimed at creating a complex system of understanding aimed at making readers think history in relational, rather than sequential terms" ("Affective Knowledge" 89). The generic hybridity of *I is* suggests that Nichols employs such traumatic realism. As Rothberg and Onega argue, it is through the combination of fictional and non-fictional genres that traumatic experiences can be understood and represented. By framing its poems with historical facts of slavery and the Middle Passage, *I is* registers and transforms them into poetic language in its representation of the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people. Thus, the collection makes us think the history of Afro-Caribbean people in relational rather than sequential terms through its framed structure and generic hybridity.

Moreover, *I is* presents how the collective speaker represses her traumatic memories in her unconscious and hence presents a traumatic neurosis. As explained in the introductory chapter, Freud and Breuer describe traumatic neurosis as the result of the *repression* of "affects" not the "insignificant bodily injury" ("On the Psychical" 5-6, emphasis added) and what is distinctive to traumatic memory is that the traumatic event is “absent from the patient’s memory when they are in a normal psychical state” (7) because they repress it in the unconscious. Freud also notes that as the memory of the traumatic event is repressed in depth, “the patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it” (“Beyond the Pleasure” 288).

In *I is*, Nichols presents telling examples of such repressions of traumatic experiences in the unconscious, especially traumatic experiences of the rape and sexual abuse of black slave women during the Middle Passage and slavery. For example, in the first poem “One Continent/To Another”, the speaker lands on the New Land and remembers her life in Africa when “her jigida / guarding the crevice / the soft wet forest / between her thighs” gave her sexual security as opposed to her present situation when “she grieved for them [others of her kind] / walking beadless / in another land” (6). During *isi mgba*, a festival celebrated in Oxulubu, Nigeria, young girls wear these beads—the jigida—, decorate their bodies with white chalk, and move with music in groups to the marketplace while older women give advice to these girls about womanhood and motherhood (Vinick 13, emphasis in the original). These beads protecting the virginity of the speaker in the poem are obviously absent in her present life. Catherine R. Restovich argues that “the young women, as a cultural whole, have already lost their virginity, and therefore their innocence, somewhere between Africa and the Caribbean, i.e., somewhere within the waters of the middle passage” (71). By alluding to the trauma of rape with the image of lost beads, the speaker grieves for the virginity she lost when she was forced into slavery but she never explicitly talks about the traumatic moment of rape; we only learn that she does not have the jigida. This indirection points to the difficulty of putting traumatic memories into words. The poem’s indirection echoes the slave woman’s unconscious repression of her traumatic memories of rape. The poem, thus, progresses around this void never openly representing the rape scene. That is, the traumatic event itself is silent and stable because it cannot be expressed in logical and linguistic terms. The woman seems to have developed amnesia and be divorced from emotions pertinent to her rape although she is fully aware of the “loss” of her jigida. Besides, the loss of her jigida is also the loss of others of her kind because she also grieves for other people who lost their beads during the Middle Passage. In other words, she does not only bewail her own loss but also that of others.

The poems imply that black slave women, who were sexually traumatized during their lives of slavery in the New World, often repress their traumatic memories and remain silent about what traumatized them. Indeed, keeping silent about rape and/or sexual abuse is a common post traumatic symptom. For example, the speaker, in “Among the Canes”, describes herself “holding her belly / [and] stumbling blindly / among the canes” (27). Commenting on these lines, Maija Naakka argues that the slave woman is holding her belly because she is pregnant or has just lost her baby (70). However, as argued by Cara N. Cilano, the reason for holding her belly is ambiguous. As Cilano further argues, the slave woman’s “body becomes a public commodity and machine that keeps the plantation economy running” (145). More importantly, however, she remains silent about what has happened to her; she does not reveal why she is holding her belly in pain or floundering helplessly among the canes. It is possible that she has been physically and psychologically traumatized most probably after sexual abuse. Referring to her traumatic experiences, she repeatedly asks the same question, wailing: “O who will remember me / Who will remember me?” (27). This seems to be the need of the traumatic subject to have “someone’s bearing witness to her life or, in other words, a community that will bear her trials with her” (Cilano 145). Here, the slave woman as a traumatized subject demands a witness in order to work through her painful experiences while at the same time she must narrate them to those who have not experienced them in order to give voice to her silenced traumatic past. However, the only thing she can do is to suppress whatever has happened to her and remain silent about it.

Similarly, the long memoried woman, in “…..Your Blessing” and “In My Name”, pregnant with the child of enslavers, shows the post-traumatic symptoms of repressing traumatic memories. In “…..Your Blessing”, the speaker is “burden[ed] with child and maim” and “tainted with guilt / and exile” (53). The first time she learned that “she was carrying [the baby] / she wanted to cry out” and “to retch / herself / empty” (52). In the course of time, she “resigned / herself to / silence” (52) and “shed tears” (53). Her silence broke down when she called out to her mother to “cover [her] with the leaves of

[her] / blackness" because she was "severed by ocean and / longing" (53). The long memoried woman wants to heal herself "with the power of" her mother's "blessings" and "blackness" (53). The mother's "leaves" and "blackness", and the speaker's "longing" imply that her mother may be her physical mother or her motherland, Africa. Her mother instructs her to be strong and resilient "like the bamboo cane that groans / and creeks in the wind….. / but doesn't break" and "like the drumskin that is beaten / on the outside….. / but keeps its bottom whole" (54). Rather than getting rid of the child, her mother advises her "to clasp [her] child to [her] bosom" (54). However, when she gives birth to her child in the following poem, "In My Name", she does not clasp him/her to her bosom as an affectionate mother would do. In fact, she has contradictory feelings about her "tainted / perfect child" and "command[s] the earth to receive […] / [her] strange mulatto" (56). Despite all her mixed feelings towards her child and her calls for help, the long memoried woman does not explicitly state what has happened to her; she does not reveal the traumatic moment of sexual abuse and rape but only shows post-traumatic symptoms of hysterical crying, silence, and feeling guilty about having a child of the enslaver. In other words, this poetic utterance represses the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past.

Since the poem represses the traumatic experiences of slavery and the Middle Passage, the speaker is unremittingly haunted by them in her present life the West Indies. Ruth Leys argues that the traumatized subject's mind is split or dissociated because of emotions of terror and surprise: "it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed" (2). Unable to remember the traumatic event in precise details, the traumatized subject is haunted and/or possessed by it. As Anne Whitehead argues, since the traumatic experience is not easy to assimilate it is difficult to be "possessed in the forms of memory or narrative" but rather it "assumes a haunting quality, continuing to possess the subject with its insistent repetitions and returns" (*Trauma Fiction* 12). In the first section of *I is,* the speaker and the poem are haunted by the traumatic memories of the Middle Passage and those of the speaker's ancestors in Africa, as exemplified in "One Continent/To Another". In the poem, the long memoried woman is metaphorically born "into the new world" as the "child of the middle passage womb" (5). Nichols links birth imagery to the start of the enslaved woman's life in another continent and the womb of her mother to the Middle Passage. Just as a newly born baby that feels insecure and isolated, the enslaved woman remembers "birth aching her pain […] her belly cry sounding the wind" (5). Arriving in the new land, she sees that she is physically under the control of the enslavers: "how she stumbled onto the shore / how the metals dragged her down / how she thirsted….." (5) In addition to these present difficulties, the traumatic past of her ancestors in Africa also haunts her present life. In fact, unlike the security of the womb for a baby, the Middle Passage definitely brings atrocities to her and she has "bleeding memories in the darkness" (5). Obviously, the traumatic experiences of the Middle Passage continue to haunt her. Besides these, she is haunted by the horror of documented specific places: "the Congo surfaced / so did Sierra Leone and the / Gold Coast which she used to tread" (5).[17] The speaker, "from the dimness of previous incarnations" (6), recalls these experiences of her slave ancestors having lived in the Congo, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast and pays homage to them as the collective speaker of the collective trauma of slavery. The fact that such widely separated places are specified as the "bleeding memories" shows that this is not a "real" memory of a represented single subject, but the creation of a poetic entity we refer to as "the long memoried woman", which is in fact a body of poems, an artistic construct.

Closely related to "repression" and "haunting" is the "repetition" of repressed traumatic memories. As suggested in the Introductory Chapter of this study, the traumatized subject incessantly acts out his/her traumatic past (12-14). *I is* presents its traumatized subject as incessantly haunted by the ghosts of the slaves that died tragically during the Middle Passage. For example, in "Eulogy", the speaker is caught in the acting out phase of her generationally transmitted trauma as suggested in her mourning for the people she lost in the Middle Passage. "Eulogy" is structured around the image of those who died in the Middle Passage and whose voices the speaker hears everywhere "in ruptured tones of nostalgia / voices pushed in by the sea breeze / darting like pains in [her] head" (16). Unable to mourn properly for her losses because she has been denied access to her cultural ways of mourning, the slave woman asks the same questions once and again: she wonders "How can [she] eulogise / their names?" and "What dance of mourning / can [she] make? (17)

The repetitive structure of “Eulogy”—the line “Yes the souls” is repeated six times, the first stanza is repeated twice, and the mourning questions of the speaker are expressed three times—seems to reproduce formally the compulsion to repeat the traumatic event or situation during the process of acting out:

> Yes the souls
> Yes the souls
> Yes the souls
> caught in the Middle Passage
>
> limbo
>
> the dead ones
> who are not dead
> the sleeping ones
> who are not sleeping (16)

The repetitive structure of the poem attests to the haunting of traumatic symptoms and to the aimless wandering of souls in limbo. It further re-enacts the difficulty of working through the historical Middle Passage. As opposed to the traditional elegies, in which “a withdrawal from the lost object and a subsequent reattachment to some substitute for that object” (Sacks 6) might be achieved, the speaker in “Eulogy” is immersed in her mourning. As Jahan Ramazani argues, while “most canonical English elegists had depicted mourning as compensatory” (*Poetry of Mourning* 3), more contemporary elegists “tend to enact the work not of formative but of ‘melancholic’ mourning […,] which is unresolved, violent, and ambivalent” (4). Similarly, the speaker, in “Eulogy”, cannot work through the trauma of losing her people in the Middle Passage. It seems that writing an elegy does not help her move on to the healing phase of working through.

Towards the end of the poem, the speaker recollects the traumatic experiences of male and female slaves who committed suicide during the Middle Passage and addresses their names:

> Dayadu, Ishidou, Anamadi
> plunging wildly to the waters
> of your fate
> Kobidja, Nwasobi, Okolie

> swallowing your tongues
> cold and still on your chains (17)

By alluding to these traumatic experiences, the speaker expresses both their individual and collective traumas and suggests that their souls were caught in limbo in the Middle Passage. This shows that what the speaker remembers is not a single memory but the accumulation of slavery traumata in a poetic body, an artistic construct made of and functioning as the site of lost memories.

By mourning for the slaves, the speaker situates herself in the position of the mourner and is in danger of creating a "crypt", a term coined by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Drawing on Freud's conceptualizations of mourning and melancholia, Abraham and Torok argue that some people inherit the "tombs enclosed" within their ancestors' psyches. To understand these enclosed tombs, we must bear in mind the distinction between incorporation and introjection. Abraham and Torok argue that introjection is a process which channels "a desire, a pain, a situation […] through language into a communion of empty mouths" and this is because "language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by giving *figurative shape* to presence" (128, emphasis in the original). In this regard, introjection, or the way to deal with loss, is dependent on the use of language. On the other hand, incorporation "reveals a gap within the psyche; it points to something that is missing just where introjection should have occurred" (127). While introjection paves the way for the acceptance of the traumatic situation on a regular basis, incorporation "merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic […] in order not to have to 'swallow' a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost" (126). To incorporate a dead person or persons means that the traumatized subject denies the loss due to the unavailability of a way out of the mourning process. Consequently, the traumatized subject creates an 'intrapsychic tomb' or 'crypt' in which the lost object can be preserved (130-1). These buried losses within the psyches of one generation might be transmitted to the following generations. In fact, some people unwittingly inherit the trauma of their ancestors through the transgenerational phantom. Abraham and Torok define the transgenerational phantom as follows:

> What haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left in us by the secrets of others […]. The phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious — for good reason. It passes — in a way yet to be determined — from the parent's unconscious into the child's. […] In no way can the subject relate to the phantom as his or her own repressed experience. *The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other*. (171-175, emphasis in the original)

Therefore, the inheritor of the traumatic experience rebuilds the hidden phantom, which is inherited reluctantly and unconsciously, in dislocated forms. The speaker, in "Eulogy", posits herself in such a situation of building a crypt where she can bury and preserve the people who died during the Middle Passage. In this context, the poem functions as the crypt where she can bury her sufferings.

Similarly, in "…..Like Clamouring Ghosts", the speaker acts out both her traumatic past and the traumatic memories of her companions during the Middle Passage in the chaotic structure of her dreams. The speaker "dream[s] a terrible / dream" in which "the gods forc[e] / [her] to drink blood from [her] father / skull" and at the same time she runs away from "the chiefs / and elders of the tribe" who follow her like "clamouring ghosts" (40). What is more, "the old ones / turn against [her] in [her] dreams" (40). Restovich finds the speaker running "toward what appears to be her African homeland, or 'motherland'" (56). We observe that the speaker suffers from disturbing and nightmarish dreams where she is made to drink blood from her father's skull and haunted by spectral images of her ancestors screaming shrilly. As suggested by Caruth, drawing on Freud, the acting out of traumatic memories usually "takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviours stemming from the event" (*Trauma: Explorations* 4). Similarly, as Onega argues, the symptoms of trauma are manifested in "the compulsion to repeat or 'act out' the traumatic event in the form of intrusive thoughts, hallucinatory images, or disturbing dreams" ("Affective Knowledge" 84). In line with this, the symptoms of the speaker's trauma, in "…..Like Clamouring Ghosts", are divulged in her dreadful dreams unremittingly haunting her. In other words, she is possessed by her traumatic past and is repeatedly acting it out.

Besides repression, haunting, and repetitions of traumatic experiences and/or memories, pastoral imagery might be employed to transmit traumatic experiences and /or memories to those who have not experienced them. Donna Coffey coins the concept of "traumatic pastoral", which is yet another strategy of trauma representation. In traumatic pastorals, "both nature and humans are victims and witnesses of catastrophe", so they lack the redemptive and consolatory power of pastoral elegy (28). Pastoral elegy is one form of elegy in which the mourner's grief is reflected onto nature: "The central device in pastoral elegy is the pathetic fallacy, in which nature, personified and anthropomorphized, mourns in sympathy with the elegist and in which nature's cycle from autumn or winter to spring reflects both the resurrection of the deceased and the successful mourning of the elegist" (31). The substituted and replaced object in pastoral elegies might be the recreating powers of nature, which are suggestive of "fertility", "reproduction", and a "reintegration of life and death through replacement of images of death and decay with images of regeneration" (31). However, such a consolatory aspect of nature cannot be evoked in trauma representations (32). As Coffey, echoing Ramazani, explains, the traditional pastoral elegy allows for "a resolution that is not possible in trauma" (32). At the same time, however, the temporal and spatial displacements of the pastoral are comparable to the belatedness of trauma time provoked by the repression and latency inherent in traumatic experiences (33). In Coffey's words, "pastoral is never written by people living in a golden age, in harmony with nature. It is written by people who attempt to recreate what they have lost" (33). This is similar to the "empty circle" or "black hole" at the centre of trauma representations (33).

In *I is,* especially in the first two sections, "The Beginning" and "The Vicissitudes", both nature and the slave woman are the victims and witnesses of slavery. Accordingly, nature does not provide the speaker with any consolation or redemption. Rather, the long memoried woman's experiences of slavery are projected onto nature. As argued above, slaves were treated as if they were merely sources of labour and exploitation but not human beings. In "Days That Fell", the slave woman alludes to such harsh conditions of slavery: While desperately trying to find solace in nature, "She leaned closer to / the earth / seeking some truth" (10), but the wilderness that surrounds her is oppressive rather than consolatory: "[she] could not cut through / the days that fell / like bramble" (10). The sufferings of slavery, described as "the destruction," continue to "choke / within" her (10). Evidently, brambles are thorny and scratch her body, so her flesh is painfully torn apart. In other words, instead of embracing her, the brambles make her feel trapped and suffocated, unable to open a way out for herself. Through stanzaic repetitions—the first four stanzas are repeated—the despair of the slave woman is underpinned, which fosters the helplessness of the woman "seeking some truth / unarmed against the noon" (10). Similarly, in "Kanaima Jungle", the traditional evil imagery of the tropical wilderness is used to express the dreadfulness and anguish of the slave woman's life. She repeats the line "I can't cut through this [Kanaima] jungle" three times and is desperately trapped by it. As Welsh suggests, "'Kanaima' is a specifically Guyanese term which refers to an evil force which may also take physical forms" (67). By evoking such evil nature imagery, the slave woman alludes to the fact that nature does not offer any solace or recovery for her.

Evidently, as opposed to the traditional pastoral elegies, traumatic pastoral does not have the power of providing the speaker with any hope for regeneration, fertility, or reproduction. For example, in "These Islands", the slave woman describes the islands as "green" but with "blades", "flame shades" and "hurricane[s]" (31). To her, "these Carib bean / Arawak an / islands" are "fertile / with brutality" (31). The blanks left within the words seem to suggest emotionality, climaxing in the last line with brutality. In fact, the horror experienced by the long memoried woman in the islands is spelt out by inserting spaces within words. The contradiction brought about by the last line—fertile with brutality—seems to suggest the chaotic form of traumatic pastoral which does not bring any hope for regeneration. By the same token, in "Sunshine", on these islands the sun shines "with as bright a flame" and "there is bird song" but "[her] life has slipped out / of [her] possession" (21). Therefore, the beauty of her surroundings is not registered. Instead, we have a series of questions that underline the inability to move on:

> but where're our shrines?
>   where're our stools?
>   How shall I worship
>   How shall I walk
>   from now on? (21)

The sustained self-questioning of the slave woman about the impossibility of mourning for her beloved lost ones illustrates that she cannot work through her trauma of slavery but is merely acting it out, as is fostered by her contradictory reaction to the beauties of her surroundings. In addition, there is a total destruction of her culture as is recorded by the speaker's inability to move forward.

As argued above, the loss of their "shrines"—their holy places—aggravates the physical and psychological trauma of black slave women. In order to cope with their traumatic experiences, they have recourse to their religious beliefs and spirituality despite the lack of any shrines. The role of religious and spiritual processes following traumatic events or experiences is one of the research areas in trauma studies that have not often been explored. James K. Boehnlein argues that traumatic events or experiences might bring about unanswered questions that are usually not recognized by the survivors of trauma immediately after the traumatic event and take a long time to make sense (259). These questions, which may involve religious or spiritual concerns, usually have to do with the meaning of human existence, loss and the moral values of good and evil (259). Since these questions may challenge a person's core belief systems at the personal, secular, and/or religious levels, "attempting resolution frequently involves an examination of previously stable cultural and religious assumptions that were the foundations of a person's life" (259). At the same time, religion and spirituality can act as trauma-coping strategies along with emotional, physical, and cognitive resources and "make individuals feel less threatened by making threatening situations more of a challenge and can help individuals derive positive outcomes even through their suffering" (Doctor and Shiromoto 247). Through a religious framework, traumatized individuals or collectivities might end up "having an enhanced meaning of life, increased social support, acceptance of difficulties and having a structured belief system" (Shaw *et. al* 2).

In the traumatic experiences of slavery, religious beliefs played an important role in providing the blacks with the power to tolerate the brutalities of slavery. As argued by Tara Bynum, when African slaves landed on the new land, the various religious beliefs they brought with them helped them "to survive and endure the brutal realities and harsh treatment of slave living" (321). Eugene D. Genovese, in his seminal study *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974), underlines the importance of religion in the slave communities. He argues that the slaves' religion "taught them to love and value each other, to take a critical view of their masters, and reject the ideological rationales for their own enslavement" (6). Thus, by deploying their religious convictions, slaves could produce hope for their present and future lives.

In *I is*, religious and spiritual beliefs and practises of the long memoried woman help her to survive and tolerate the horrendous aspects of slavery. In fact, the speaker asks for spiritual and religious agency from goddesses of different communal groups: Ala, the Igbo goddess of fertility (Lynch and Roberts 6); Asaase Yaa, Ashanti goddess of fertility (1); and Yemanji, the Yoruba goddess of motherhood (136). As Furniss and Bath argue, "the combined power of such gods […] helps to […] reconstruct a western African mythology in the Caribbean that can counter-balance or even banish the cultural and religious impact of European colonisation" (510). Although this argument casts significant light on *I is*, it does not pay attention to the role of religion or spirituality after trauma. In fact, the long memoried woman calls on the spiritual and religious power of these goddesses to alleviate her sufferings in the new land and to derive positive outcomes from them.

The long memoried woman has recourse to her religious beliefs and prays for her fellow victims, which seems the only strategy she has in the New Land. As stated above, slaves had sores and open injuries because they were shackled and chained brutally during their voyage over the Atlantic. They suffered from unbearable living conditions and carried the signs of these chains and shackles on their bodies. The speaker, in "Each Time They Came", welcomes such newly arriving slaves with inerasable scars. Various African groups that include "Igbo/Yoruba / Ashanti/Fanti" and "Mane" (15) arrive in the New Land. She underlines the cohesiveness and similarity of these groups by writing their names without leaving a space in-between the slashes. She sympathizes with the physical pain of these "new arrivals" that have "faces full of old / incisions", "calves grooved from / shackles" and "ankles swollen / from the pain" (15). "Each time they came", she wanted to "touch them" but the only thing she can do is "mov[e] [her lips] in a dreaming / kind of prayer" (15). This suggests that the only thing she can do is to pray for these slaves in pain and remain silent.

In a similar vein, the long memoried woman turns to her religious practices in order to heal her wounds after being sexually traumatized. As stated, the long memoried woman gives birth to a child after being raped by the white master in "In my Name". Despite her mixed feelings about her child — "my bastard fruit / my seedling" — she eventually decides to receive her child "in [her] name / in [her] blood" and let it live (56). The slave woman in this poem baptises her child figuratively:

> For with my blood
> I've cleansed you
> and with my tears
> I've pooled the river Niger
> now my sweet one it is for you to swim (57)

Thus, it might be argued that the slave woman passes her sufferings to her child by baptising him/her with her blood and tears but at the same time gives her child the freedom to live. The speaker, in a way, has healed herself and decided to give birth to her child rather than kill it. The long memoried woman, in "Among the Canes", prays Asaase Yaa, the goddess of fertility, in order to recover from her trauma of losing her child. Holding her belly in despair because she may have just lost her baby (Naakka 70), the long memoried woman calls out to Asaase Yaa to relieve her pains, wailing: "O like my Earth Mother / *Asaase Yaa* / I demand a day of rest" (27, emphasis in the original). In Ashanti tradition, work is forbidden on Thursdays, the sacred day of Asaase Yaa (Adu-Gyamfi 265). Accordingly, the slave woman associates herself with Asaase Yaa and asks for a day of rest to heal herself.

The reason why the long memoried woman has recourse to her African religious and spiritual beliefs is healing her wounds as well keeping her African heritage alive in the new land. In "Yemanji", for instance, she pays homage to Yemanji, the Yoruba goddess of motherhood. Audre Lorde, in the glossary that appears at the end of *The Black Unicorn* (1978), sheds light on different legends about Yemanji:

> Yemanja [Yemanji] is also the goddess of oceans. Rivers are said to flow form her breasts. One legend is that a son tried to rape her. She fled until she collapsed, and from her breasts, the rivers flowed. Another legend says that a husband insulted Yemanja's long breasts, and when she fled with her pots he knocked her down. From her breasts flowed rivers, and from her body then sprang forth all the other *Orisha* (121-122, emphasis in the original)

In *I is,* when the long memoried woman meets Yemanji, "mother of all beings sprawled / upon the rivershore" (64), she notices "her long / breasts (insulted by her husband) / oozing milk that lapped and flowed" (64). By referring to the legend of Yemanji being insulted by her husband, the long memoried woman empathizes with the native goddess and promises that she will worship her: "Mother of seas / Goddess of rivers / I will pay homage to you" (64). Consequently, the long memoried woman appreciates Yemanji who has the power "to bless [her] followers / with an abundance of children" (64). When considering previous poems in which the slave woman is without her mulatto child either because she has killed it or let it free, it might be argued that, in "Yemanji", she believes in the spiritual power of Yemanji who could bless her with plenty of children. In other words, the speaker's praying and paying homage to Yemanji is a way of healing her trauma of losing her child.

Evidently, the long memoried woman resorts to her religious and spiritual practises not only to heal the wounds the white man has inflicted on her but also those she has self-inflicted. In "Ala", for example, she prays for a slave woman called Uzo who is punished with death for killing her own child with a pin. Uzo, rather than delivering her baby to the world of slavery, "with a pin / stick[s] the soft mould / of her own child's head," and, thus, helps "the little-new-born / soul winging its way back / to Africa — free" (23). As argued above, under normal circumstances, killing one's baby would be considered barbaric but for African slave women infanticide provides both a form of control over their fertility and an individual protest against slavery. As suggested by Restovich, Uzo reminds us of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Restovich argues that, in *Beloved*, a slave woman called Sethe kills her daughter: "Sethe's rationale for killing her daughter, i.e., that Beloved will be safer dead in the spiritual world, than alive in the physical world, signifies on the same mentality of Nichols's 'rebel' woman, Uzo" (174).

Regarding her murderous act as a form of rebellion, the enslavers sentence Uzo to death:

> Face up
> they hold her naked body
> to the ground
> arms and legs spread-eagle
> each tie with rope to stake
> then they coat her in sweet
> molasses and call us out
> to see…..the rebel woman (23)

Other slave women are made to witness the agonizing and traumatic punishment of Uzo: “the slow and painful / picking away of the flesh / by red and pitiless ants” (23). The only thing they can do is to “sing and weep / as [they] work” (24). In other words, rather than verbalizing what they have had to see, these witnesses to Uzo’s atrocious death can only sing and weep, which can be considered as a way of expressing their pain and responding to trauma. Despite the seemingly cruel act of Uzo, the long memoried woman wishes that, after her death, “Uzo is to join [Ala] / to return to the pocket / of [her] womb” and that she will be “laid to rest — for she has / died a painful death” (24). She asks Ala, the goddess of fertility, for her sympathy and grace: “Gracious one / have sympathy / let her enter” (24). The long memoried woman’s prayer to Ala to have mercy and receive Uzo in her mother-earth womb “forces a revaluation of ‘the maternal’ in a context where such ‘universal’ human values as ‘maternal love’ have been traumatically disrupted” (Narain 184). Consequently, for Afro-Caribbean people, spiritual/religious support is needed to alleviate the pains of trauma and to find a way to cope with their traumatic experiences, particularly of losing their children.

While the women respond to Uzo’s trauma by singing and weeping and praying to Ala for her grace, the children have recourse to antiphony in order to work through their witnessing of Uzo’s death. In “Without Song”, for example, the slave children are depicted as traumatized after Uzo’s death punishment. “Moving without song or prayer” (25), these children express their traumatic condition in their silence and incapacity for emotional reaction after Uzo’s death:

They have fallen
into silence
uttering no cry
laying no blame (25)

The children do not know whom to blame but are only mourning for the death of Uzo in "the shrouds / of tares" silently (25). Within the context of the poem, "tares" refer to some kind of weed while "shrouds" are clothes used to wrap a dead body. The plantations are, therefore, not only working places for these children but also places for mourning. Seeing the "female flesh [of Uzo] / feast coated in molasses" (26), the children have "small and stricken and black" faces (25). The description of the faces of the children as "stricken" suggests that they might be affected with extreme grief or fear because of witnessing what has happened to Uzo. Consequently, deprived of the means of expressing their pain by singing or weeping, the children might be said to be in a state of shock or great pain, which usually comes as a sudden reaction after traumatic events. At this point, the slave woman comes to help children and desperately advises them twice: "Maybe the thing is to forget / to forget and be blind / on this little sugar island" (26) but at the same time she fearfully wonders if it is possible to "forget" and "be blind" (26) to what happened to Uzo. The children and the speaker might be said to suffer from the tension between "the therapeutic requirement to remember the trauma […] and the contrary requirement to forget the past" (Leys 14-5). At the same time, however, the repetition of this stanza reminds us of antiphony—call and response—a tradition in African culture which "enlivens the performance space as it invites audience participation and thereby creates an active community of participants" (West 33). The antiphonal repetition of the stanza helps build a collective response to the atrocities of the enslavers. Thus, the collective response of antiphony turns out to be a way of working through traumatic experiences.

Such collective responses to trauma, i.e. singing and antiphonies are ways of dissociating from the brutal facts of slavery, which is yet a trauma coping strategy. In fact, dissociation is the most dominant trauma coping strategy in the collection. Dissociation, as conceptualised by Pierre Janet, refers to a form of mental depression which is characterized by the retraction of personal consciousness and a tendency of the emancipation of ideas and functions that constitute personality ("L'amnésie continue"

138). Although it was first associated with a mental breakdown, dissociation has gained wider recognition in contemporary trauma theory with its “adaptive process that protects the individual and allows him to continue to function, though often in an automaton-like state” (Luckhurst 42). In fact, during the process of working through traumatic experiences and/or memories, dissociation is an essential and helpful trauma coping strategy.

Although it becomes pathological in the context of traumatic consciousness, dissociation is in fact a perfectly normal and useful part of our daily lives; it allows us to perform different tasks simultaneously like driving a car while rehearsing a lecture. As Sandra L. Bloom explains, only in its acute form, which is usually after traumatic events or experiences, “it is common to recognize that people are ‘in shock’ — that is, they are acutely dissociated. As a result they may not remember the terrible events that just occurred, or they may remember them but have no feeling about the events” (200-01). In the long-term, dissociation may foster fragmentation of mental functions and impaired performance, while in the short-term it helps us “to transcend, to escape from, the constraints of reality and in doing so, it allows us to tolerate irreconcilable conflicts” (201). Similarly, Onega argues that “dissociation, like Freudian repression, becomes a defence mechanism that allows individuals to cope in the short-run with the shock produced by an overwhelming shock or situation” (“Affective Knowledge” 85). Bloom points to another function of dissociation which is to decrease group conflict and promote group cohesion. This form of dissociation is usually facilitated by rituals such as tribal dances, music, drumming, and chanting which allow the participants to share the same level of arousal, vulnerability, and emotional state, a situation which enhances their unity (201). By these means, individuals or groups manage to alter aspects of reality that are chaotic and upsetting for internal stability (202).

In *I is,* African oral culture, expressed either through narratives or communal music and songs, is the dissociation mechanism that allows slavery victims in the short-term to represent the trauma of slavery in an attenuated form. In “Web of Kin”, for example, the speaker has recourse to her oral culture of story-telling with the aim of transcending the constraints of reality in the new land. She juxtaposes the present situation of slave women in the new land, who come “bearing gourds of sacrificial blood — / the offering of their silent women / suffering” to that of her homeland in Africa, which is “a country of strong women” (8-9). Isolating herself from her fellow slaves, who opt for silence and suffering, the long memoried woman decides that she “will have nothing to do with it / will pour it in the dust will set / [them] free” (9) and she decides to alter her reality of slavery. She dreams that she will sprinkle flowers over the Middle Passage on behalf of everybody who could survive the journey and tell the younger ones “sweet tales of Dahomey” (9). Female warriors in Dahomey are known to be among the best-known examples of female power in West Africa (Woodfork 141). By telling their “sweet” stories to the young ones, the long memoried woman hopes both to maintain cultural continuity and to find a way of coping with the horror of slavery. In other words, she strongly believes that her African culture expressed through sweet tales of Dahomey warriors will become an instrument of dissociation and a source of hope which will help not only her but also young black children around to cope with the reality of slavery in a better way.

African oral culture is a means of dissociation in “Like Anansi”, too. Anansi, the trickster and folk hero in Ashanti tradition, appears in many tales of the Ashanti tradition in various forms: he is the fool, trying to outwit animals, humans, and even the gods without much success; the creator of the moon; the man responsible for bringing debt and greed into the world; or sometimes just a cunning and witty hero (Seal 8-9). Enslaved Africans narrate the stories of Anansi as part of their cultural heritage in exile in the Caribbean (Hecker 133). Although Anansi is known to be a male figure, the long memoried woman likens herself to him: “I was the Ashanti spider / woman-keeper / of dreams” (66). Thus, she uses Anansi to distance herself from her status as a female slave and transforms into a folk hero. Meeting another Anansi-like figure dressed in colourful clothes makes her even happier:

> calm and cunning
> as a madman
> bells hung
> from your little waist
> an ornate flute
> beads and feathers
> stood in your cap
> and I laughed at you (66-7)

The figure that the long memoried woman meets makes her laugh because of the colourful and ornate way s/he dresses up. Evidently, slaves would turn to their cultural heroic stories to gain strength and transform the hostility of their present lives in exile into positive experiences. Upon meeting somebody like Anansi, the long memoried woman seems to cope with her sufferings through laughter and at the same time to keep loyal to her cultural heritage.

Similarly, the speaker dissociates herself from the reality of slavery also by invoking her cultural heritage of communal songs in "Drum Spell" in which she dreams of being back in her homeland, Africa. She imagines that when her sisters see her arriving, they will welcome her with a joyous song:

> rejoice!
> rejoice!
> rejoice!
>
> She is back
> She is back
> She is back
>
> *Waye saa aye saa oo!*
> *Waye saa aye saa oo*
>
> She has done so
> She has done so
> She has done so (29-30 italics in original)

Obviously, drum rhythms and stanzaic repetitions invoke African communal songs. Thus, by evoking songs and story-telling of African culture, the speaker dissociates herself from the brutal facts of slavery. As her sisters describe her, she is a "wilful daughter" (30), a description which attributes bravery to her journey back to her homeland.

Similar to the power of oral culture is the power of imagination as a form of dissociation from traumatic reality. Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart bring up thought-provoking questions about traumatic legacies: "How can one bring the traumatic experience to an end, when one feels completely unable and unwilling to resign oneself to the fact that one has been subjected to this horrendous event or series of events? How can one resign oneself to the unacceptable?" ("The Intrusive Past" 178)

Drawing on the theories of Pierre Janet, they argue that imagining “an alternative, less negative or even positive scenario” (178) is one of the most effective ways of coming to terms with traumatic experiences and/or memories. Elaborating on the traumatized subjects’ capacity to resign themselves to the situation brought about by the unacceptable and ungraspable traumatic events, van der Kolk and van der Hart argue that “by imagining these alternative scenarios, many patients are able to soften the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror” (178). For example, Janet suggests his patient Justine, traumatized by nude corpses of victims of a cholera epidemic, to imagine these corpses as mobile human beings with their clothes on (178). Similarly, another therapist makes a Holocaust survivor imagine a flower growing in Auschwitz, which provides him with great comfort and peace (178). In keeping with these telling examples, van der Kolk and van der Hart argue that “memory is everything” and “once flexibility is introduced, the traumatic memory starts losing its power over current experience” (178). In other words, imagination has a potentially great healing power for traumatized subjects.

In *I is*, the slave woman manages to escape and tolerate the unbearable practises of slavery through the power of her imagination. In “Drum-Spell”, for example, she starts dreaming of her homeland in Africa which evokes feelings of comfort and peace rather than her horrific experiences during her slavery: “Suddenly for no reason / though there is reason”, the long memoried woman imagines that she is back in Africa, where “the drum-spell” and “the drum-beat” call her (28). “Walking small / and careful among the / mounds of [her] mother’s yams”, she dreams of a childhood that gave her security and happiness: her father is “nimble, catlike crouching / with his spear” and she is again “in the eyes / of her sisters”, can talk “words / that come smoothly” and walk “roots / that are easy” (29). She feels safe and sound in her homeland because she can speak her mother tongue, not that of the enslavers, and walk easily in familiar surroundings. By dreaming and journeying through time and space back to her homeland, the long memoried woman seems to alter her present situation of slavery in Africa and replace the horrific image of slavery with her peaceful homeland. In other words, she introduces flexibility over her present experiences and gains freedom through her imaginative sources. As she also suggests in the repetitious structure of “One Dream”, rather than "the borders of this darkness", "these blades of hardness", "this plague of sadness", she must "construct [herself] a dream / one dream is all she need[s] to keep" but "**this dream must not be tarnished**" (38). The decisiveness of the slave woman is underpinned by writing the last line in bold. The long memoried woman that embodies all slave women in the new land does not yield to the despair and hardship of slavery but dreams of transforming her present situation into a better life. Similar to Holocaust survivors imagining flowers instead of Auschwitz, the long memoried woman imagines a hopeful dream that would supplant her dark, difficult, and sorrowful life in the New Land.

While positive scenarios usually involve replacing traumatic imagery with positive ones, the traumatized subjects can also assuage their desire for revenge by creating fantasies where they change roles with the perpetrators, which is yet another form of dissociation from the harrowing facts of slavery. As Judith Herman states,

> [t]he revenge fantasy is often a mirror image of the traumatic memory, in which the roles of perpetrator and victim are reversed. It often has the same grotesque, frozen, and wordless quality as the traumatic memory itself. The revenge fantasy is one form of the wish for catharsis. The victim imagines that she can get rid of the terror, shame, and pain of the trauma by retailing against the perpetrator. The desire for revenge also arises out of the experience of complete helplessness. In her humiliated fury, the victim imagines that revenge is the only way to restore her own sense of power. She may also imagine that this is the only way to force the perpetrator to acknowledge the harm he has done to her. (189)

Following the same argument, Horowitz also argues that "the victim can feel good about gaining a sense of power and control by planning vengeance and may experience pleasure at imagining the suffering of the target and pride at being on the side of some primal justice" (24). Similarly, van der Kolk and van der Hart argue that "many patients who are victimized by rape and other forms of violence are helped by imagining all the power they want and applying it to the perpetrator" (178). This suggests that imagining revenge can be used as a trauma coping strategy. Estela Welldon, in her analysis of sexual abuse, explains that victims who become perpetrators "believe they are creating a situation in which justice is satisfied" but, in fact, "they are identifying with their aggressors" (124). As Welldon suggests, victims become perpetrators when they re-enact the behaviour of their offenders motivated by a desire for revenge.

In *I is*, the slave woman insinuates the idea that she will take her revenge through her magical powers and evil spirits and thus will become a victim-perpetrator. For example, in "…..Like Clamouring Ghosts", she dreams of an old black woman preparing to take revenge on her perpetrators:

> I see the old dry-head woman
> leaning on her hoe
> twist-up and shaky like a cripple
> insect
>
> I see the pit of her eye
> I hear her rattle bone laugh
> putting a chill up my spine (41)

Obviously, the old woman resembles a potentially deadly creepy-crawly rattle-snake. The same usage also appears in the following poem, "I Coming Back" where the slave woman warns the enslaver that "I coming back 'Massa' / I coming back / mistress of the underworld" and identifies herself with a "skinless higue" (42). As suggested by Welsh, "in Caribbean folklore 'Old Higue' or 'Ol' Higue' is an evil spirit which takes the form of a haggard old woman" (129). In this poem, the slave woman fantasises with the idea of returning as this poisonous snake woman to take revenge on her enslaver. She threatens her master in a spine-chilling way:

> I coming back
> hiss in yuh ear
> and prick in yuh skin
> I coming back
> bone in yuh throat
> and laugh in yuh skull
> I coming back (42)

Obviously, both in "…..Like Clamouring Ghosts" and "I Coming Back", the slave woman imagines a hair rising snake that will take her revenge by biting and/or poisoning the enslaver. This suggests that the slave woman is after her enslaver's blood and has fantasies of killing him in revenge for her sufferings in the New World.

The slave woman's revenge fantasies range from indigenous, scary animal imagery to obeah spells which might be cast either for good or evil purposes by the African. Obeah spells—a system of beliefs based on spirituality, sorcery, witchcraft, magic, and healing—take different forms ranging from the application of herbal to animal medicinal properties (Frye 198). The slave woman, in "Night is Her Robe", has the knowledge to prepare such obeah spells: "With the all care / of a herbalist / she's gathering strange weeds" (46). Similarly, in "Love Act", the slave woman, who is victimized by the whole family of enslavers, prepares her poison. She is described as "the fuel / that keep them all going" (48). While the male enslaver "want[s] to tower above her", his wife "is glad to be rid of the / loveact", and their children "take to her breasts / like leeches" (48). The male enslaver "thinks she can be trusted" but she "hide[s] her triumph / and slowly stir[s] the hate / of poison in" (49). Obviously, her hatred towards the enslaver gradually increases while he thinks she is reliable. What is more, the slave woman warns the enslavers of her revengeful intentions, which are hidden in her seemingly obedient but in fact rebellious smile, as exemplified in "Skin Teeth". The slave woman's smile, in "Skin Teeth", is defiant in nature although she seems to be compliant: "Not every skin teeth / is a smile 'Massa'" because she may smile "only the better / to rise and strike / again" (50). Nichols states that: "They [the masters] do not know that behind that smile, or behind that servility is a plotting mind. As they say […] people stoop to conquer; it is that kind of survival technique that people who are dispossessed and who do not have the power use and ['Skin Teeth'] illustrates this" (qtd. in Welsh 68-9). What remains to be established is the underlying reason for the rebelliousness of the slave woman. The "plotting mind" of the slave woman and her dreams and plans of killing her master resonate with the revenge fantasy of a victim exchanging roles with the perpetrator as a way to work through the memory of her traumatic past whereby Nichols stresses the possibility of the victims becoming perpetrators.

Such revenge fantasies of victimized black women suggest that violence exerted by white male perpetrators might trigger more violence, which is in accordance with Walter Benjamin's notion of history in terms of constellations and catastrophes. Benjamin coined the concept of constellation to replace "the concept of the historical progress of mankind" (261) sanctioned by Hegelian world history and exemplified it with the backward glance of the angel in Paul Klee's painting, "Angelus Novus":

> He [Angel] is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay […] [b]ut a storm is blowing from Paradise […] [which] irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (257-258)

Benjamin believed that "history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now" (261). In keeping with this, Onega explains that "Benjamin exposed the need to abandon the sequential interpretation of events in cause-and-effect terms and assume instead a relational interpretation of the past in the light of present occurrences" ("Hybridity, Montage" 217). In the context of trauma studies, Benjamin's concept of constellation, which "works on the principle of accumulation and repetition-*cum*-variation of apparently disparate elements" (Onega "Affective Knowledge" 90), suggests that traumatic events can repeat themselves with a difference and, what is worse, that perpetrators and victims may exchange their roles with the passing of time. When considering *I is*, the cyclical nature of history is underpinned by the revenge fantasies of the slave woman who hopes and plans to take revenge on the perpetrators and, thus, to transform into a perpetrator. In other words, she imagines that she will have revenge on white male colonizer by exerting violence and gaining control over him one day in the future.

In *I is*, the cyclical nature of history and violence is most visible in the spiritual and imaginary journeys that the slave woman takes back in time and space. In the course of these journeys, she witnesses the atrocities endured by other colonized people and these prompt her to have fantasies of revenge. What makes her revengeful responses different from those of other victims is that she does not react to the experience of fresh violence but is moved by the desire to terminate previous atrocities involving earlier generations of slaves. The long memoried woman, in "Of Golden Gods", for example, watches her "chameleon spirit / take its exit […] / across the face of heaven" (59). The spirit, "moving from land to sea / from swamp to Southern / vastness", flies over "Inca ruins / and back again / drifting onto Mexican plains" (59). Thus, the spirit bears witness to "genocides — / all a prelude to [her] time" (60). Defining the previous genocides of Amerindians as a "prelude" suggests both a connection between the sufferings of the Native Americans and the African slaves and a sharp increase of the atrocities in the following generations culminating in the mass murders of the Middle Passage. It is the confluence of all these atrocities that nourishes the revenge fantasies of the collective speaker. The long memoried woman's compulsion to look back into African history from the time before she landed on the land to her present time would be comparable to Klee's angel with his face turned toward the past and seeing one single pile of catastrophe that keeps mounting up which acquires meaning only from his present perspective. Similarly, the long memoried woman's backward glance situates the slave trade at the centre of the catastrophes of African history which keep increasing.

Moreover, the long memoried woman's revenge fantasies expressed through animal imagery and/or obeah spells are transformed into physical violence against the white male colonizer towards the end of the collection. Nichols, in a documentary film directed by Frances-Anne Solomon and entitled *I is,* the same as the collection, explains that the long memoried woman understands that she must take physical action against the enslavers in order to free herself from the shackles of slavery: "The long memoried woman sees clearly, you know, the kind of action she must take [...] [and] feels that you have to take actual physical steps to free yourself, that I mean, freedom is not just going to be given to you" (n.p.). For example, in "New Birth", the speaker implies the idea that there will be a fresh start but only in a chaotic atmosphere. Nature seems to become empathic to the slave woman's sufferings but, still, there are doubts about the speaker's future. By then, it has been some time since she started living in the new land and the pastoral imagery seems to evoke hope and rebirth:

> Looking into the cascade
> of foam
> she saw that the hurricane
> months had passed
> that the air was quickened
> with the taste of new birth
> and the benediction of the sun
> that the frogs were singing

from deep among the mangrove roots (70)

Although it looks as if the chaos has settled down and the slave woman has had the possibility of beginning a new life under slavery, the form of the last part of the poem seems to set into doubt the assertiveness of its content:

The sun is singing
the sky is singing
I am singing into the day
moving
beyond
all boundaries (70)

Michael finds the spacing and topographical arrangement of the words in this poem as a way of “creating narrative *other*-wise” (220, emphasis in the original) and argues that

> [t]he spaces between words visually highlight the experiences of black women slaves that have typically remained unrepresented but that they have had to endure and overcome in order to move forward and build new lives for themselves. At the same time, the spaces between words and absence of punctuation evoke movement and emphasize the ongoing process of breaking free of boundaries in consonance with what the words themselves denote. (220)

On the other hand, Cilano notes that “the free form of the last three lines betokens uncertainty, not wholly positive or negative, of the speaker’s identity” (173). Cilano further contends that

> despite efforts to re-present location to their advantage, the slaves’ identities and, by implication, identities in general will not eventually root and stabilize in any permanent way. This lack of permanence need not be cause for lamentation, however. Rather, a degree of identity impermanence allows for changes to be introduced into a system, just as the slaves introduce resistance into the colonial order. (173)

The long memoried woman suggests that the slaves will definitely start a new life only by resisting the enslavers and turning into victim-perpetrators, a situation which is underpinned by the hesitant arrangement of the last lines.

Similarly, in “This Kingdom” and “Wind a Change”, the enslavers are duly warned that there will be a drastic change when the slaves turn into rebellious subjects. In “This

Kingdom”, for example, the collective “we” threatens the enslavers with the warning that “This Kingdom Will Not Reign / Forever” (75). Despite the present calmness of the plantations where “cool winds blow / softly / in brilliant sunshine”, “flowers flame”, and “all / is a spectrum of blue / jewels”, everything can turn upside down: “soft winds can turn / volatile […] / can turn hurricane”, “plantations can perish / lands turn barren” (76). In that case, the white man can no longer be indifferent to the sufferings of the slaves and cannot “turn his thoughts / to death” (76). The slaves can “take [their] freedom” because of “the rage growing / like the chiggers in [their] feet” (76-7). In the following poem, “Wind a Change”, she warns the enslavers that there will certainly be a change “slow but / steadfast” (78). In Solomon’s film, Nichols explains that the long memoried woman is aware of “the calm before the storm” which is, in fact, “the storm of revolution” (*I is* 1990).

As this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, *I is* registers traumatic experiences and/or memories of Afro-Caribbean people, especially black slave women, and the responses of those who witness such experiences, which are followed by trauma coping strategies and the possibility of victims turning into perpetrators. As Nichols points out “at the beginning of the book she [the long memoried woman] is weighed down and she is lamenting about slavery, a woman uprooted. But gradually she begins to question things to herself, she begins to employ her own woman magic and power to strengthen herself. So she develops as a character” (qtd. in Welsh 74). Accordingly, the penultimate poem, “Holding my Beads,” describes the power the long memoried woman has gained in the New World: She is “charting [her] own futures /   a woman / holding [her] beads in [her] hand” (86). The topographical arrangement of the line that includes a blank left before “a woman” underpins “the power” she has gained “to be what [she is] / a woman” (86). She emphasizes that “it isn’t privilege or pity”, “it isn’t reverence or safety / quick happiness or purity” that she looks for but to regain her freedom. She is aware that she is “unforgiving as the course of justice / inerasable as [her] scars and fate” (86). Obviously, she will always hate her enslavers and remember her traumatic past. However, she has eventually gained her freedom, symbolized through her beads and managed to put her trauma into words by acquiring a new language as the “Epilogue” of the collection suggests:

> I have crossed an ocean
> I have lost my tongue
> from the root of the old
> one
> a new one has sprung (87)

In addressing the Middle Passage with the ocean image, the long memoried woman recognizes her past sufferings. Losing her tongue may refer to her physical loss of tongue on board the ships, to her loss of her native-language, or to her loss of freedom to speak. Despite the difficulties she has gone through, in the new land she has found a new language that has sprung from the roots of her mother-tongue allowing her to express her past and present situation. As can be traced in the structure of the collection, the long memoried woman transforms from a traumatized subject into a resilient agent and rather than acting out her repressed memories, she works them through by employing trauma coping strategies. How individual and collective traumatic experiences of slavery are passed onto the following generations and how they are dealt with will be analysed in the representations of the second generation British Afro-Caribbean people's trauma and trauma coping strategies in Nichols's following collections, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) and *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989) which are evidently inextricably linked with *I is*.

CHAPTER II

TRAUMA AND ITS HEALING THROUGH NOSTALGIA AND GROTESQUE IN *THE FAT BLACK WOMAN'S POEMS* AND *LAZY THOUGHTS OF A LAZY WOMAN*

As we have seen in the first chapter, in *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1981), Nichols develops a body of work that explores new and non-western perspectives on trauma and trauma coping strategies. Nichols's subsequent collections, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) and *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989), are concerned with Afro-Caribbean people in Britain in the post-1960s. Although different in their choices of place and time, these two collections are inextricably bound with *I is* because all three collections present the traumatic experiences and healing strategies of Afro-Caribbean peoples whether in the Caribbean or in Britain. Accordingly, this chapter argues that *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* represent the continuity of the trauma of slavery and the Middle Passage for Afro-Caribbean people in Britain in the post 1960s and their trauma coping mechanisms which are nostalgia and grotesque. These collections represent the traumatic legacies of British Afro-Caribbean people which are triggered by racial intolerance and social difficulties leading to their alienation in Britain. In order to heal their traumatic inheritance, the British Afro-Caribbean diaspora have resort to nostalgia for their homeland in the Caribbean which provides them with an idyllic and safe space or site which they can attach sentiments of belonging. In other words, nostalgia is a productive response to their traumatic heritage whereby they can imaginatively re-experience and reconstruct their past at the expense of repressing it. In doing so, they can also escape from their present social difficulties and racial discriminations even if for only a short period of time. Besides nostalgia, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* employ grotesque images of British Afro-Caribbean people, embodied especially in Afro-Caribbean women's grotesque bodies. By using a grotesqueness which evokes laughter and fascination, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* challenge and heal British Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic inheritance of slavery. Strictly speaking, by using nostalgia and grotesque images, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* present ways of healing traumatic legacies of the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain and offer alternative solutions to their present difficulties stemming from their traumatic past.

In *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts*, the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery is seen to disturb the British Afro-Caribbean diaspora a long time after these events, in the post 1960s. Since its publication in 1984, *The Fat* has received critical attention mainly in terms of its handling of gender and diasporic issues that theorize representations of the body and of otherness. For example, Mara Scanlon argues that Nichols presents "a new heroine, a woman who revises the aesthetic of female beauty, challenges oppressive societal forces, and emerges as a powerful queen, founder, or goddess" (59). Similarly, Maija Naakka argues that Nichols's *The Fat* "reveals something of the experience of a black, immigrant woman living in Britain" and "depict[s] the experience of a black female body" in her diasporic life in Britain (1). From a different perspective, Maite Escudero argues that *The Fat* demonstrates "Nichols's ability to create alternative spaces wherein black female experience is to have a transformative impact" (12). Evidently, critical attention to *The Fat* revolves around the black female experience in diasporic life in Britain. Although these criticisms provide us with invaluable insights into *The Fat,* they are limited to the black female experience. Recognizing the collection's importance in that context, this chapter argues that, in *The Fat,* the ancestry and black history of Afro-Caribbean British people align themselves with a traumatic history of slavery and the Middle Passage. At the same time, however, in *The Fat,* we observe possible ways of healing such a traumatic legacy through nostalgia and grotesque.

Lazy Thoughts, inextricably connected with *The Fat*, has also received critical commentary from a variety of standpoints since its publication in 1989 but scarcely in terms of trauma and trauma coping. Many scholars such as Simone A. James Alexander acknowledge *Lazy Thoughts* as "a sequel" to *The Fat* (716). Similar to *The Fat*, *Lazy Thoughts* has been analysed in terms of its gender related and diasporic elements. For example, Innes believes that *Lazy Thoughts* wanders away from exclusionary views of femininity that disregard black women and challenges traditional images of the good housewife obsessively cleaning the house (329). Similarly, Ana Bringas Lopez argues that, in *Lazy Thoughts*, "the body continues to play a central role in the construction of woman as an empowered subject" (36). In addition to such gender specific readings of *Lazy Thoughts*, there are views on its elements of diasporic life of black women in Britain. For example, Christine Harris contends that *Lazy Thoughts* "subtly mocks the modern mores of her country's ex-colonizers, poignantly and wittily treats the experience of the migration of a black woman living in London and her resurgent memories of the Caribbean" (54). In the same vein, Lorna Sage argues that *Lazy Thoughts* continues Nichols's "poetic project of asserting the sensual presence of power of black women at home in the Caribbean and in their newer diasporic locations" (380). This chapter moves from reading *Lazy Thoughts* in terms of its gender related and diasporic elements and argues that *Lazy Thoughts*, similar to *The Fat*, represents the second generation of British Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic legacies of slavery and the Middle Passage and its healing through nostalgia and grotesque.

The trauma presented in *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* is then the collective trauma of the Afro-Caribbean people living in Britain. One can see that the diasporic existence in Britain is difficult and marked by a sense of "otherness". Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain, the individuals of African origin and Caribbean descent, are members of a cultural diaspora[18]. After the Second World War, Afro-Caribbean peoples migrated to different parts of the world such as the USA, France, the Netherlands, and Britain, where they became "a cultural diaspora" (Cohen 144).[19] What makes them a cultural diaspora depends on various factors such as their compulsory dispersal because of the slave trade. Although it has been a long time since slavery was over, there are many people of African descent in various parts of the world and this can be seen through their skin colour. Because of their skin colour, they are exposed to racial discrimination and alienation from the host society: "The deployment of skin colour in many societies as a signifier of status, power and opportunity, makes it impossible for any people of African descent to avoid racial stigmatization" (Cohen 144). However, as Cohen states, skin colour is not enough to label the Afro-Caribbean people as a cultural diaspora. What defines Afro-Caribbean peoples as cultural diaspora is their loyalty to their homeland in the Caribbean through their social conduct, ideas, and feelings (150-51). Afro-Caribbean diasporic life displays "cultural retention or affirmations of an African identity" (144). In other words, Afro-Caribbean peoples pay homage to their origins no matter where they live (144-5). Afro-Caribbean diasporas are communities that "acknowledge that 'the old country'—a notion often buried in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions" (ix).

Among Afro-Caribbean peoples living abroad, the British Afro-Caribbean diaspora consists of three generations: "the first, which came with the Windrush (1948), and through the 1950s; the second, the post-1960s generation […] unwilling to accept racism; [and] the third generation, the Afro-Caribbean children growing up and assuming the rights of the state" (Davies "Triply Diasporized" 514). The first generation, as Stephanie Davis explains, was called the Windrush Generation because "the ship bringing the migrants to the UK was the *SS Windrush*" (186, emphasis in the original). After the Second World War, there was an attempt at reconstructing Europe which had faced the destruction of industry, houses and, accordingly, domestic order (Chamberlain 5). The first wave of Afro-Caribbean migrants entered Britain during this period of labour shortage. In other words, they came to work in Britain, and, from this moment onwards, they were merely seen as workers. The Nationality Act of 1948 gave citizens of Britain's former colonies the right to UK citizenship and lifelong residence in the UK. From 1948 to 1973, nearly 550,000 people of Afro-Caribbean origin settled in Britain (6). However, the Windrush generation discovered that they were unwanted by the indigenous population (Davis 186). In other words, they were received as "black and colonial, poor and dependent" and also as the source of "labour and often, in the eyes of the colonial authorities, as trouble as well" (Chamberlain 6). As Cohen states, Afro-Caribbean peoples faced a "psychic shock of rejection" (140). Since their arrival was simultaneous with Britain's attempts at redefining and rebuilding its nation state, Afro-Caribbean migrants were "[seen] as a new permanent addition to British society, into which, rationally, they should assimilate and integrate and thus prove worthy of citizenship" (6).[20]

The first generation Afro-Caribbean people was followed by the second generation who were equally exposed to racist discriminations. The second-generation British Afro-Caribbean peoples faced "a growing politics of racial intolerance expressed at an official, institutional level" (Procter 95). Unlike the first generation, the second generation was an Afro-Caribbean diaspora most of whom had lived in Britain since early childhood or were born and raised there (James 251). However, this does not mean that the second generation was not exposed to any hostile attitude of the indigenous population. On the contrary, they went through really difficult times from the 1960s to the 1980s. Christina Julios explains that immigrants worked "in the least skilled, least desirable and worst remunerated occupations"; they lived as "conurbation dwellers" and experienced "deprived socio-economic conditions" (91). Further, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962) was a turning point for the immigrants because in aiming to "prevent their entry into the 'mother country'" it introduced a racial distinction between "citizens of the UK and colonies and citizens of independent Commonwealth countries, resulting in Commonwealth passport-holders becoming subject to new immigration controls" (94). In order to prevent such racial discriminations, in 1965, the government passed the Race Relations Act which was, however, "more a statement of policy than a substantial prohibition" because it basically "sought to secure the peace in public places rather than tackle covert racial violence" (Solanke 60). Similarly, in 1968, another Race Relations Act was passed to prevent racial discrimination but Afro-Caribbean migrants incessantly faced "populist vilifications" (Chamberlain 6).

Additionally, in the 1970s in Britain there was a misconception of the blacks—inclusive of not only Afro-Caribbeans but also African-Asians and Indians along with many others—as a group with the potential to commit crimes such as attacking and mugging people. Consequently, they were defined as potential criminals who deserved to be treated badly; they were stopped and searched in the street, especially in the mugging areas (Nicholas Abercrombie *et al.* 257-58). In Hall's description, Britain in the 1970s was "the land which they [Afro-Caribbean peoples] are *in* but they not *of*, the country of estrangement, dispossession and brutality" (*Policing* 357, emphasis in the original). Eva Ulrike Pirker explains that in the 1970s, especially after the enforcement of the stop and search law, there were "countless incidents of violence and deaths in custody" (12). During the Margaret Thatcher and John Major periods, from 1979 to 1997, this situation got worse. Thatcher, in a scandalous speech made on Granada TV in 1978, expressed her beliefs and fear that the British people were afraid of being "swamped by people with a different culture" and that "[British] people are going to be really rather hostile to those coming in" (n.p.). Thus, all these official and institutional discriminations against the blacks in Britain added up to a general hostility towards them in the 1980s, Afro-Caribbean peoples being not an exception to this formula.

Such racial injustices and violence committed against the second generation British Afro-Caribbean peoples created a strong sense of alienation and anxiety among them. Reflecting on the racist and discriminatory attitudes he faced and by extension on the British Afro-Caribbean diaspora in the 1970s, Fred D'Aguiar defines the Afro-Caribbean diaspora's predicament in Britain as "a nervous disposition coupled with a psychic tremulousness or sense of inadequacy in relation to time and place" (199). Indeed, many Afro-Caribbean people had the experience of being asked

> 'to go home where you come from,' and consequently found it difficult to acquire a firm sense of belonging in a nation which had welcomed their parent's generation—the so-called *Windrush*-generation—with housing signs proclaiming 'No dogs, No blacks' and generally indicated an unaccommodating and unfriendly attitude. (Mustad et al. 141, emphasis in the original)

Describing the second generation, Tariq Modood *et al*. explain that "[w]e found that most of the second generation […] found it difficult to call themselves 'British' because they felt that the majority of white people did not accept them as British because of their race or cultural background" (330). As a result of these discriminations, the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora could not develop a sense of belonging in Britain.

We observe that *The Fat* presents the second generation of British Afro-Caribbean peoples' present anxieties and difficulties which are compounded by their traumatic past of slavery. In other words, *The Fat* presents the British Afro-Caribbean community as haunted by the traumatic past of slavery in a society where they have social difficulties and feel alienated because of their racial difference. The collection constitutes four sections: "The Fat", "In Spite of Ourselves", "Back Home Contemplation" and "I is". In the last section, "I is", there are eight poems taken from Nichols's first collection, *I is*. This borrowing explicitly indicates the continuity of the trauma of enslaved Afro-Caribbeans in the present. Besides, the collection begins with the speaker identifying herself with the sun and the sea. In other words, *The Fat* starts with the description of the speaker by the sea, which denotes connections with the collective voice of *I is*, the representative of all black slave women forcibly taken from Africa and brought to the Caribbean over the Atlantic. Similarly, as we observe in the sections, “In Spite of Ourselves” and “Back Home Contemplation”, images and feelings associated with the traumatic experiences of slavery and the Middle Passage haunt the Afro-Caribbean speaker in Britain. What triggers her traumatic legacy is intolerance and discrimination expressed at racial and social levels, as will be discussed below.

In “Back Home Contemplation”, past traumas of Afro-Caribbean peoples are evinced through a spatialized practice of contemplation. When the British Afro-Caribbean speaker thinks about her ancestors, she realizes that elements of the Caribbean landscape are not limited to a single meaning but invested with heterogeneous meanings:

> There is more to heaven
> than meet the eye
> there is more to sea
> than watch the sky
> there is more to earth
> than dream the mind (41)

The speaker notices that “the heavens are blue”, “the sea is calm”, and “the earth is firm” but “the sun is murderous”, “the waves reap havoc”, “trees dance shadows / and bush eyes turn” (41). By conferring such painful and chaotic meanings onto the elements of the Caribbean landscape, the speaker refers to her ancestors’ trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery. More importantly, the Caribbean Sea is the eternal witness to the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean slaves during the Middle Passage. In “Sea Timeless Song”, the speaker underlines the continuity of the effects of these traumatic experiences in the present in the Caribbean: “Hurricane come / and hurricane go”, “hibiscus bloom / then dry-wither so” and “tourist come / and tourist go” but the “*sea* [is] *timeless*” (48, emphasis in the original). By repeating ‘sea timeless’ four times at the end of each of the three stanzas, the speaker emphasizes the fact that the sea, which attests both to the Middle Passage and the migration of Afro-Caribbean subjects to the UK, registers the continuity and persistence of the Afro-Caribbean peoples' trauma both in the past and in the present in Britain. Therefore, the speaker has to confront her ancestors' traumatic experiences of slavery and the Middle Passage as well as her migration from the Caribbean to Britain. For example, in "Winter Thoughts", the speaker is at pains to enshrine her memories of the sea, symbolizing her connections with the Caribbean Sea/Mother Nature in the image of her heart: "I've reduced the sea / to the throbbing fruit [her heart] / in me" (32). The Caribbean Sea is the witness not only to her distant traumatic past of slavery but also to her present. Therefore, the speaker does not affirm a distinction between the present and the past because the traumatic past of slavery continues to structure the present reality of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain. Further, the Caribbean Sea is well known as a famous tourist attraction, especially today. Considering this, Nichols's "Winter Thoughts" aims to jerk us into a realisation of what the Caribbean Sea holds; clearly, the Caribbean Sea is not an immaculate tourist attraction but home to the traumas of slavery and the Middle Passage.

Evidently, in *The Fat,* we observe that although many generations and miles away from the traumatic past of slavery and the Middle Passage, the poetic voice is psychically connected to her ancestors and their traumatic experiences. For example, in "We New World Blacks", the ghosts of the traumatic past of slavery and the Middle Passage surface again and again in the present lives of British Afro-Caribbean diaspora. The collective speaker states that "[h]owever far / [they]'ve been" and "whatever tongue / [they] speak," they are haunted by "the old ghost" that continues to "asser[t] itself / in dusky echoes / like driftwood / traces" (30). As Derrida argues, a ghost never dies and it remains to trigger our responsibility towards him/her (*Spectres* 123). In these lines, while the image of 'the old ghost' seems to refer to the souls of Africans who died during the Middle Passage, 'driftwood traces' might refer to pieces of wood left from the ships carrying the slaves. In other words, the haunting image of death is pervasive in the lives of Afro-Caribbean peoples who cannot dissociate themselves from their traumatic past. In this way, the poem conjures ghosts of slavery and thus proves the fact that the present is not free from the burdens of the past.

Hence, *The Fat* promotes a further understanding of and a more comprehensive negotiation with the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Among the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbeans is not only the distant past of slavery but also the more recent, even immediate traumatic past of previously colonized places such as Grenada, an island country in the Caribbean. The speaker, in “So the Eagle”, addresses the traumatic past of Grenada by describing its landscape as pounded by U.S. forces in both military and economic ways in the early 1980s. Maurice Bishop, the revolutionary leader and the Prime Minister of Grenada, had sought Cuban assistance to improve the economy of the island by building an airstrip for large military planes and tourist jets and by training military forces (Elliot and Reginald 124). However, the U.S. government became uneasy with this co-operation. Following the execution of Bishop by the members of his own party on October 19, 1983, more than 7,000 American troops were sent to occupy Grenada under the command of the U.S. President Ronald W. Reagan on October 23, 1983 (Smith and Davis 159). Reagan claimed that they aimed to rescue U.S. medical students living in Grenada and restore democratic rule but the real motive was to defeat the Marxist government in Grenada (Elliot and Reginald 124). “So the Eagle” directly refers to this attack and the collapse of the revolutionary government in Grenada in parenthesis, under the title: “(on the death of the Grenadian revolution)” (43). The eagle, the symbol of the United States and of air striking power, is “swooping on a revolution’s / remains” and, at the same time, is “winging bullets/burgers/ hot rescues / in the claws of its rein” (43). While bullets coexist with burgers, the symbol of American capitalism, hot rescues refer to the ostensible cause of invasion, that is, to save medical students. The poem’s address to the traumatic landscape of Grenada emphasizes the speaker’s inextricable connections with the traumatic past of her ancestors. In other words, the poem underlines the continuity of the effects of Grenada’s colonial past, its similarity to Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and its reflections on the present.

Obviously, through a closer look at the Caribbean Islands, we can see that the haven of home evokes traumatic sufferings of British Afro-Caribbean peoples, which conflates with their present problems in Britain. In “Price We Pay for the Sun”, we can observe the after-effects of Afro-Caribbean peoples’ traumatic losses. Contrary to what the tourists consider as mere “picture postcards,” Caribbean islands are “more real / than flesh and blood” (42). Besides, they are “past stone / past foam”, which implies that they are more than what seems to be a piece of island where waves create foams. In fact, “these islands split / bone” (42). Evidently, the Caribbean landscape is the embodiment of the traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean peoples who lost their lives through brutal practices symbolized through bone splitting. In other words, the poem presents the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. The psychological heritage of these traumatic experiences is traceable to the wounds of the speaker’s father and mother. In “Price We Pay for the Sun”, while “the wind [is] / constantly whipping / [her] father’s tears,” her mother suffers from “cancer tricking her / below” (42). The speaker’s description of the Caribbean as a place evoking sorrow and pain rather than being a place of waves and foams marks the Caribbean as the witness to a traumatic past of bone splitting. Evidently, in *The Fat*, traumatic experiences of slavery and the Middle Passage conflate with present difficulties of the second generation Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain and with continuing colonizing types of political behaviour in the Caribbean. In other words, the collection juxtaposes the second generation British Afro-Caribbean peoples’ present social and political difficulties with their traumatic past.

One of the effects of this conflation of traumatic past and present problems is the continued alienation experienced by the second generation of British Afro-Caribbean peoples. As argued above, these people yield to feelings of anxiety and are detached from their wider society because their present difficulties activate traumatic memories of the Middle Passage and slavery (Arnold 2). Similarly, as a result of her anxieties and gradually increasing rage, the speaker in *The Fat*, starts to suffer from a sense of alienation in Britain which is inextricably linked with her traumatic past. In “Fear”, the speaker states that she neither belongs to the host society where “our [diaspora’s] culture rub skin / against your [the host’s] own / bruising awkward as plums” (28) nor to the homeland where “mangoes fall to the ground / [and] politicians turn cruel clowns” (28). The speaker feels estranged from the host society while at the same time longing for her homeland. However, her homeland is not strong enough to provide political solutions for her problems.[21] Besides, the discriminatory and condescending attitude of the host society perpetuates her uneasiness: “‘Are you going back sometime?'" (28), she is asked (Mustad *et al.* 141). Such unaccommodating and unsympathetic behaviour of the host society represents Thatcher's assumption that since British people were afraid of being overwhelmed by the presence of immigrants, they would definitely be hostile to these new comers. The speaker's response to this disdainful question underpins her predicament: "home is where the heart   lies" (28). As D'Aguiar contends, Afro-Caribbean peoples go through a nervous disposition which gets worse with a feeling of disquietude (199). By leaving a space between the words "heart" and "lies", Nichols presents Afro-Caribbean peoples' agitation and anxiety in Britain. It might be argued that Nichols underlines the difference between the heart and where it emotionally lies.

We observe a similar feeling of disquietude in "Spring" in which the speaker is alienated by the host society's condescending and indifferent attitudes represented by daffodils, a typically English flower, associated especially with English poetry from the age of slavery. The speaker notes that spring does not bring any hope and/or consolation to her. After surviving "two unpredictable spells / of influenza that winter", she does not have the simple energy "even to put the rubbish outside" (34). Throughout the whole winter, she has been doing little more than "pulling on [her] old black jacket / [and] resolutely winding / a scarf round and round [her] neck" (34). Vicki Bertram argues that the speaker's "hibernation is obviously a reaction to both literal and metaphorical coldness" (1). More importantly, Afro-Caribbean peoples experience insecurity because of the racist hostility in the host society which is connected with their traumatic past. Apparently, the speaker is alienated from the host society because she is reminded of her Afro-Caribbean origins and positioned accordingly. Also, the speaker's alienation is germane to Hall's description of Britain in the 1970s as the land where Afro-Caribbean peoples are disposed and vulnerable to racism (*Policing* 357). When the speaker finally has the courage to step outside, the first thing is "to have that daffodil baby / kick [her] in the eye" (34). The daffodil that meets her is evocative of Wordsworth's daffodils, "the symbol of English poetic diction" (Bertram 2). While Wordsworth's daffodils are "fluttering and dancing in the breeze" (285) in harmony with the movements of the speaker, Nichols' daffodils kick the speaker in the eye. In other words, daffodils come to represent the speaker's sense of otherness in Britain.

Besides her anxieties and alienation, the speaker feels rage building up inside her because of the resurrection of her traumatic past. For example, in “Small Questions Asked by the Fat Black Woman”, past atrocities and conflicts incessantly plague the speaker’s life: She wonders if “the rains / [will] cleanse the earth of shrapnel / and wasted shells” (23), which refer to the wars in her homeland or in the world in general and their post traumatic effects. After such devastations, she doubts if “the seas / [will] toss up bright fish / in wave on wave of toxic shoal” (23) but knows that “the shore [is] / feeding slowly the greying / angry roots” (23). Evidently, the speaker oscillates between hope and despair because her atrocious past perpetuates some kind of rage and aggression growing deep inside her. Also, she is unable to enjoy the natural scenery and beauty without linking them to forms of destruction.

Similar to *The Fat*, in *Lazy Thoughts*, we observe that the legacies of the collective trauma Middle Passage and slavery haunt Afro-Caribbean people in Britain. In *Lazy Thoughts*, the continuity of the collective trauma is best represented in “Out of Africa” which establishes the identity of the speaker representing collective trauma. The poem achieves this by structurally and thematically representing Afro-Caribbean peoples’ trauma of dislocation through three stanzas describing Africa, the Caribbean, and England successively. The traumatic effect of dislocation is fostered by the repetitions of “out of Africa” at the beginning of each line in the first stanza and “into the Caribbean” in the second and “into England” in the third stanza (30). The speaker of the poem moves out of Africa and builds associations with her mother: “the first rains, the first mother” (30). As Cohen contends, Afro-Caribbean peoples keep loyal to their African identity no matter where they settle in (144-45). By calling Africa as her first mother, the speaker shows her loyalty to her African origins. At the same time, however, the speaker knows that Africa, “the tired woman in earrings,” has a painful past (30). From the difficulties of Africa, such as hunger, the speaker moves into another difficulty in the Caribbean: “[S]taggeringly blue sea-eye” and “the flame, the palm tree, / the ackee, the high smelling salt fish” meet the speaker in the Caribbean. Also, “the baleful tourist glare” and “the hurricane” make her life even worse (30). Obviously, neither the tourists coming to the Caribbean nor its nature welcome the newly arriving speaker, the representative of Afro-Caribbean peoples. Thus, the

Caribbean is a place which does not offer any hospitality to them. Similarly, when they move into England, they face the difficulties of living in England. Upon their arrival in England, Afro-Caribbean peoples meet with “the frost and the tea” and “the budgie and the strawberry” while, at the same time, they face “the trampled autumn tongues” and “the meagre funerals” (30). The Afro-Caribbean speaker meets with the English way of living represented in the cold and rainy atmosphere of the city and thus has difficulty in adapting to her new life in Britain (Cohen 145). Evidently, the speaker, in “Out of Africa”, is discontented with typical English funeral ceremonies. Thus, the poem represents Afro-Caribbean peoples who have difficulty in adapting to the cultural values of England and the English way of life. More importantly, the collective speaker’s dislocation from the Caribbean to England activates her trauma of dislocation from Africa to the Caribbean. In effect, the speaker’s collective traumatic heritage of her ancestors is activated by her exile in England.

In *Lazy Thoughts*, what activates traumatic heritage of Afro-Caribbean people in Britain is the discrimination set against them at social and racial levels, which is similar to *The Fat*. In other words, in *Lazy Thoughts,* we observe the inextricable link between the continuity of the collective traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people and discrimination and disquietude experienced by them in Britain. For example, in “Cosmic Spite”, we observe that the speaker complains of the condescending attitude of the host society towards Afro-Caribbean peoples by labelling them as “the people, ‘third in the world’” (34). Evidently, they are seen as peripheral and inferior to the dominant world powers. Besides, they have had to fight against natural disasters such as “the hurricane, the floods, the famines, / the droughts” as well as “foreign debts” (34). Obviously, not only people but also nature has been merciless to them. As the title of the poem suggests, Afro-Caribbean peoples are exposed to cosmic hatred. Accordingly, the lazy woman feels that she does not belong to England. As we observe in “Wherever I Hang,” the speaker feels divided between the host land and her homeland: “To tell you de truth / I don’t know really where I belaang” (10). The speaker’s overwhelming dilemma of (un)belonging to a place represents double consciousness as argued by Nayar: The speaker is caught between two spaces and cultures (165). In other words, the speaker’s diasporic condition in Britain represents her “polycentrism” between her homeland and the host country (Safran 76). After leaving her home in the Caribbean which she identifies with “de humming-bird splendour” and “big rats in de floorboard,” the lazy woman “come[s] to this place call England” (10). The first experience she has is “feeling like [she] in dream— / De misty greyness” as opposed to the sun in the Caribbean (10). Everything in the new land seems to be very different from her homeland: She touches “de walls to see if they real” and sees “de people pouring from de underground system / Like beans” (10). Gradually, she discards her “calypso ways” peculiar to her homeland and “never visit[s] nobody / before giving them clear warning” (10). Although she “get[s] accustom to de English life,” she “still miss[es] back-home side” (10). Furthermore, she feels “divided to de ocean / divided to de bone” (10). The word “divided” gives us the idea that the speaker in “Wherever I Hang” feels split between her homeland and the host land neither of which she feels like home. More importantly, being divided to bones explicitly has connections with the traumatic journey over the Atlantic when Afro-Caribbean people suffered from brutal treatments. Hence, Nichols presents the collectivity of Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic experiences moving from the Caribbean to Britain in the present.

The collectivity of Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic experiences is also evident in their distant and immediate past. To begin with their distant past, it seems that the after effects of slavery are ever present in their lives. For example, in “Dead Ya Fuh Tan”, the only thing left for the speaker is to acknowledge her ancestors’ traumatic experiences in the Caribbean. She is estranged from the society when she sees people sunbathing: “If me na been come ya / Me na been know / People a dead ya fuh tan” (11). The speaker is astonished when she sees “dem a lie on rock / dem a lie on sand” and “dem a buy sunbed / dem a buy lotion / People a dead ya fuh tan” (11). Obviously, the speaker views the Caribbean as a holiday place but also considers its relation to the traumatic past of her ancestors who were brutally killed because of the colour of their skin. This traumatic effect is achieved through the employment of the elements of Caribbean landscape such as rocks and the sand, the witnesses to the brutal deaths of the slaves. Therefore, we can observe the fact that traumatic history of her ancestors haunts the British Afro-Caribbean speaker although she lives centuries and miles away from the Caribbean. In addition to her distant past, the speaker acknowledges her immediate traumatic past such as in Guyana. In “Walking with my Brother in Georgetown”, the speaker refers to the traumatic Jonestown massacre of 1978 in Guyana and the Caribbean landscape testifies to this trauma. While walking with her brother in Georgetown, the speaker sees “dih city dying” with the streets, houses, everything, and everybody looking “suh rundown” and “stamp wid dih dry ah hunger” (39). During her absence, the landscape of her lost homeland has incontestably changed to a great extent. As her brother repeatedly tells her “You been away too long girl” (39), which has estranged her from the realities of her homeland. She believes that what they need is “a purging / new fires burning / some incense” (39). The speaker’s anger is quite similar to the speaker’s anger in “Small Questions Asked by the Fat Black Woman” in *The Fat*. Furthermore, the speaker, in “Walking with my Brother in Georgetown”, believes that they need “a new blooding / an boning” because there are “too many deaths unmourning / Jonestown, Walter” (40). Welsh argues that these lines refer to Jonestown massacre of 1978 and the assassination of Dr Walter Rodney, the leader of the multiracial Marxist Party, in 1980 (104). Past sufferings haunt the present realities of the speaker who becomes aware of them upon her visit to the Caribbean after a long time. The speaker seems to be making Jonestown massacre into an integral part of the Caribbean traumatic past. The final stanza reads “maybe I lying / maybe I dying” which signifies present and past sufferings haunting the homeland. In other words, the final stanza registers the traumatic past symbolized by Jonestown massacre which still plagues the speaker’s life.

As in *I is,* Nichols, in *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts,* presents not only trauma but also trauma coping strategies of Afro-Caribbean people. In order to cope with their traumatic heritage activated by their present racial and social problems in Britain, Afro-Caribbean speakers, in *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts,* reconstruct the Caribbean as a place of nostalgia. As a word derived from two Greek roots, *nostos*, “return to one’s native land” and *algos*, “pain”, the term nostalgia was coined by Johannes Hofer in his 1688 thesis *Dissertia Medica de Nostalgia* (Su 180). Hofer was working on the young Swiss living abroad when he observed their disease with symptoms of grief and longing for their native land: “the disease appeared to spread from the brain through the body, the sufferer’s afflicted imagination having been aroused by the idea of the recalled native land, resulting in nausea, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, fever, cardiac arrest, and even attempted suicide” (Walder 8). Hofer decided that the only way they could recover was an immediate “return to the homeland, although drugs could mitigate the condition” (8). Rather than on such somatic symptoms, the current definition of nostalgia depends more on a psychological and psychiatric discourse. As defined by *New Oxford English Dictionary*, “nostalgia” is “a sentimental longing, or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations” (1266). From a different yet interrelated perspective, Svetlana Boym figures it as “the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility” (xvi). Similarly, drawing on Milan Kundera’s description of nostalgia as “the suffering caused by the unappeased longing to return,” (5) Maria-Antonia Oliver-Rotger argues that nostalgia “implies a yearning for a lost culture and way of life, for the happy experiences of childhood, for landscapes and sensorial experiences, oftentimes described as untouched by modernity” (2). Consequently, what these definitions have in common is that nostalgia is engaged with a sense of displacement from and a deep longing and mourning for a previous time and place.

As such, nostalgia has both positive and negative connotations for trauma and nostalgia studies. On the one hand, some nostalgia and trauma scholars criticise nostalgia because it connotes sentimentality and mourning. Susan Stewart, one of the most important nostalgia critics, describes nostalgia as a “social disease” (23). Similarly, John J. Su argues that there are risks of nostalgia which might be used “to conceal social tensions and to construct falsely idealized pasts” (143). In terms of trauma, Dominick LaCapra, in *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (1998), states that “one particularly dubious phenomenon is the nostalgic, sentimental turn to a partly fictionalized past that is conveyed in congenially ingratiating, safely conventionalized narrative form” (8). In other words, LaCapra argues that nostalgic people wallow in their traumatic experiences instead of trying to work them through.

On the other hand, however, nostalgia has the potential to heal the effects of one’s traumatic past because it provides the possibility to imagine an alternative past by drawing on blissful experiences. In other words, nostalgic longing for one’s blissful past is a trauma coping strategy. Julia Hell contends that trauma triggers nostalgia (914). In her analysis of German society, Hell argues that many former East Germans started to long for German Democratic Republic after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This was mainly because they were traumatised and needed to construct a new identity (911-14). Drawing on Hell, Su contends that nostalgia is “a necessary and often productive response to trauma” which restructures “how individuals experience the past” (143). In other words, nostalgia is “the longing to reconstruct a simplified and unproblematic past as a means of avoiding confrontation with unpleasant realities in the present” (143). Nostalgia achieves this by interweaving “imagination, longing, and memory” (3). In this way, nostalgic discourse provides “a useful response to the trauma of embittered history” (146). Yet, working through one’s traumatic past by employing nostalgia does not necessarily involve restoring things lost. As Su argues,

> [nostalgia] demands a sensitivity to the memories of loss that remain. Appeasing an embittered history requires an act of imagination that is also and always an act of commitment: to imagine the world in terms that recognize its inevitable traumas without conceding that history itself is traumatic and to recollect past suffering as a guide for imagining future promise. (171-72)

Strictly speaking, nostalgic imaginations have the potential to recognize the inevitability of traumatic histories and address them from an alternative perspective whereby a better future world can be imagined.

Accordingly, formerly colonized and traumatized diaspora use nostalgia to heal their sufferings. As Walder argues, they have recourse to nostalgia to cast “a beneficent glow over past suffering and anxiety” or as the vehicle that “admits the past into the present in a fragmentary, nuanced, and elusive way, allowing a potential for self-reflexivity or irony” (16). Further, nostalgia is an excellent vehicle to revalue their historical realities: “The more conscious we are of our own nostalgia, the more we reflect upon it, the more aware we may become of our history” (9). From an interrelated perspective, Oliver-Rotger underlines the healing power of nostalgia through its imaginative and creative agency:

> [Nostalgia] offers the possibility of revisiting a place through the imagination in order to escape and resist an unbearable present of colonial violence, the possibility of recreating a place and a past one never visited that substitute for non-existent

> personal and collective memories, as well as the possibility of speculating on historical alternatives. (12)

Therefore, nostalgia has the potential to heal “the pain of rootlessness” by imagining another blissful place and an alternative history (11). In other words, delving into nostalgia paves the way for redressing the traumatic past such as in the case of Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain.

Afro-Caribbean people in Britain, who have to confront their inherited trauma of slavery and present social difficulties such as alienation nostalgically imagine their homelands in the Caribbean as an alternative place to heal their wounds. As Davis argues for many Afro-Caribbean diasporas their Caribbean home becomes “a place where they could belong [to]” (192). Through the power of their nostalgic imagination, they fashion the Caribbean as a safe and welcoming home for themselves. The reason why they do this is “to retain a valid identity, creating a sub-culture in which belonging and safety are possible” which is, in fact, “a creative strategy that prevents psychotic or neurotic illness” (192). Besides, their strong feelings of attachment to their homeland are mainly because of their aspirations to become conversant with their cultural and ethnic heritage and to overcome social marginalization and racial discrimination that they are exposed to in the UK (Stephenson 63).[22]

In *The Fat*, nostalgia provides Nichols with a rhetorical mode of re-evaluating Afro-Caribbean traumatic past by recasting it within an alternative world, even if it is temporarily.[23] For example, in “Island Man”, Nichols presents a Caribbean man in London who “wakes up / to the sound of blue surf / in his head” (29). Obviously, the island man imagines being back in the Caribbean, “his small emerald island”, where “wild seabirds / and fishermen pushing out to sea / the sun surfacing defiantly” render a nostalgic and peaceful atmosphere but he gradually realizes that he is in London where “a grey metallic soar”, a “surge of wheels”, and a “dull North Circular roar” surround him (29). Concerning the predicament of the island man, Nichols states that

> ‘Island Man’ came because I myself woke up and the kind of ‘swoosh’ of traffic, the big industrial lorries going by […] reminded me of the sound of the sea back home. So the idea for the poem came from that, of having this island man wake up and think he’s back in the Caribbean. In actual fact he’s very much in London. “The Poetry of Grace Nichols, Programme 3”

As Nichols states, the island man subtly yearns for his homeland but sees to the harsh realities of the region which he does not feel a part of. Yet, nostalgic imagining of his homeland in the Caribbean provides a source of relief for the island man even though it lasts for a short time. Similarly, Nichols, in *The Fat*, presents the significance of childhood memories, people and places which initiate nostalgic feelings. In ‘Like a Beacon,” for example, the speaker craves for her mother’s food, plantains, saltfish, and sweet potatoes because she needs “this touch / of home” (27). Similarly, in “Those Women,” she articulates her yearning for her homeland in her description of the women in her childhood who are catching fresh shrimps while at the same time “standing waist deep / in the brown voluptuous / water of their own element” (39). The fish they try to catch are slipping “through their laughing thighs” (39). Such pleasurable images of fishing women are “sweeping in the childish rivers / of [her] eyes” (39). It seems that the image of the women in water, a fundamental element of Caribbean landscape, provokes a longing for her homeland. Instead of evoking the traumatic past of her ancestors, the speaker’s nostalgic imaginations cast a blissful meaning onto the Caribbean.

Through the power of her imagination and memory eschewed in her nostalgic yearning, the speaker, in *The Fat*, clearly tries to recover from a traumatic past. Such an attempt can be observed in “Childhood,” a poem which describes her childhood as a “watershed of sunlight / and strange recurring mysteries” (40). One of these mysteries is “the fishes [that] before a drought / came in droves / floundering at [their] backdoors” (40). Referring to the postcolonial Christian education at Sunday school, the speaker complains that “[they] didn’t learn to pray / for the dying freshwater souls of fish” (40). As a diaspora living in Britain, the speaker remembers the traumatic oppression of Christianity on their lives. By contrasting the abundant fish in the Caribbean to her loss of cultural values in Britain, the speaker expresses how much she craves for her joyous childhood days in her motherland; the miracles of her homeland have been suppressed by her diasporic life. By enabling the speaker to interweave imagination and memory, nostalgia helps her to reconsider what she has lost in Britain. On these grounds, the speaker, in “Childhood”, reconstructs the Caribbean as an alternative haven, which helps to fight against their alienation and anxiety in Britain and to restore the Caribbean as a place of peace and happiness.

Further, the use of nostalgia in *The Fat* enables the possibility of speculating on the things that could be done in order to heal Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic past and to provide a relief even if it is momentary. Nichols achieves this in “Two Old Black Men on a Leicester Square Park Bench”. The speaker meets two old black men sitting on park benches and thinking about the things they could have done in their homeland. They dream “revolutions” they could have achieved and “mourn” some beautiful women they could have loved (35). Evidently, they resort to nostalgia in order to cast a glow over their past sufferings and anxieties. In two old black men’s case, the Caribbean is visited through the power of nostalgic imagination whereby the speaker can speculate on historical alternatives (Oliver-Rotger 12). In other words, nostalgia is deployed with the aim of recognizing and healing the traumatic past of the Caribbean.
Similar to the employment of nostalgia in *The Fat*, in *Lazy Thoughts*, Nichols employs nostalgia for the reconstruction of Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic past in the Caribbean. For example, in “Child-Kingdom”, we see that the lazy woman nostalgically remembers her childhood and calls herself a “God-child” who surveys “all the brown waters” (42). Furthermore, “cows sang for [her] / dogs heralded [her] / sheep parted at [her] coming” (42). She is like a god commanding the earth in her homeland. In other words, rather than focusing on the traumatic events in the Caribbean, the speaker emphasizes the idyllic aspects of the Caribbean. Similarly, in “Conkers”, remembering her childhood brings along happy memories she seems to have lost in the host land. Seeing “an English schoolboy / picking them [conkers] up—” reminds her of her childhood when she collected “orange-coloured cockles / way back then / from a tropical childhood tree” (47). Obviously, in the host land, the speaker, as a grown-up, has lost her infant “instinct / for gathering the magic shed of trees” except for parties “in wineful spirits” when they “dance around crying / ‘Give me back my conker’” (47). Therefore, she imagines being back in her childhood place in “Emerald Heart”:

"journey[ing] deep / into the emerald heart / of [her] country" where she "ate labba / drank creek water" and enjoyed "the irredeemable beauty" (41). As stated in the footnote to this poem, there is a Guyanese belief that if someone eats labba (wild meat) and drinks creek water, s/he has a chance to return to Guyana (41). Thus, the speaker implies how much she misses and wants to return to her childhood and homeland. More importantly, the speaker adopts a more positive attitude towards her nostalgically remembered homeland in the Caribbean. Similar to *The Fat*, Nichols finds nostalgia appealing in *Lazy Thoughts* because the articulation of the Caribbean as it could have been provides the image of an alternative historical reality. In "Emerald Heart", the speaker weeps like a peasant woman "for all the harvests / that could have been" (41). Obviously, she yearns for possible fertile days in her homeland, which is similar to two old black men in "Two Old Black Men on a Leicester Square Park Bench" in *The Fat* who also yearn for possible joyous days in their homeland in the Caribbean. As Su argues, nostalgia enables individuals to reconsider what they have lost and to verbalise their disappointments and frustrations with present circumstances (9). In line with this, nostalgia, in "Emerald Heart", helps the speaker to restructure how she experiences her present reality in relation to her traumatic past. In effect, she has the possibility to ruminate over historical possibilities to get relief even if it works only temporarily. (Oliver-Rotger 12)

Further, as nostalgia is the amalgamation of memory, longing, and imagination (Su 3), it helps the speaker to cast alternative meanings onto the traumatic landscape of the Caribbean and conceive resolutions to her dilemmas of displacement simultaneously. We observe such agency of nostalgia in "With Glenda in Brixton Park". While the speaker and Glenda walk together in Brixton Park, Glenda suddenly takes a stroll down her memory lane and the speaker "glance[s] quickly at the new-found fortitude / on her [Glenda's] face" (49). Glenda imagines that she is "clothesless / husbandless / babyless" and finds strength when "her dark limbs / [are] hitting once more / the blue Caribbean sea" (49). In other words, Glenda underlines the beauties of her pre-migration life in the Caribbean and refuses to be identified according to her physical appearance, marital status and babies. It should also be noted that there is a constant reconstructing going on in these lines. In contrast to what colonisation and migration have turned the Caribbean

Sea into, Glenda confers alternative meanings onto it and redefines the Caribbean Sea as a place of strength and power through the instrumentality of her nostalgic longing. In doing so, she attempts at subduing the horrific experiences of the Caribbean instead of being traumatized by them.

Besides nostalgia, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* give grotesque bodies of the speakers the task of healing British Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past of slavery. Conceptualisations of the grotesque body are mostly built on Mikhail Bakhtin's definitions and arguments. According to Bakhtin, grotesque body "is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" as seen "in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking and defecation" (*Rabelais* 26). The grotesque body, with an emphasis on the lower parts of the body that are open to the outside world (the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose), is symbolically united to the sphere of earth, which now acquires a paradoxical nature: "Earth is an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb) and at the same time an element of birth, of renascence (the maternal breasts)" (21). While the upper part includes the face and the head, the lower part is the genital organs, the belly and the buttocks, which are all used in grotesque images (21). Accordingly, "degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is […] to bring forth something more and better" (21). Degradation, in this sense, suggests regeneration through earth because the grotesque body's openness to the world is "deeply positive" (19).

Drawing on Bakhtin's arguments, Lyn Marven, a critic analysing the works of Eastern Bloc authors traumatized under socialist regimes, delves into the function of the grotesque body in the representations of trauma and ways of coping with it. To begin with, Marven defines the grotesque as "the result of an encounter with something which threatens our perceptions of the world" and provokes "a perpetual dialectic of setting up and destroying expectations" rather than a "total destruction of order and expectations" (48). Therefore, grotesque has an ambiguous and dual structure: it evokes "fear and laughter, fascination and horror or disgust" (48) and, in the same vein, it "disrupts, but also confirms the strength of social norms and cultural signification" (49). Marven argues that the effects of trauma are "refracted" in the grotesque which is, in fact, "a form of resistance of its [trauma's] effects" (43). In Marven's words, "the grotesque, an ambivalent mode, is both a refusal of trauma and a first step towards admitting it" (248). What Marven suggests is that grotesque is both a tool to challenge trauma and to heal it by evoking laughter and fascination. Drawing an analogy between grotesque and trauma, Marven contends that the distorted human body is central to both of them. She argues that "trauma is a response to overwhelming events, and its effects disrupt body images as well as use of language and narrative structures" while "the grotesque is a literary mode whose force derives from the transgressive body, which also implicates language" (10). Moreover, she contends that traumatic affect transforms "perceptions of the body as well as use of language and the concept of narrative" and "the disjunction of outward appearance and internal constructs, between deeds and thoughts, mirrors behaviour under repressive regimes; it is a symptom of trauma" (8). Marven explains that main characteristics of the grotesque body are "metamorphosed, distorted, or unstable human bodies; the grotesque body transgresses its limits, calling into question the stability of the body's borders and its proportions" (49). Thus, in grotesque descriptions, a person imagined as an "an object" rather than "a thinking subject" disrupts our expectations of the human being and "the alienation of the body from consciousness is an effect of trauma" (49). Marven argues that this is the intersection point of trauma and the grotesque: "the grotesque is the external counterpart to trauma's internal disorder; it is acted out on the body as trauma acts on the psyche. Put another way, what is imagined in trauma is represented visibly and literally in the grotesque" (49).

The use of grotesque body as a trauma coping mechanism is interrelated with the excessive nature of trauma, as conceptualised by Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau. Onega and Ganteau have made a distinguishable contribution to trauma poetics by analysing romance strategies as an indispensable part of trauma fiction in general and traumatic realism in particular. By drawing out similarities between romance and trauma in terms of their ethical and deconstructive powers, they argue that writers have recourse to romance when realism fails to describe and explain limit-case situations (“Introduction: Traumatic Realism” 2). Romance as a mode has been an important part of sentimental literature as well as of the Gothic, the fantastic, and the spectral tradition, which have a contrary status to “the reassuring transparency of realism, by promoting subversion and disarticulation, shunning reality and totality the better to leave for openness and the paroxystic expression of the irrational” (3). This tendency to avoid reality and open a space for the expression of the irrational can be also seen in the literary representations of trauma. Onega and Ganteau argue that trauma is “characteristically registered as a surplus of affects that cannot be accounted for or channelled properly” and that it “always has an element that remains *in excess* of representation and understanding” (7, emphasis in the original). In order to clarify their arguments, they remind us of Michael Rothberg’s concept of traumatic realism, a type of contemporary trauma narrative which is by its combination of “documentation and historical cognition attuned to the demands of extremity” (14). Drawing on Rothberg, Anne Whitehead argues that since “the real can no longer appear directly or be expressed in a conventional realist mode” writers of trauma literature have had to go beyond realistic descriptions “in order to suggest that traumatic knowledge cannot be fully communicated or retrieved without distortion” (*Trauma Fiction* 84).

In keeping with the arguments about the excessive nature of trauma, the grotesque body that is unfinished and that transgresses its own limits can be employed to heal traumatic affects. In this regard, the grotesque body has two functions. Firstly, it may be employed as a platform to re-negotiate traumatic events, which are in excess of representation and understanding and, secondly, the humorous element in grotesque provides possibilities for healing traumatic affects. In other words, by provoking a distorted view of reality and arousing shock and laughter at the same time, the grotesque body acts as a space to represent the unrepresentable traumatic experiences through its excessive nature which is also inherent in these traumatic experiences and, at the same time, it provides possibilities for the regeneration and healing of such experiences through its humorous tone. Andrew S. Gross and Susanne Rohr, in their analysis of the function of humour in the representations of trauma, argue that humour and laughter are used “as an approximation of the unrepresentable and unsayable” (69) and as “manifestation of the unsayable, laughter becoming—much like the scream—a point where language materializes itself as sound without content" (76). Similarly, Marven argues that "humour is a key element of the grotesque, which is both a prelude to dealing with trauma and a measure of having overcome it. Laughter can signal denial (distance as defence mechanism), or sovereignty" (249-50).

We observe that Nichols, in "The Fat"—the title section of *The Fat*—presents a fat black woman whose grotesque body acts as the vehicle to heal Afro-Caribbean people's trauma with a particular focus on black slave women. Nichols achieves this by drawing an analogy between a famous slave woman, the South African slave Sara (or Saartjie) Baartman and the fat black woman. Janell Hobson, in *Venus in the Dark* (2005), traces the trauma of the slave women to the nineteenth century when Sara Baartman's body was exhibited in freak shows highlighting her 'large' buttocks and was exposed to scientific experimentation; after her death, her brain and genital organs were dissected and preserved to illustrate racial and sexual differences between the Africans and the Europeans (1). The slave Baartman, also nicknamed "the Hottentot Venus", was brought to England and France for public exhibition between 1810 and 1815, and symbolized both the presumed ugliness and heightened sexuality of the African women during her era. "Steatopygia" was the term used to describe the "protruding buttocks" of the black, slave women. It was only in 2002 that Baartman's remains were given back to her country of origin (1). Similar to the Hottentot Venus, Nichols, in the title section "The Fat", draws the portrayal of a fat black woman with a grotesque body with one major difference; the fat black woman's mountainous body gradually becomes one with the elements of nature in order to challenge and heal her traumatic past. In the opening poem, "Beauty", the tropical landscape seems to welcome the fat black woman. She is "walking the fields" and "pressing a breezed / hibiscus / to her cheek" while "the sun lights up / her feet" (7). She is not suffering from the trauma of slavery but is, "riding the waves / [and] drifting in happy oblivion" (7). Evidently, the fat black woman starts to heal her traumatic legacy: The sea "turns back / to hug her [the fat black woman's] shape" (7). In other words, the fat black woman is not confined to the shackles of slavery but is ready to work through traumatic legacy of slavery by uniting with the elements of nature. In Bakhtinian terms, the fat black woman becomes one with the mother earth which is an element of birth and renascence (*Rabelais* 21). Thus, her grotesque body is the means through which she is freed from her traumatic past of slavery.

Besides her union with nature, the fat black woman's body gradually becomes mountainous which conforms to the descriptions of the grotesque body. In "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping", we can observe that the fat black woman is confined within the limits of London which does not offer many choices for her huge size and desperately searches for something throughout "all this journeying and journeying" (11). The motif of this continuous journeying recalls the Middle Passage while the shopping she does by going from one store to another refers to her condition of exile in England. Neither "de weather [that is] so cold" nor "de pretty face salesgals / [that are] exchanging slimming glances / thinking she don't notice" are friendly to her; they seem to look down on her fatness, which is expressed in their contemptuous smiles (11). As a response to this othering and disdainful attitude, she "curses in Swahili/Yoruba / and nation language under her breathing" (11). Not only her body outgrows itself but also her language goes beyond the limits of the hegemony of English because she curses the people around her in her mother tongue. She desperately searches for something that is "soft and bright and billowing / to flow like breezy sunlight / when she [is] walking", but in the end she concludes "that when it come[s] to fashion / the choice is lean / Nothing much beyond size 14" (11). Evidently, she is othered by the society because of her huge body. In response to this othering attitude, the fat black woman appreciates her hugeness. For example, in "Assertion", we see that the fat black woman's body is "heavy as a whale" and "ringed in folds" (8). Far from feeling ashamed because of her largeness, the fat black woman claims that "*this is my birthright*" (8, emphasis in the original). In this way, her body becomes a space where she could reclaim and reform her largeness and view her grotesque body as authentic. In other words, there is an acceptance of her grotesque body. Similarly, while sitting in silence, in "Alone," she is "gathering / gathering / into herself / onto herself" (10).[24] In the second stanza written separately from the first, the image of "gathering" is underlined by repeating it six times. Consequently, the topographical arrangement and the stanzaic repetition of the image of "gathering" seem to underpin the fat black woman's body becoming colossal.

Her body thus becomes the grotesque body described by Bakhtin as unfinished and outgrowing itself (*Rabelais* 26).

By cherishing her splendidly excessive and fertile body, the fat black woman shows resilience against all traumas imposed on her by anthropology, history, theology, and the beauty industry. For example, in "Thoughts drifting through the fat black woman's head while having a full bubble bath," the fat black woman defines herself as "steatopygous me" by comparing her largeness to that of the sky, the sea and the waves, "steatopygous sky / steatopygous sea / steatopygous waves" (15), which certainly enhances the links between the woman and nature. Besides, the unusually long title of the poem and the topographical arrangement of the lines underpin the grotesqueness of the fat black woman; it is through such a long title and enjambments that going beyond the boundaries of the speaker's corporeal existence is performed. From an interrelated perspective, the transgressive nature of the fat black woman's grotesque body implicates the use of language (Marven 10). In so doing, the poem edges towards using the speaker's body as a place for traversing the limits imposed on her. During her full bubble bath, she imagines that with her grotesque body she will "place [her] foot / on the head of anthropology", "swig [her] breasts / in the face of history", "scrub [her] back / with the dogma of theology" and "put [her] soap / in the slimming industry's / profitsome spoke" (15). Thus, the fat black woman reveres her sexuality and her mountainous look. One of the most important tenets of the continuity of such traumatic experiences is embedded in the way present Afro-Caribbean peoples, especially women, treat their own sexuality. In *The Fat*, we observe that there is an attempt at healing such symptoms of the continuity of their trauma. Evidently, Nichols employs the grotesque body to re-negotiate traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean people. As Marven argues, the grotesque body destroys our expectations and disrupts the strength of cultural significations (48). Thus, traumatic effects are refracted by the agency of the grotesque body as in the case of the fat black woman.

The fat black woman also employs the humorous aspect of her grotesque body to cope with the trauma of her ancestors passed down to her. For example, in "Invitation," she adopts a humorous attitude towards her hugeness and provokes laughter in the reader.

She rejects trying to change her appearance according to the standards of slenderness: “If my fat / was too much for me / […] / I would have dieted / more care than a diabetic” (12). In a playful manner, she goes against the grain of slimness and appreciates her “huge exciting” breasts, which are like “amnions of watermelon” and her thighs, which are like “twin seals / fat slick pups” (13). When considering the humorous elements in her collection and the adverse criticisms directed against it, Nichols states that “things are put in a funny way because the laughter and the humour is healing and is very much part of Caribbean people” (Butcher 18). Nichols’s comment makes clear how laughter as a trauma coping mechanism is embedded in the fat woman’s black culture. In other words, regarding the humorous tone in this collection as merely frivolous would obfuscate its role as a trauma coping strategy expressed by the fat black woman’s positive attitude to her grotesque body. More importantly, the fat black woman’s body turns out to be her space to overturn oppressions because she is happy about her physical appearance rather than feeling ashamed of herself.

Accordingly, the fat black woman’s celebration of her grotesque body as a trauma healing strategy brings considerable hope for future generations. We observe such a hopeful attitude in “Trap Evasions”, too. The fat black woman accepts her grotesque body that has the potential for fertility. The fat black woman argues that while her suitors see “a spring of children / in her thighs”, there are, in fact, “mountains / in her mites” (14). In the fat black woman’s case, her grotesque body is sure to give birth to numerous children and bring renewal. The fat black woman as the symbol of mother earth has the potential to heal the traumatic memories of black slave women who were displayed in freak shows with their ‘large’ buttocks and subjected to scientific experimentations in which their genital organs and brains were dismembered and exhibited. In fact, she cherishes her grotesque body, fertility, and femininity whereby she could cope with traumatic memories of all black slave women rather than remaining a traumatized victim. By reconsidering and challenging the impositions on her, she refuses to be a victim of trauma and establishes a place for herself in the host society. In “Afterword,” the fat black woman states that “When the last of her race / is finally and utterly extinguished” and “when the wind pushes back the last curtain / of male blindness”, she “will come out of the forest” (24). There will be “brushing vegetations /

from the shorn of her hair” and “flaunting waterpearls / in the bush of her thighs” (24). Furthermore, she “will emerge / and tremblingly fearlessly / stake her claim again” (24). Mara Scanlon argues that “[t]his is a clever manoeuvre and a radical political move on the part of Nichols, who gives her mythological woman the task of recolonization, the chance to do over what has oppressed her people” (64). In terms of trauma, the fat black woman goes against the grain of being victimized after traumatic experiences and becomes instead a figure of power and endurance. In the grotesqueness of her body, she seems to present her voice as an alternative to the “male blindness” (Nichols 24). In so doing, the fat black woman re-owns and reconstructs her ancestors’ traumatic experiences and makes herself heard.

Similar to *The Fat*, in *Lazy Thoughts*, there is an analogy between the lazy woman and the grotesque body which helps to heal trauma inherited from enslaved Afro-Caribbean peoples. For example, in “The Body Reclining”, the lazy woman praises her laziness as conveyed in the image of her body gradually turning into grotesque like the fat black woman’s enormous figure. The lazy woman celebrates her “fallen arm” and “lolling breast” together with her “body reclining / as an indolent continent” and “as a wayward tree” (4). Obviously, Nichols draws an analogy between an unmanageable tree and an indolent continent and the lazy woman’s grotesque body. Thus, she establishes a relationship between the mother earth and the female body. The lazy woman exalts in her “slow-moving blood / sluggish as a river / in its lower course” as well as her “weighing thighs” (4). Similar to Bakhtin’s description of the grotesque body, Nichols puts emphasis on the lower parts of the lazy woman. The lazy woman, however, revels in her grotesque body which is identical to the fat black woman’s hugeness in *The Fat*. The lazy woman cherishes her body becoming colossal and unites her vital fluids with the elements of mother earth. She challenges “those who scrub and scrub” and “those who dust and dust / incessantly” because she believes they “corrupt the body” and “are caught in the asylum of their own making” (4-5). Davies argues that the speaker “challenges colonialist/racist critiques of blacks as lazy” (“Black/Female” 194). The grotesqueness of the lazy woman derives its force from the transgressive body (Marven 10). Nichols presents a portrayal of grotesqueness which challenges our perceptions of the world; we do not expect dusting and cleaning to be challenged and rejected but the lazy woman provokes a perpetual discussion of their necessity and thus destroys our traditional expectations. Thus, similar to *The Fat*, Nichols presents alternative ways of treating the traumatic legacy of Afro-Caribbean peoples.

Further, as in *The Fat*, in *Lazy Thoughts*, the grotesque body evokes hope for the future. In "My Black Triangle", the lazy woman states that she has a black triangle "sandwiched between the geography of [her] thighs" (Nichols 25) which might refer to the Atlantic slave trade, also known as the triangular slave trade, or to her sexual organ. In this way, the poem represents traumatic experiences of the slave trade through the speaker's sexuality and grotesque body. In addition, the speaker's black triangle is a combination of "tiny atoms / forever seizing / and releasing / the world" and has the potential to "flo[w] over / on to the dry crotch / of the world" by "spreading and growing / trusting and flowing" (25). Similar to the fat black woman's grotesque image, the lazy woman's crotch becoming more and more enormous challenges the norms of male dominated world by "spread[ing] beyond his story / beyond the fears of parch-ri-archy" (25). As Marven contends, there is a natural intersection point between trauma and grotesque and what is experienced in trauma is challenged in the grotesque (49). Similarly, in "Configurations", the speaker revels in her sexuality and defecation in view of her traumatic sexual experience as the grotesque body transgresses its limits. We see the black female speaker's traumatic intercourse with a white male colonizer: "[S]he gives him her 'Bantu buttocks' / He rants about the spice in her skin" (Nichols 31). "He does a Columbus—, " which connotes colonizing both the land and the female body, "but this time her wide legs close in / slowly" and make "a golden stool of the empire / of his head" (31). Gina Wisker argues that "the double reading of stool (to sit on, faeces, excreta) shows her [the lazy woman's] subtle triumph" (292). According to both connotations, the black woman revels in her excessiveness and overcomes the coloniser whereby she works through the traumatic moment of sexual intercourse with her grotesque body.

In this chapter, we have seen that Nichols connects *I is* to *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* which represent the second generation of Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain and show that they are haunted by the traumatic experiences of their ancestors. As argued in Chapter I, the hidden phantom of the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past is reconstructed in the following generations as can be seen in *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* (53-55). It seems that Nichols's poetry functions as the crypt where the inheritor of the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past hides her ancestors' trauma. In other words, the collective traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean peoples presented in *I is* continue to structure the present lives of the second generation Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain presented in *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts*. Therefore, the collections enact the premise that the traumatic past is never really past, as they speak to the reader about the present difficulties of the Afro-Caribbean people in Britain as much as about their traumatic history of slavery and the Middle Passage. The reactivation of their traumatic legacy is rooted in their exposure to racial prejudice, economic and social troubles, which result in a strong sense of anxiety and alienation in Britain. In order to cope with their traumatic legacy and overcome their pain of anxiety in Britain, they nostalgically reconstruct a homeland in the Caribbean of their imaginations. By nostalgically imagining this homeland, they attempt to redress and reconstruct their traumatic past even though this is not a permanent solution. Another strategy of coping with their traumatic legacy is the use of grotesque bodies. The agency of grotesque bodies employed in the collections provides the possibility of challenging and healing their traumatic inheritance by distorting long held prejudices against Afro-Caribbean peoples, especially black slave women. Similar to this chapter, the next chapter argues that Nichols's following collections, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish*, represent trauma treatment strategies but this time by using different ways of healing. While *Sunris* uses Trinidad and Tobago Carnival with a positive and affirmative attitude towards Afro-Caribbean traumatic past, *Startling the Flying Fish* does the same but this time by having recourse to the healing power of mythical retellings of historical reality. Thus, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* suggest that finally trauma becomes something of the past and the future generations are freed of it by recognizing its part in their identity.

CHAPTER III

GOING BEYOND TRAUMA WITH CARNIVAL AND MYTHS IN *SUNRIS* AND *STARTLING THE FLYING FISH*

I think dis time I go make history
Columbus, you is not the only one
who can make discovery
(*Sunris* 72)

And though I Cariwoma prefer not to dwell
on the wrongs of history, I must bear witness—
To the invisible frieze of lips.
To sculptural hurts which I must try to heal
if only with my balm of words.
(*Startling the Flying Fish* 76)

Different from Grace Nichols's three initial collections, *Sunris* (1999) and *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005) present means of coping with the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past in a more positive and affirmative way. These two collections move beyond the traumatic Afro-Caribbean past by integrating the traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean people into their present lives and thus establishing harmony with the world surrounding them. We observe that in these more recent works, there is a continuity of the treatment of trauma and trauma coping strategies that noted Nichols's *I is*, *The Fat*, and *Lazy Thoughts*. However, Nichols now abandons the strategies of representing trauma and trauma-coping that we observed in *I is*, *The Fat*, and *Lazy Thoughts*. In order to move beyond their inherited trauma of slavery and the Middle Passage as well as their present racial and social difficulties, British Afro-Caribbean people, in *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts*, were shown to have resort to two main trauma coping strategies; recourse to nostalgia and grotesque images of British Afro-Caribbean people, embodied especially in Afro-Caribbean women's grotesque bodies. *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* present and move beyond the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past in a more affirmatory and constructive way, which stands in stark contrast to her earlier collections. *Sunris* includes four main sections: "Against the Planet", "Lips of History", "Sunris", and "Wings". In "Against the Planet", we read poems about the otherness felt by Afro-Caribbean people in Britain as well as poems about mythological and religious figures such as the Queen of Sheba, the Long Man of Wilmington, Kuan Yin, and Mnemosyne while, in “Lips of History”, we observe the cultural clash felt by the first generation Afro-Caribbean people in Britain as well as lives and difficulties of people from different parts of the world such as Edith Södergran (1892-1923), the Finnish-Swedish poet, a black migrant named Michael in Berlin, and people in Brazil. In the last section “Wings”, Nichols presents the possibility of Afro-Caribbean people renouncing their adhesion to the past and embracing their future. In contrast to these three sections, the section entitled “Sunris” is one long poem presenting a female Caribbean speaker named Sunris who attends the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival where she both recognizes and moves beyond the Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic past of slavery and the Middle Passage. Similar to the “Sunris” section, Nichols’s following collection, *Startling the Flying Fish*, is a single long poem which explores the traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean people and suggests moving beyond such traumatic past through the agency of myths. Like the strong female speaker Sunris, this poem presents an Afro-Caribbean female speaker, named “Cariwoma”, who in this work journeys into the traumatic history of pre-Columbian and Afro-Caribbean slaves in the Caribbean and blends them with the present and future. Evidently, the name “Cariwoma” is a combination of the words “Caribbean” and “woman”. Cariwoma unifies both the pre-Columbian and Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with the present. Hence, we observe that in *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish*, Nichols has recourse to the agency of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and myths in order to promote trauma coping and reconciliation through a recognition of the traumatic past, instead of living in the shadow of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past.

Nichols’s *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* have attracted the attention of scholars and critics mostly from the perspective of carnival and mythological studies. In fact, studies of these collections provide us with little more than general overviews. Considering *Sunris*, commentaries focus on its long title poem. Simone A. James Alexander for example, argues that “the Caribbean landscape is celebrated in a lengthy poem [“Sunris”] about carnival, as an African consciousness is invoked” (716). Dominic Head describes the title poem as a platform for blending different mythologies: “‘Sunris’ draws on the rhythms of Carnival and a range of mythologies from around the world" (805). Similarly, Fiona Darroch states that "Sunris" celebrates "a myriad of rituals and deities from Africa, India, China, and Europe" (127) and Mohit K. Ray argues that "Sunris" "highlights the mythic and elemental aspects of carnival, establishes links to Africa and the Aztec kingdoms and vibrates with the colours and sounds of the spectacle" (400). From a different perspective, Mark Stein contends that "Sunris" uses "Calypso rhythms and Carnival motifs to depict a woman reclaiming herself" (234). *Startling the Flying Fish* has to date not attracted the attention of so many critics. Among the very few critics to discuss this book, Sarah Lawson Welsh draws a correlation between *I is*, *Sunris*, and *Startling the Flying Fish* and argues that these three collections negotiate with "mythological and historical figures from the region's past by means of spiritual and imaginative journeying" (49). However, Welsh does not provide us with a full account of how *Startling the Flying Fish* achieves such a mythological and spiritual exchange. Similarly, Ian Hamilton and Jeremy Noel-Tod describe *Startling the Flying Fish* as "a mythological story of the Caribbean" (443) but do not give us any other information about the collection. Although such commentaries acknowledge the importance of the use of carnival in *Sunris* and myths in *Startling the Flying Fish*, they do not recognize trauma as an essential part of these collections. This chapter argues that *Sunris,* through the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, and *Startling the Flying Fish*, through myths, present ways of moving beyond the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. "Sunris" is a long poem presenting a Caribbean speaker, Sunris, attending a carnival whereby she recognizes and heals her traumatic past of slavery and colonization and builds an empathic relationship with the world surrounding her. Similar to *Sunris*, *Startling the Flying Fish* treats the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past but this time by having recourse to myths. Like "Sunris", *Startling The Flying Fish* is a long poem presenting Cariwoma's recognition of and her moving beyond her ancestors' traumatic history of slavery and colonization; and it presents the reconstruction of a harmonious world through the employment of myths. Evidently, in both *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* there is a continuity of trauma treatment and healing through the recognition of Afro-Caribbean traumatic history as an integral part of Afro-Caribbean identity and history and both works offer an alternative cosmos of harmony and compassion.

In *Sunris,* Nichols seems to have an understanding of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival that it is a way of moving beyond the traumatic past in a constructive and productive way. Nichols's use of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as a way of going beyond the traumatic past seems to be quite similar to van der Kolk and McFarlane's arguments that trauma may be healed by integrating it into one's life in a meaningful way. They argue that, in order to move beyond traumatic past, one needs to modify and transform it by placing it in a proper context and restructuring it meaningfully. In other words, traumatic past needs to be recognized as part of one's historical reality. Drawing a correlation between everyday life and traumatic past, van der Kolk and McFarlane contend that the latter needs to become a part of everyday reality by acknowledging its reality as part of one's history. In the aftermath of traumatic experiences, traumatized subjects are unable to find feasible solutions to their traumatic affects because their traumatic past haunts them in the present. However, avoiding the traumatic past is not an optimal solution; there must be a proper healing process which involves regaining a sense of safety and completing the unfinished past in order to relieve the effects of traumatic experiences (17). In line with this, van der Kolk and McFarlane cite the example of a traumatized man whose wife passed away in an ambulance on their way to the hospital while he was looking into her eyes. The man improved only when he could summon up his courage and continue to look into the eyes of another woman who could tolerate his sufferings (18). Drawing on this man's healing process and many others, van der Kolk and McFarlane argue that traumatized subjects must actively engage with their traumatic past rather than remain haunted by it (18). Clearly, in order to ward off one's traumatic past, merely exploring the causes of trauma is insufficient and does not prove useful. There must be a move from the overwhelming effects of trauma towards engaging in the present life and becoming adept at dealing with present demands. Van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Onno van der Hart contend that in order to reach such a healing phase "the patients need to regain control over their emotional responses and place the trauma in the larger perspective of their lives—as a historical event (or series of events) that occurred at a particular time and in a particular place, and that can be expected not to recur if the individuals take charge of their lives" (419). Such an identification and acknowledgement of the trauma requires traumatized subjects to integrate "the alien, the unacceptable, the terrifying, and the incomprehensible into their self-concepts" (419-20). In other words, the traumatic past needs to be "'personalized' as an integrated aspec[t] of the individual's history and life experiences" (420). In fact, traumatized subjects need to "acknowledge the reality of what has happened without having to re-experience the trauma all over again" (429). It is only after the recognition of their traumatic past when they have the possibility to transform into a party of daily experience. In line with this, van der Kolk and McFarlane contend that "exploring the trauma for its own sake has no therapeutic benefits unless it becomes attached to other experiences such as feeling understood, being safe, feeling physically strong and capable, or being able to empathize with and help fellow sufferers" ("The Black Hole" 19). In other words, although traumatised subjects cannot do anything to change their past, they need to confer alternative meanings onto their experiences by recognizing them as part of their lives and/or identifying with the sufferings of others and helping them.

From a related perspective, Susana Onega, in her recent article about a shift in the trauma paradigm, underlines the importance of "the recuperation of holistic knowledge" ("The Notion" 491) in dealing with one's traumatic past. Onega argues that we need to "transform the self-centred and greedy individual subject produced by the ideology of progress into a loving and empathic, relational subject in harmony with nature and with other human beings, irrespective of race, class and gender" (499). In other words, to achieve resilience in the face of the traumatic events, we need to establish empathy and harmony with the world surrounding us. Onega argues that we live in a traumatic age characterized by our "relationality" with the world surrounding us. Therefore, in order to move beyond the trauma paradigm, we need to understand and build empathy towards the collective traumas of our age (498). Drawing on famous traumatic events of our age such as the Holocaust, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as our collective traumas of colonialism, imperialism, and decolonisation along with many others, Onega argues that rather than focusing on the needs of the egoistic self, dealing with trauma requires fostering love and empathy (497-498). Further, Onega contends that such a comprehensive and cross-cultural approach which requires the consideration of "the full range of human experience" and the embracement of "creativity, free will, and human potential" is needed for trauma recuperation (500). Evidently, Onega relies on the potential of human beings to cure themselves and their potential to imagine and create an alternative world characterised by empathy and reconciliation instead of traumatic affects.

It seems that Nichols recognizes the importance of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as a trauma healing mechanism which makes it possible to integrate traumatic past into everyday life and build an empathic relation with the world around. Nichols's use of the Carnival seems to enable what Bernard McKenna describes as "new personal and interpersonal structures of identification that incorporate the violent past into nontraumatic functions of everyday life" (13). Accordingly, the carnival is an excellent nontraumatic medium which "involves seeing past the façade of fear and anguish, anger and betrayal and seeing into the true nature of individual suffering and community displacement and potential re-establishment" (13). In fact, in order to make his meaning clearer, McKenna draws on Antonio Benitez-Rojo's description of the carnival festivals in the Caribbean. According to Benitez-Rojo, the carnival in the Caribbean "is the one that best expresses the strategies that the people of the Caribbean have for speaking at once of themselves and their relation with the world, with history, with tradition, with nature, with God" (294). During these carnival celebrations, "the groups in power channel the violence of the oppressed groups in order to maintain yesterday's order, while the latter channel the former's violence so that it will not recur tomorrow" (307). According to McKenna, such complex nature makes the carnivals an instrument for the society to express their complicated feelings and sufferings as well as present their potentials to go beyond their traumatic past.

"Sunris" employs the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as the medium to move beyond the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past, allowing people's traumatic past of slavery and colonization to be recognized as part of the Afro-Caribbean history and identity and thus to be successfully and affirmatively dealt with. As will be explained below, "Sunris" achieves such healing through four main channels, having recourse to the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. First, it presents us with the celebratory and hedonistic aspect of the Carnival which has its roots in the emancipation period. Second, "Sunris" embraces the subversive aspect of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and thence gains the power needed to rewrite the traumatic past of the Afro-Caribbean people. Third, the poem has resort to the unifying aspect of the carnival and emphasizes the importance of solidarity in building empathy with the sufferings of others. Ultimately, in “Sunris” three important art forms of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival—steel pan music, calypso singing, and masquerade performance—help to keep the Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic past in a tolerable form. By relying on these elements of the Carnival, the poem presents us with the possibility of transcending the boundaries of the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and moving towards recuperation in a constructive and affirmative way.

“Sunris” has recourse to the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as the medium to celebrate the salvation of Afro-Caribbean people from the trauma of slavery because it goes back to the emancipation period. This Carnival is celebrated in Trinidad and Tobago, an island country of twin islands. The Carnival includes elements of various cultures because the Caribbean has been home to various peoples from different parts of the world. Forbes-Erickson notes that it bears the influences of people who lived in Trinidad and Tobago as slaves, indentured labourers, or as free people such as Europeans, Africans, Amerindians, East Indians, Chinese, and Lebanese (240). When Africans were forcibly taken from Africa to Trinidad and Tobago from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, they brought there their African dance traditions which involved ancestral masking.[25] Originally, the Spanish and the French celebrated the carnival as a masked event that included a ball and visits to each other. At this time, the Amerindians ignored it and slave Africans were not allowed to participate. However, after the abolition of the slave trade in 1834, the newly freed African population started to celebrate the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. (Saunders 52)

Nichols’s use of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is thus inextricably connected with the celebration of the abolition of slavery. In this sense, although similar in form to European carnivals, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is “a celebration rooted in the experience of slavery and the commemoration of emancipation” (Paravisini-Gebert 216). Originally, the carnival started by paying homage to the sufferings of the slaves in the sugar plantations. The slaves were called out to put out fires in the sugar plantations with the sounds of horns and shells and the gangs would propel them to work with shouts and blows. After gaining their emancipation, the former slaves commemorated the change in their status by re-enacting this scene which was called Canboulay or *cannes brulees* (burnt canes) as the semi-ritualistic opening of the Carnival celebrations (216). By masquerading at night, lighting torches, drumming and dancing, the freed Afro-Caribbean slaves celebrated the carnival as an annual ritual of protest and rebellion against the European colonizers (Nurse 670). When freed slaves started to celebrate the carnival in such an exuberant and festive manner, the European colonizers deemed the carnival as “noisy and disorderly amusement for the lower classes” (Pearse 20). In other words, carnival celebrations were regarded as licentious and vulgar. Further, the European elite attempted to stop carnival celebrations many times but failed to do so.

Since gaining independence from Britain in 1962 and becoming a republic in 1976, Trinidad and Tobago has continued its annual carnival tradition. As a carnival taking place annually, the Carnival takes two days, ending at midnight on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. During the carnival, there is revelry before the forty days of Lent, the period of penance before Easter (Forbes-Erickson 240). As Richard Schechner points out, the Carnival does not act as sunshine to dispel the shadows of slavery and colonialism completely but rather as “a means of overcoming them, assimilating them, and playing them out. Carnival is a celebration of freedom—yes, but not only or even mostly, individual freedom, but social, collective, national freedom” (6). Similarly, Paravisini-Gebert states that the carnival embodies “the spirit of the people’s unrestrained (albeit temporary) freedom from official control” (217). In other words, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is a platform on which freedom is celebrated and alternative identities are offered. The carnival achieves this through various rituals such as people dressed in the costumes of the eighteenth-century French aristocracy and the use of masks that are in a colour opposite one’s own skin colour, along with many other devices (Paravisini-Gebert 216). The subversive power of the carnival makes it appealing to the Caribbean society, whose members are willing “to adopt fictitious social roles and to (at least temporarily) break the social boundaries of class and colour characteristic of Caribbean societies” (216). In other words, the carnival is a ritual of subversion which turns the social order and roles upside down symbolically and metaphorically whereby normally forbidden things are encouraged and thus find a way to be expressed.

In this context, in “Sunris”, Nichols employs the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival for its subversive potential which is already recognized by Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin, in various works such as *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) *Rabelais and His World* (1984) and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1984), dwells on the carnival, especially on its subversive power. Although these works present somewhat different approaches, they all revolve around the basic tenet of describing the carnival as a form of folk festival with the potential of subversion. Bakhtin defines the carnival as a festival without boundaries between the performers and spectators living a carnivalistic life, which is “life turned inside out” because “the laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 122). Rather than an impassable distance, there is “*free and familiar contact among people*” and “a *new mode of interrelationship between individuals*” (123, emphasis in the original). The Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is analogous to Bakhtin’s description of the carnival in that it serves as a platform for social protest: “[the Caribbean carnival] has evolved into an expression of national identity shared by a broad sector of the Caribbean community in opposition to the ruling system and its (often) foreign officials” (Paravisini-Gebert 217). Further, during the carnival, people are no longer restricted by hierarchical impositions on their behaviours, gestures, and discourses, whereby the eccentric aspect of their lives is revealed. Bakhtin argues that such eccentricity is “a special category of the carnival sense of the world, organically connected with the category of familiar contact; it permits—in concretely sensuous form—the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 123). Hence, the carnival makes subversion of the social order possible whereby repressed sides of human nature find a way to reveal themselves.

Hence, in “Sunris”, Nichols uses the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as the medium to achieve social and cultural unity whereby moving beyond the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past becomes possible. In other words, in the poem, the Carnival builds a contact and interrelationship between individuals and assembles all disunified things under the same roof, which acts as a trauma coping mechanism. According to Bakhtin, such unifying aspects of the carnivals are “carnivalistic mésalliances”:

> All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations […] [because the carnival] unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid. (123)

The Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is no exception to this rule in that similarly it brings together and unifies people. Antonio Benitez-Rojo, in his analysis of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival from a postmodern perspective, argues that the carnival “serves the purpose of unifying through its performance that which cannot be unified (the impossible desire to reach social and cultural unity—sociocultural synthesis—that runs within the system)” (307). What Benitez-Rojo suggests is that the carnival is a vehicle for the establishment of social engagement. In other words, the carnival is a sociocultural platform of coalescence where distanced and disunified people find the possibility to become equal and even act in harmony and unity. Accordingly, Schechner contends that one of the most important functions of the Carnival is “the formation and maintenance of tight-knit communities” (5). Similarly, Michael Bristol contends that, for the participants, the carnival is “an experience of social solidarity and cohesion within a social space no longer vertically organized into distinct and separate strata” (65). As such, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival inculcates cohesion and solidarity among its participants by promoting the sense of being a member of a community and sharing common interests.

In “Sunris”, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival not only brings along cohesion and solidarity but also three important art forms: steel pan music, calypso singing, and masqurade performances, all of which have active roles in diluting the after-effects of the trauma of slavery and colonization. The steelpan is recognized as one of the most important and sacred celebration instruments of the carnival. When freed slaves started to celebrate the carnival in the post-emancipation period, they marched through the streets carrying torches and sometimes engaged in stick fighting. They also used these sticks to make music. However, the government banned stick fighting in the 1890s because it caused chaos in the society. In order to make music, the carnival musicians started using whatever they could find, such as spoons, bottles, and pans. In other words, the freed slaves resisted the ban in their own way. Thus, the steel pans began to be used in carnival celebrations (Augustyn 57). In line with this, Stephen Stuempfle points out that the steel pan is usually related with "celebration, power, resistance, and identity" which are the main components of the steel pan music (14).

In addition to its celebratory and rebellious connotations, the steel pan music is generally associated with spirituality and sacredness. Funso Aiyejina and Rawle Gibbons argue that carnival art forms, especially the steel pans, have their roots in Orisha tradition/religion, Orisha for short (653). Orisha is an African-derived, eclectic religion in the New World characterized by the interaction between European colonialists and African slaves. The beginning of Orisha in Trinidad and Tobago goes back to the 1840s when freed Yoruba slaves arrived in Trinidad which was a Catholic island at the time because of French and Spanish colonization. Therefore, Orisha was a mixture of Yoruba and Catholic practices. In the 1920s and 1930s, Orisha was influenced by the Spiritual Baptist religion, a mainly Protestant faith. Therefore, in Orisha, there are some borrowings from Spiritual Baptism such as the practice of mourning in which pilgrims go through spiritual travels to Africa, China, the United States, and Caribbean islands. In this way, Orisha worshippers get ready for a "spiritually powerful" and "sophisticated" phase of being an Orisha (Houk 286-287). In the 1950s, Orisha was influenced by Hinduism while in the 1970s it was mixed with the Kabbalah practices. Orisha believers are strong devotees who celebrate Ebo, an annually held ceremony which hosts Baptist prayers and drummers playing songs for Eshu, the trickster god (287-89). According to Aiyejina and Gibbons, these Orisha songs and drums had a major influence on the birth of steelpans and calypso singing (653). In fact, Orisha faith had great influence on the use of pans because early steel pan music performers were located near or in Orisha sanctuaries and original steelband players were Orisha members. Therefore, Gibbons states that "the pan is regarded by African-Trinidadians in particular as an instrument of 'spirit'" (qtd. in Dudley 15-16). Strictly speaking, the steel pan music has both celebratory and spiritual significance accorded by Afro-Caribbean people.

Accordingly, in Nichols's use of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in "Sunris", the steel pan music is of utmost importance in that it enables Afro-Caribbean people to interact with each other during the course of their trauma healing process. Stuempfle notes that the steel pan music is "a participatory music performed by bands with large numbers of members who represent communities, both geographic and sentimental" (233). In other words, the steel pan music unifies people both geographically and emotionally. In addition, the steel pan music generates a sense of being a member of Trinidad and Tobago and "a whole heritage rooted in the island" (234). In other words, the steel pan music brings along "a sense of national consciousness" and "feelings of solidarity" whereby carnival participants form strong connections and develop empathy with each other. (235) Besides, during steel pan music performances "performers and audiences together transcend the limits of day-to-day life" (235) and "explore their experience and various visions of themselves" whereby they can contemplate and celebrate their existence. (236)

In "Sunris", another important art form of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is calypso singing which provides the medium to move beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic heritage through its satirical, didactical, and unifying agency. Calypso music has its roots in plantations where slaves used to sing songs about anything related to their life as they were forbidden to talk to each other. Later, this chanting tradition was transformed into calypso music played during the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival (Mendez *et al.* 81). Saunders argues that calypso has satirical purposes:

> Calypso has far more ancient roots with origins in songs that praised and satirized native rulers in West Africa and that were kept alive by the slaves who came to Trinidad. As Carnival developed during the nineteenth century, Calypso became a way of making scandalous public comment on the island's white British colonial society. In the first two decades of the twentieth century it continued to evolve—its French patois dropped in favour of English—and it became both respectable and commercialized, though never lost its satirical bite. (54)

Besides its satirical and didactical features, calypso has the power to interconnect the community: "It [calypso] was an interactive musical form that bound together those who sang and played with those that heard" (Augustyn 57). In other words, both the steel pan music and calypso singing are the instruments to entertain and establish a mutual relation between people whereby they can reflect and transcend their present reality.

In “Sunris”, another way in which the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival produces a harmonious impact to move beyond traumatic heritage is the use of masquerades. Michael Bristol notes that masquerades, mas for short, “permit people to ‘put on’ new social roles, to borrow the clothing and identity of someone else, and to adopt the language and manners of a different social status” (65). The Caribbean term “mas” derives from “masquerade” but is different from European masks as explained by Lesley Ferris and Adela Ruth Tompsett:

> Those who go on the road in a costume band in carnival are called mas players. However, simply wearing a costume is not mas. It becomes mas when the player plays it, connecting to its meaning from inside him/herself and giving that character or thematic aspect full life on the street. European traditions of masquerade usually involve the wearing of the face mask. In Caribbean mas, a mask may occasionally be worn, but more important is how the character is played or the theme is animated and given meaning and purpose by the player. (47)

Evidently, Caribbean mas performances derive their strength not from putting a mask on one’s face but playing one’s role by conferring a thematic aspect on it. During mas performances, the subversive power of the carnival manifests itself in that authorities and institutions are satirized and subverted (Bristol 65). However, this does not mean that mas performances only serve to entertain people. In fact, mas performances are complex constructs which generate the feeling that there are numerous possibilities for recreating one’s self identity and improving one’s life (Mcwatt 40; Abner Cohen 3).

Among most important mas performances are Jour Ouvert masquerades which mark the beginning of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. Jour Ouvert (J’Ouvert for short, French for daybreak) is a clamorous pageantry which starts at 2:00 a.m. on Monday and lasts for the whole day with steel bands and their followers pouring into the streets and celebrating the carnival boisterously (Saunders 53). The revellers paint themselves or get covered with mud and join their individual bands to celebrate the beginning of the carnival. Each band has a particular theme built upon traditional characters and/or social or political ideas. Because of drunken revellers, J’Ouvert can turn into a licentious celebration but still one can feel the ritualistic atmosphere. Although torches are not lit as in the emancipation period at the end of the nineteenth century, one can notice that J'Ouvert represents individual and communal emancipation from slavery (Seidman 186-87). Further, by the courtesy of paints and mud on the revellers' body, all the participants become equalized; no one is superior to the other because of race, class, and/or gender (187). Karmenlara Seidman, in her dissertation on mas celebrations in the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, draws an analogy between Canboulay celebrations in the emancipation period and J'Ouvert in contemporary Trinidad and Tobago Carnival: "Just as the Canboulay riots of the late 19th century evolved the notion of emancipation amongst urban blacks long after the official 1834 proclamation, Jouvay remembers the contemporary struggle for freedom and rebellion, taking to the streets in the dark hours before dawn" (186). Not every member of Trinidad and Tobago necessarily joins the pageantries but still feels the influence of slavery and emancipation in the celebrations:

> the streets do fill at dawn when those in their homes come out to see the Jouvay spectres haunting the streets like unearthed bodies, Canboulay ancestors and prehistoric wildmen. Some carry a palm branch as a symbol of the torches once carried by their forefathers, and this adds an even more ancient and natural feeling to the night. (188)

In this way, J'Ouvert celebrations provide a link between the traumatic experiences of slavery and colonialism whereby the carnival becomes the space "to unravel the effects of slavery, colonization, and national identities as expressed in performance, and to reinvent identities in contemporary society" (Forbes-Erickson 240). In other words, by acknowledging the power of imagination and fantasy through masquerades, carnival celebrations in Trinidad and Tobago offer the possibility of disentangling the traumatic effects of slavery and colonialism and reconstructing alternative identities in the present.

In "Sunris", the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is a form of performance art that heals Afro-Caribbean people by offering them an alternative reality instead of their traumatic heritage. John Wallace Nunley states that performance arts are "expressions of life's full blown experiences that are filled with pain and pleasure, the coldness of loneliness and exclusion, the warmth of togetherness and inclusion, the trauma of fear and danger, and other variances of these emotional sensations" (43). Slavery is one of these full blown experiences which have traumatized following generations and is now recalled in African masquerades. In order to move beyond such traumatic past, Nunley argues that alternative meanings need to be recreated, especially through performance arts (43). In the same vein, Dale Francis argues that performance arts, such as masquerades in carnivals, exercise "transformational power" and serve as "medicated gauze for banding the real to the surreal for the ongoing healing of the society" (97). Carnivals, as therapeutic agents, heal the society by going beyond "secular bonds" and entitling its participants to "exercise their spirit of humanity" (97). In this way, both performers and observers in carnivals transcend their present reality and go through an alternative reality whereby they can tolerate their unbearable traumatic past.

Accordingly, Nichols's "Sunris" uses all above mentioned agencies of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in order to move beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic heritage. "Sunris" opens with the mythical description of the speaker named Sunris, who is not a simple descendant of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past but is born out of the ashes. In this context, Sunris seems to be aware of the need to develop relationality and unity with the world surrounding her in order to move beyond her traumatic heritage. Thus, Nichols presents Sunris not only as a simple carnival attendant but also as a powerful mythical being at the very beginning of the collection:

> *Slipping the earth-bounders*
> *Who always tried to pin her down*
> *Grabbing at the knees,*
> *She began to dance her own sea-tree*
> *To stretch towards her rainbow raiments*
> *Rising with the fireflies,*
> *The flickering little stars*
> *That sparked her own divinity*. (n.p., italics in the original)

The description above presents Sunris as a speaker who manages to break free from objectionable earthly beings and gains her celestial power. As discussed below, Sunris moves to rewrite her traumatic heritage and the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival becomes the excellent medium for the articulation and the recuperation of the traumatic experiences of her ancestral past. In other words, Sunris can only achieve healing the traumatic past of her ancestors through the agency of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival which is a platform to represent the traumatic past of her ancestors in a tolerable form and become unified with the world surrounding her. Nichols achieves such relationality through the combination of various cultures, mythologies, and her own familial bonds in the name Sunris, as is evident in the last line of the poem: “I just done christen myself, SUNRIS” (74). By describing this self-naming as “a kind of mythic coinage” (qtd. in Welsh 84), Nichols explains that the name Sunris comes from her mother’s name and various cultures and mythologies:

> my mother’s name was Iris and Iris was supposed to be the goddess, the rainbow goddess in Greek mythology, a bridging type of figure […] my mother was very much that, she really reached across towards […] all kinds of racial strands, cultural and so on […] so that coining sunris was for me an important type of mythic ending […] Isis, the Egyptian goddess, Iris, and so on. (qtd. in Welsh 84)

Evidently, Nichols constructs in a single name a speaker who bridges and reaches across various racial strands and cultures. The combination of Greek and Egyptian mythological goddesses’ names with Nichol’s mother’s name attests to the relationality necessary to work through one’s traumatic past, which is also an inextricable component of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival.

The first way Nichols uses the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in “Sunris” is having recourse to its celebratory and rebellious elements to move beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic heritage. The hedonistic and defiant atmosphere of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is manifest in the prologue where Nichols cites Derek Walcott’s[26] comments on the carnival, and lyrics from the calypso song, “Fire Fire”, by McCartha Lewis with the stage name Calypso Rose (1940)[27], the first female calypso singer. Walcott, in “On Choosing Port of Spain” (1975), an essay on the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, acknowledges the celebratory elements of the carnival as follows:

> Carnival is all that is claimed for it.
> It is the exultation of the mass will,
> its hedonism is so sacred, that to withdraw
> from it, not to jump up, to be contemplative
> outside of its frenzy is a heresy… DEREK WALCOTT (50)

Evidently, Nichols transforms Walcott's prose into a poetic form. In its prose version, Walcott enthusiastically supports carnival hedonism and encourages participation in the carnival. In Walcott's words, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival presents "the shrillest kind of hedonism, asserting with almost hysterical self-assurance that Trinidad is a paradise" (14). Evidently, Walcott emphasizes the importance of carnival tradition in developing, sustaining, and reinforcing the public spirit. By referring to Walcott's praise of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, Nichols pays homage to the carnival's hedonistic atmosphere and long existence in Afro-Caribbean tradition, too. In other words, "Sunris" is a poem of intertextuality which accepts the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as a product of a long tradition belonging to previous Afro-Caribbean people and celebrated boisterously.

In contrast to such an exuberant atmosphere of the carnival, "Sunris" acknowledges and attempts at moving beyond the traumatic history of slavery by having recourse to calypso singing, which is yet another component of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival celebrations. As explained above, calypso singing is a musical form which provides the possibility to represent the traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean people in a tolerable form and establish solidarity in the society. In this context, Nichols uses lyrics from "Fire Fire", a calypso song by Calypso Rose:

> If you hear she Fire Fire,
> In meh wire, wire,
> Ay, ay, ay, oy, oy, oy,
> Fire, Fire, Beneca me pito
> Damay mucho agua, heat for so… CALYPSO ROSE (50)

In Spanish, "damay mucho agua" means "give me a lot of water". In the song, the speaker states that there is fire and that she needs water. Considering the beginning of carnival celebrations in the emancipation period, the fire and water in the song represent Canboulay or *cannes brulees* (burnt canes) celebrations. The slaves were brutally propelled to fight fires in the sugar plantations. After the emancipation, they celebrated the change in their status by re-enacting this scene (Paravisini-Gebert 216). By implicitly recalling this ritualistic scene in "Fire Fire", Nichols recognizes the traumatic experiences of slaves as part of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and at the same time

Trinidadians' historical reality. Remembering the traumatic experiences of slaves in the plantations in the form of calypso singing is an instrument to integrate traumatic past into everyday life. As stated above, working through one's traumatic past requires their recognition as part of one's historical reality and transformation into everyday reality (van der Kolk, Alexander, and van der Hart 419-20; McKenna 13). By including Afro-Caribbean peoples' traumatic past of slavery in calypso singing, Nichols attempts at incorporating it into the present and thus moving along. Further, calypso singing is an interactive musical form that helps to establish cohesion within the society (Augustyn 57). By citing a calypso song in the prologue to "Sunris", Nichols reminds us of the solidarity aimed at calypso singings which is one of the main components of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival.

Besides calypso singing, "Sunris" employs masquerades which have the power to give the Afro-Caribbean carnival attendants an alternative reality instead of their traumatic legacy. "Sunris" opens with a large group of people attending the carnival "to lift up dis city to the sun" and "to incarnate their carnation" (51) on Jour O'uvert morning, the opening of the carnival at daybreak on the Monday preceding Ash Wednesday. Sunris joins the carnival with clothes that suit the atmosphere of the carnival: "A bellyband with all my strands / A plume of scarlet ibis" (52). In her colourful attire, she plays "Mas-Woman" and puts on a mask which is not to "hide" her but is "visionary" (52). Obviously, her mask is different from western masks in that European traditions of masquerade involve the wearing of a mask not acting out a theme or giving a meaning and/or purpose to the mask, as stated above (Ferris and Tompsett 47). By contrast, in Afro-Caribbean masquerades, there is a thematic aspect of mas performances. As Paravisini-Gebert notes, the people attending the carnival assume imaginary roles to re-construct their present realities (216-17). In Sunris's case, her mas performance thematises hope as can be inferred from her description holding "a branch-of-hope and a snake in [her] fist" (52). Similarly, towards the end of the poem, Sunris states that "Heritage just reach out […] / From dih depths of dih unconscious / I hear dih snake hiss" (74). In non-western cultures, such as in the Caribbean, snakes usually have positive connotations such as rebirth and rejuvenation because they shed skins and start a new life. Further, they are considered to have healing powers (Werness 376-77).

When considering such symbolic meanings, the piece of hope and the snake in Sunris's hand attest to her agency of dealing positively with her traumatic past. Such healing agency is also germane with mas performances in the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival (Nunley 43; Francis 97). Clearly, Nichols adopts the transformational power of masquerades in the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival.

Besides the transformational power of masquerades, Nichols, in "Sunris", draws on the unifying aspect of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. In Bakhtin's description of the carnival, there is a combination of the profane with the divine, the lofty with the low, and the great with the trivial (*Problems of Dostoevsky's* 123). In line with this, Sunris asks people to "join [her] in dis pilgrimage / this spree that look[s] like sacrilege" (52). Evidently, the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival gathers contradictory images under the same roof. Further, the carnival is the platform to achieve social solidarity and cohesion whereby Afro-Caribbean peoples find the opportunity to live in harmony with the surrounding world (Bristol 65; Benitez Rojo 307; Schechner 5). Sunris tries to achieve such unity by calling out to people from various parts of the world such as Coolieman, Blackman, Redman, Potageeman, Chineyman, Whiteman, and Brown (53). Sunris states that while dancing with them "I come out to tasteup mih race" (53). In other words, Sunris builds a connection between her ancestors and people from different cultures. In this way, she feels a strong link with each person attending the carnival no matter where they come from. Such a strong intercultural solidarity resonates with the unifying aspect of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and the necessity of establishing a harmonious world to deal with one's traumatic past.

In her attempts to achieve unity with the world surrounding her, Sunris re-negotiates with an array of western and eastern historical, religious, and spiritual figures. For example, she gives voice to the Aztecs known as pre-Columbian peoples of the Americas. Nichols, in the glossary to *Sunris*, explains how and why the Aztecs suffered from the Spanish invasion led by Cortés in the early sixteenth century. Montezuma II, one of the last Aztec rulers, made a big mistake when the Spanish conquistadors arrived (84). According to the legend, Quetzalcoatl (Feathered Serpent), one of the gods worshipped by the Aztecs, came down from heaven and ruled the Aztecs until he was expelled by Tezcatlipoca, an Aztec deity (84). Upon Quetzalcoatl's prophesy that "I will return in Ce Acatl (One Reed Year) and re-establish my rule," the Aztec priests believed in his return one day in the future (84-5). Unfortunately, when Cortés landed in Mexico in 1519, a Reed Year in the Aztec calendar, Montezuma and others mistook him for Quetzalcoatl (84-5). Montezuma was already in panic because of a number of bad omens such as the appearance of a comet and the eruption of a volcano signalling the arrival of Quetzalcoatl (84-5). Not knowing what to do and how to make Quetzalcoatl, who was in fact Cortés, leave the country, Montezuma sent many gifts to him, which only ended in the destruction of his country (85).

By acknowledging the traumatic past of the Aztecs, "Sunris" moves from representing and healing Afro-Caribbean traumatic past towards establishing a universal brotherhood in suffering and the required empathy for trauma healing. Such empathic relationship and solidarity are manifest when Sunris meets Montezuma in the carnival, which gives her the possibility to articulate and build empathy with the traumatic past of the Aztec kingdom invaded by the Spaniards. In fact, Sunris recalls what happened in the Aztec kingdom although she is not an Aztec and lives in the twenty-first century: "I remember it as if I was there" (58). In order to get rid of the stranger who he believes to be Quetzalcoatl, Montezuma sends all his treasure to Cortés (58). The speaker asks Montezuma how he was deceived into delivering all his treasure and "the whole Caribbean" (56) to Cortés. Montezuma asserts that all ill omens have signalled the arrival of Quetzalcoatl as the legend claimed and he puts the blame on the messengers who mistook the arrival of Cortés and thought him to be the appalling half-man and half-animal god Quetzalcoatl (56-7). Montezuma also defends himself by putting the blame on his own fatalism and on the power of "the bible and the sword" (58). In this context, Montezuma's blame on the Bible is germane to the Biblical notion of *dominium terrae* (Genesis 1:26). According to this notion, the Creator issues a mandate to human beings to "Fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). This order to exploit the earth lies at the heart of the discourse of modernity as an endless progress, with its justification of capitalism, colonial domination and the subjugation of the other. Thus, Montezuma places all the blame on his own fatalism and the Bible:

> Woman, blame the bible and the sword,
> Blame that cross of a blood-devouring man
> Look, just blame the fatalist
> Sitting on the throne of my own heart (58)

In Montezuma's case, Nichols provides us with alternative reasons for his mistake forcing us to look at the historical reality of the fall of Aztec Kingdom from a contemporary, postcolonial perspective. In other words, the Spanish invasion of the Caribbean by Cortés and his followers was not Montezuma's fault but the fatal outcome of ideological and historical circumstances. The fact that Montezuma is aware of the historical forces at work in the destruction of the Aztec kingdom is a logical incongruence that can only make sense if we assume, in true carnival fashion, that his spirit has somehow survived the passing of time and shares the knowledge of the contemporary speaker. In other words, Montezuma's awareness of historical facts is only possible through the power of imagination embedded in carnival celebrations.

Accordingly, "Sunris" employs the power of imagination as a trauma coping strategy, which is relevant to the subversive aspect of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, and thus rewrites the traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean people. Nichols gives the speaker Sunris the task of recognizing the sufferings of her Afro-Caribbean ancestors as part of their historical reality and subverting their status as trauma victims. Instead, Nichols presents us with a resilient and ever-present Afro-Caribbean existence. Accordingly, Sunris meets Africa as a carnival attendee, which provides the medium for the speaker to re-negotiate her ancestral sufferings and heal them. Africa is "a woman in a shroud of grey / making the dancesteps of mourning / even as she clears a space for her way" (65). Such a depiction of Africa in grave-clothes and mourning most probably for the blacks who died undeservedly suggests that the sufferings of the blacks are still remembered in the present. Yet, Africa has the power to "mov[e] like a river whose source cannot be found" (65). The speaker admits that Africa has kept its presence in her life "after all this time and water" and "despite all the dark-despising / and death-dooming spread about [Africa]" (65). She complains about "dih governors-of-art [who] tried to tear / every ounce of civilization from [Africa's] heart" and "basked in the relief / of [Africa's] darkness" (65). What is more, these significant artists "seeked to reduce [Africa], their host / to a footnote in their notes" (65). By returning to the speaker's

African origins and disclosing the condescending attitude towards Africa of the dominant whites, Nichols implicitly highlights the flawed accounts of Caribbean history (Paravisini-Gebert 215-16). Far from downgrading Africa to such a footnote in a note, the speaker accords praise to Africa's presence and, more specifically, to African rituals such as pouring a libation, making fufu, and burying a navel string in her life (66). She is amazed at the persistence of these ancient rituals in contemporary Afro-Caribbean life "like relics / in the pillow of our unconscious…" (66). The speaker's words echo Nichols's statement that: "I keep being amazed at how much of Africa still remains in the Caribbean, when you consider the disruption caused by slavery and the whole European colonizing experience" (qtd. in Welsh 82). Africa, as a woman attending the carnival, argues that

> 'History is a river
> That flow to the sea
> Laced with the bone of memory
> Ride high her choreography
> Pay homage in ceremony' (67)

What can be inferred from this description of history is that the events that make an impact in the collective memory of Africa are the events that must be assimilated and transmitted through ritual acts. Evidently, "Sunris" achieves such assimilation and moves towards endorsing the traumatic heritage of Afro-Caribbean people in the form of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival.

Besides the power of imagination and subversion, Nichols uses the musical component of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in order to keep the sufferings of traumatic Afro-Caribbean past in a tolerable form. The agency of music is manifest when Sunris hears the sounds of an "underbelly pan" (69), which refers to the steel pan or steel drum. Sunris asks people playing pans to let their sounds reach out:

> Spread re-echo
> regather
> down down
> wake dih ear
> of the middle passage
> drown. (69)

Obviously, Sunris wants the pan players to pay tribute to what happened in the Middle Passage. In this context, the call for steel pan music is quite similar to the use of calypso singing at the beginning of "Sunris", which acts as the medium to represent and move beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Besides the Middle Passage, Sunris calls attention for the Sauteur leap:

> Speak to the
> Sauteur leap
> even as you sweeten
> the bones of our
> indigenous one's sleep. (69)

Thus, Sunris wants the carnival to entertain not only indigenous people but also to remember the suicides that took place in Sauteurs, the mainland in Grenada, an island country in the Caribbean Sea in the Atlantic Ocean in 1651. Sauteurs, derived from the French 'Le Morne des Sauteurs' meaning 'Leapers' Hill' or 'The Hill of the Leapers', witnessed the mass suicide of the last indigenous inhabitants of Grenada, the Amerindian Caribs, who jumped into the Atlantic rather than surrender to French colonizers (Viechweg 15). The speaker of the poem wants the sounds of the carnival to spread around:

> Spread re-echo
> regather
> round round
> touch ground
> of Atlantic
> brown. (69)

Evidently, Sunris articulates the sufferings of Amerindian Caribbeans buried deep in the Atlantic. Besides, she refers to a more recent mass suicide in Jonestown: "Scatter / like minnows / the shadows of Jonestown" (70). In the Jonestown massacre, which took place in 1976, hundreds of black people committed suicide by the command of Reverend Jim Jones, a charismatic and sadistic religious leader (Holloway 98). By addressing two mass suicides in the history of the blacks in South America, Sunris re-visions them. More importantly, she believes that the "octaves" of the pans can "fall on [them] / like a benediction / of leaves" (70). Thus, she affirms the potential of the carnival ritual and music to keep the memory of the atrocities and sufferings of the past in a tolerable form. As noted above, the steel pan has its origins in Orisha tradition (Houk 286-288; Aiyejena and Gibbons 653). Therefore, Sunris relies on the sacredness and spirituality of the steel pan music to heal the traumatic events such as in the Middle Passage, Leapers' Hill and Jonestown massacre. In other words, this ritual act of remembrance through the musical component of the steel pan has an intrinsic healing potential. This may be the reason why Nichols as a trauma poet gives prominence to her sociocultural values (Paravisini-Gebert 215). Accordingly, Sunris valorises the traditional Caribbean rituals of collective remembering and healing of traumatic events of the past, which have survived the passing of time thanks to the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival.

Towards the end of "Sunris", Nichols uses the subversive agency of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in the strictest sense and transforms Afro-Caribbean traumatic past into a productive experience, which is an undoubtedly affirmative and reconstructive way of moving beyond trauma. The subversive aspect of the Carnival can be observed in the transformation of Sunris from a witness to history to a history writer. In other words, Nichols transforms Sunris from a simple carnival attendant into a history maker who has the power to subvert the traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean people as "dih trade winds" are "urging [her] with hands of jubilation" and "fanning [her] with hands of rejuvenation" (72). Obviously, Sunris has a surge of elation and sense of renewal as she feels the tropical trade winds preparing her for her renewal. Accordingly, deities play a significant role in her transformation. She meets Legba, as Nichols explains in the glossary, the custodian of the crossroads and of the sacred gateway (85). Also, she meets "a whole heap of deity / like they come out to greet [her]" (72). By asking for help and guidance of local deities, the speaker hopes to finalize the development of her mythic self. For example, she addresses Yoruba deities such as Oya, the goddess of the wind, to "strike [her] a light"; Ogun, the god of war, to "beat dih iron"; Shango, the god of lighting and thunder, "to boom dih bass out"; and Yemanja, the symbol of motherhood, to "cool [her] down / bathe [her] hace in [Yemanja's] river" (73). She wants Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction, creation, and preservation, to "destroy, renew [her] with each blood-shiver" (73). She also meets Makonima, the Great Spirit of Amerindian tribes, and the Virgin Mary (73). Iris, the Greek goddess of the rainbow and natural peace-maker and the bridge between earth and heaven (83), is “arcing before [her] / in a rainbow bridge”, while Isis, the Egyptian goddess known as the Mistress of Magic and Speaker of Spells (83), says something to the speaker which she “cannot quite remember” (73). Thus reinforced by their presence, she assertively states that “I think dis time I go make history / Columbus, you is not the only one / who can make discovery” (72). As argued above, Sunris thus sets to challenge the supremacy of colonial powers and professes to explore the world, a source of authority she could gain through the Carnival. In other words, Sunris not only recognizes but also moves beyond her ancestors’ traumatic past of slavery and the slave trade by assuming the power to re-write her ancestors’ traumatic past through the agency of the Carnival.

Similar to *Sunris* which treats Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with a positive and affirmative attitude by using the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, Nichols’s following collection *Startling the Flying Fish* continues to treat Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with a reconstructive and effective manner but this time by using the agency of myths.

The title of the collection, *Startling the Flying Fish*, has connections with arousing rupture and/or terror in the lives of the enslaved Afro-Caribbean people. This is related with the fact that the flying fish are a type of local fish abundant around the Caribbean island of Barbados and therefore the flying fish in the title refers to African slaves in the Caribbean. In “The Pinta”, we see that the Caribbean Sea is the conveyor of mercenary adventurers since Columbus’s ships, the Pinta, the Niña, and the Santa María “full of adventurers and seasoned sailors / all scrambling around the decks / like mutinous spiders” (21), approach the islands and “startl[e] the flying fish / and the long sleep of history” (22). Columbus’s ships startling the flying fish and the long sleep of history alter the course of natural and human life on the Caribbean islands. As Dwyer argues, Caribbean history is not smooth and continuous but fragmentary and full of ruptures because of the effects of slavery and colonialism (426). Evidently, the arrival of Columbus’s ships marks this event as the beginning of colonization and so of the most traumatic and consequential rupture in Caribbean history. Thus, the title of *Startling the Flying Fish* reflects on the fragmented and traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean slaves.

In *Startling the Flying Fish*, Nichols presents us with the mythical being "Cariwoma" who comes to represent the kind of healing necessary for Afro-Caribbean people's recovery from their traumatic and fragmented heritage. As argued above, "Cariwoma" is the combination of "Caribbean" and "Woman". Therefore, it can be argued that Cariwoma is the embodiment of the traumatic Caribbean past as well as the healing mechanism of the present and the future Caribbean. In other words, Cariwoma is far from lamenting her traumatic Afro-Caribbean heritage but is a resilient inheritor who sets to rewrite Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and thus heal the wrongs of history. Accordingly, in "Deep", Cariwoma verbalizes her strong connections with her ancestors on the Caribbean islands:

> Deep
> I Cariwoma
> have always
> carried deep
> these islands,
> this piece of Atlantic coastland
> inside me.
> Sky-deep
> Sea-deep (9)

Evidently, Cariwoma has buried her ancestors in her heart at such depth that it equals that of the Caribbean Sea and the sky. However, she does not only bury these sufferings but reclaims them all not only with regard to the traumatic past but also to the present and the future. In other words, Cariwoma's depth embodies not only past sufferings but also present and future healings of Afro-Caribbean heritage. In the following poem, "Wind and Shore are my close companions", we witness to Cariwoma's depth in that although she has buried the drownings of her ancestors, she is ready to move beyond them. She states that "In my sea-house there are many mansions / who knows more than me / the songs of the drowning?" (10) The biblical echoes —"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2)—cast an archetypal tinge on the death of the drowned, implicitly setting the suffering of the Africans lost over the Atlantic because of colonisation, the Middle Passage, and enslavement. Cariwoma promises that she will pass down their dreadful stories to the following generations: "I whisper to the living / To the dead I offer a treatise / of continuous remembering—" (10). Evidently, Cariwoma sets to remember and pass down her ancestors' traumatic past to the people living in the contemporary world. In this regard, Cariwoma sets not only to transfer her ancestors' sufferings to the present and following generations but also to rewrite and thus heal them.[28]

Accordingly, Nichols's *Startling the Flying Fish* rewrites and thus offers a healing for Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Donnell argues that Caribbean writers like Grace Nichols in their many works in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries "rehumanize and indigenize those subjects whose humanity, ethnicity (language, religion and cultural traditions) and history had been systematically confiscated by the conditions of colonial rule and plantation life that denied a relationship to the past based on established genealogy, succession and a secure sense of place" (423). Therefore, these writers like Grace Nichols re-affirm and re-appropriate the Caribbeans' relationship with their past through "creative works that recover continuities to places of prior belonging and secreted histories" which provide "a cultural wholeness" (423).[29] Although the kind of stories they address differ from each other, these works are connected by their focus on re-visioning the Caribbean past so as to subvert "dehumanization and powerlessness, whether at the hands of the colonial master, the postcolonial dictator or the abusive father and whether from racial and class hierarchies or those based on linguistic, gendered or sexual norms" and, thus, to acquire "a place in history for Caribbean subjects as humans with value, dignity, culture" (426). Similarly, Dwyer elaborates on the function of Caribbean poetry, as exemplified in Nichols's collections, in articulating and transforming the traumatic past of the Caribbean. Dwyer argues that since the Caribbean historical narratives are not smooth and hierarchical, "the Caribbean postcolonial writer is the best placed to resolve the quarrel with history" by using his or her "creative energy" (433). In this way, they supplant and revise misconceptions about and negative connotations of the Caribbean and replace them with a new energy: Caribbean poets like Nichols "offe[r] counter histories, alternative cosmologies and valoris[e] the indigenous" (438-39). Besides, they regenerate "broken bodies and give nameless bones identity, personality and individual histories etched on a broader West Indian historical palette" (440). They achieve this "not by trying to reproduce the original but breathing life into what has been destroyed" and thus they "invent a new paradigm that is at once postcolonial and idiosyncratically Caribbean" (440).

Consequently, Nichol's *Startling the Flying Fish* revolves around rewriting Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and offering an alternative mythical reality instead. In accordance with this purpose, Nichols creates in Cariwoma a mythological being with the cognizance and the knowledge of previous myths but also offers a new myth that looks to the future and reclaims previous sufferings. As argued by Tracey L. Walters, the employment of myths is a way of conveying an opposition to the dominant historical accounts provided by the Western ideology (171).[30] Walters argues that the Caribbean and various other Black writers "use the classics as a blueprint for the creation of their narratives and marry classical mythology with myths specific to their own cultures" (171). Accordingly, in order to rewrite and heal Afro-Caribbean traumatic history of slavery and colonialism, Nichols's *Startling the Flying Fish* uses myths and offers a counter-hegemonic representation of present Afro-Caribbean society. In other words, Nichols presents us with Cariwoma as a mythical figure who acknowledges Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic journey and tries to recuperate their wounds.

Drawing Cariwoma as a mythical speaker who has the agency to move beyond Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past has two main purposes. First, in doing so, *Startling the Flying Fish* arouses a sense of affinity with the world in general and thus helps for sustaining a harmonious and unifying relationship with the others. In other words, Nichols presents a non-exclusionary and all-encompassing way of moving beyond traumatic past of pre-Columbian societies and those of the following Afro-Caribbean slaves. Second, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, Cariwoma, as a mythical speaker, recognizes Afro-Caribbean traumatic history of slavery and colonialism whereby the sufferings of Afro-Caribbean people are redefined. In this way, Cariwoma finds the opportunity to rewrite the traumatic past of the Afro-Caribbean people whereby they are repositioned in the present. In Nichols's earlier collections such as *I is, The Fat,* and *Lazy Thoughts*, there is a more aggressive attitude towards Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. However, both in *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish,* Nichols adopts a more decisive and affirmative manner towards moving beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic history. Especially, Nichols's *Startling the Flying Fish* renegotiates the place of Afro-

Caribbean people in the present and future through creating in Cariwoma a mythical being who has the agency to subvert and rewrite Afro-Caribbean traumatic past.

Before the publication of *Startling the Flying Fish* in 2005, Nichols had underlined the importance and agency of myths in her essay entitled “The Battle with Language” in 1988. In this essay, Nichols acknowledges the function of myths as follows: “Literature is not a static thing. The myths of old were created by the poets of old and remain powerful sources of imagination, to be drawn on again and again. Odysseus in his rolling ship did a lot for mine as a child and I am grateful” (102). However, Nichols also argues that the imposition of European myths on black psyche might bear unintended consequences:

> [Mythology] has created certain images and archetypes that have come down to us over the ages, and I have observed how destructive, however inadvertently, many of them to the black psyche. As children we grew up with the all-powerful male white God and the biblical associations of white with light and goodness, black with darkness and evil. We feasted on that whole world of Greek myths, European fairy-tales and legends, princes and princesses, Snow Whites and Rapunzels. I am interested in the psychological effects of this on black people even up to today, and how it functions in the minds of white people themselves. I think that white people have to be aware of this […] and question it. I feel we [the Black] also have to come up with new myths and other images that please us. (101)

In this context, Nichols, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, acknowledges and uses figures from European mythology such as Penelope and Janus but she also creates a new mythic being in Cariwoma who has the agency to reinterpret them and thus go beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic past.

Hence, Nichols’s *Startling the Flying Fish* re-constructs what it means to be an Afro-Caribbean after the traumatic past of slavery and colonization through myths—cultural acts of speech. There are various definitions of what a myth is and therefore it is not easy to opt for a single one. According to the Chris Baldick, a myth is “a kind of story or rudimentary narrative sequence, normally traditional and anonymous, through which a given culture ratifies its social customs or accounts for the origins of human and natural phenomena, usually in supernatural or boldly imaginative terms” (235). In other words, myths are narrations about the origins of the cosmos or the elements of it and at the same time explain the social practices of a given culture usually by fantastic means. As they help a culture to ratify its social traditions, myths are useful in sustaining the integrity of individual and cultural identities. As Stuart Hall notes,

> cultural identity is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute return. Of course, it is not a mere phantasm either […]. It has its histories—and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past' […]. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. ("Cultural Identity" 226)

In other words, myths bring a redefinition of our present cultural identities by reconstructing our past.

In addition, Nichols's use of myths in *Startling the Flying Fish* offers a great affinity with Afro-Caribbean culture and with the larger world in general. David Leeming, in his "Introduction" to *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (2005), explains that myths are both "literally or symbolically true to particular cultures" and that they have some "elements in which outsiders can discern some kind of truth" (xii). Therefore, myths are "the cultural vehicles for understandings that people in all corners of the world have shared" (xii). A good example of such universality of myths would be the story of Thor from Norse mythology or Gilgamesh from Sumerian mythology. Although not all people would believe in the supernatural powers of Thor's hammer or the superhuman characteristics of Gilgamesh, both stories have an important contribution to the formation of cultural identity and more importantly to that of universality:

> Thor's hammer conveys a Scandinavian and ultimately a human sense of a terrible and wonderful power of fertility in the universe that is difficult to explain in any historical or scientific sense. The travels of Gilgamesh express the ancient Sumerian-Babylonian search for meaning, a search that metaphorically is still very much ours. (xii)

Thus, myths have the power to arouse a sense of belonging to our culture and to the world in general. In other words, myths bring a union with the people around us and make a harmonious and peaceful world possible.

Myths, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, also have the power to represent Afro-Caribbean historical realities which cannot be accounted for through rational thinking. Marianne Pugliese argues that myths probably emerged from the need to give universal answers to the questions about the causes and meanings of cosmos, life, natural phenomena, historic events, and frames of mind, especially when rational thought is not sufficient to give valid answers (18). In other words, myths have the imaginative power to unravel the unknown realities of life, the state of affairs, and ontological and epistemological historical facts which cannot be approached and explained through rational thinking. Accordingly, there is an inextricable relationship between myth and historical facts. Paul Ricœur argues that myth and history are both "arrangements of events into unified stories" with the difference that myths "tak[e] place in a primordial time, a time other than that of everyday reality" while "history is a narrative of recent events that are further in the past but that are, nonetheless, situated in human time" (273). Ricœur's definitions undergird the intertwining relationship of myths and history and, more importantly, the useful function of myth in accounting for historical realities. In other words, myths are the sources of remembering and/or rewriting a society's historical realities, whether social and/or personal.

Thus, Nichols's use of myths in *Startling the Flying Fish* is the catalyst for the representation of the traumatic past of slavery as it provides the reader with an alternative reality. Alvin H. Rosenfeld argues that the accurate representation of traumatic experiences and/or memories does not revolve around "any exact fidelity to history" but rather depends on "the writer's ability to absorb history into myth or legend" and on "the presentation of feeling through certain brilliant images" (80). Drawing on Rosenfeld's arguments, Judith Kelly underlines the need for a transformation of historical facts into metaphors and myths (3). Kelly explains that, rather than the static chronology of the historical events, we need a re-construction whereby we can make out the story and store it in our collective memories (3). Drawing on these theories, Onega, in a seminal article on the relationship between myths and traumatic events and/or memories, puts a great emphasis on "the role of archetypal forms of representation in the verbalisation and transmission of dissociated affective knowledge" ("Affective" 90). Onega states that "the metaphorisation of historical facts and the imposition of an archetypal pattern of meaning capable of attenuating the shock and making the message transmissible to the narrate/the social group" are necessary to put trauma into words (88). In this regard, a myth might function as a restorative narrative that metaphorically articulates the unspeakable whereby an explanation is cast on ungraspable facts (Kerler 89). In other words, myths have the power to reinterpret traumatic historical facts from an alternative perspective.

In this context, *Startling the Flying Fish* opens with Cariwoma's building empathy with the sufferings of the larger world in general by the courtesy of her mythical agency. In this sense, she unifies pre-Columbian sufferings with those of the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Cariwoma's mythical agency of connecting people belonging to various different cultures can be observed at the beginning of the collection with an Aztec prayer:

> Be it jade, it shatters.
> Be it gold, it breaks.
> Be it a quetzal feather, it tears apart.
> Not forever on earth; only a little while here.
> *Aztec Prayer* (xiii, title in italics)

Aztec prayer thus underlines the transient and elusive nature of life and pays homage to the beliefs of Aztecs, a pre-Columbian Mesoamerican society. Hence, *Startling the Flying Fish* recaptures the time before colonization and slavery and re-stores the lives of the pre-Columbian Caribbean societies. In this way, the collection acknowledges and underlines the necessity of establishing harmony between pre-Columbian and Afro-Caribbean history (Onega "The Notion" 491-99). Similarly, as argued above, in *Sunris*, Nichols underlines the importance of building empathy with the sufferings of others such as the Aztecs, which is the required empathy for trauma healing. Therefore, it might be argued that by drawing our attention to the Aztecs both in *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish*, Nichols underlines the necessity of realizing the transience of life and the necessity of looking to the future. It seems that moving beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic past is only possible through an awareness of the elusiveness of life and the need to seize the present.

In addition, Nichols, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, uses and subverts the mythological stories such as that of Penelope in order to reflect on and rewrite Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. As is quite well-known, Penelope is the intelligent and faithful wife of Odysseus, the hero of Homer's epic poem *Odyssey*. When Odysseus leaves Ithaca to fight in the Trojan War, Penelope waits for his return for twenty years because she believes that he will come back to Ithaca. During this long time, suitors court Penelope in order to convince her to marry but they fail to do so because Penelope devises tricky strategies to avoid marrying any of her suitors. One of her most efficient strategies is weaving a shroud for Laertes, her father-in-law. She promises that when she finishes weaving the shroud, she will marry one of her suitors. Her suitors relentlessly wait for her to finish weaving. However, during the night, she unweaves what she has weaved during the day. In this way, she finds the opportunity to make her suitors wait for a long time. Nichols, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, acknowledges the heroic story of Odyssey and Penelope's relentless waiting for her husband's return as well as her weaving and unweaving strategy and the waiting of the suitors as such. In this regard, Nichols draws a similarity between the story of Penelope's and suitors' inexorable waiting and Afro-Caribbean people's journey over the Atlantic Ocean and their waiting to be rescued by a saviour when they were involuntarily transported from Africa to the Caribbean. Nichols underlines the fact that unlike Penelope's hopeful waiting for her husband, Afro-Caribbean people's journey over the Atlantic was far from being heroic and promising a return to their native land. In fact, African slaves were abducted and taken to the Caribbean involuntarily. More importantly, there was no one waiting for their return to Africa because they were enslaved in the Caribbean and there was no one to rescue them from slavery. Nichols's "But there were other ships" represents such hopelessness of no return. When Cariwoma sees the arrival of ships from Africa to the Caribbean, she recognizes that they are full of dreams, fears, and promises while approaching the Caribbean from Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Kowloon, Canton, Madeira, and Ireland. However, Cariwoma notices that there is nobody waiting for the return of these ships:

> Their songs of exile
> their drums of loss
> all caught in a weaving odyssey
> of no return.
> No waiting Penelope

> unpicking all her work. (13-14)

In this way, Nichols subverts the mythological story of Penelope by rewriting the myth of Penelope as a weaver of stories with the task of keeping alive the collective memory of the slaves' one-way journey to the Caribbean. In other words, Nichols uses the well-known mythological story of Penelope as a medium to reflect on the predicament of slaves traumatized by the Middle Passage which initiated their slavery. In this way, Nichols's *Startling the Flying Fish* underlines Afro-Caribbean people's one-way traumatic journey to the Caribbean which precluded any possibility of a return to their homeland in Africa. Further, slaves were also waiting to be rescued but there was no one who had the power to do that. It seems that when Cariwoma arrives in the Caribbean, they gain voice. In this sense, Cariwoma seems to be Odyssey of Afro-Caribbean slaves. In other words, although it was impossible for Afro-Caribbean slaves to return to their homeland in Africa, Cariwoma achieves a return and recuperation by casting a mythological meaning on the historical fact of Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past.

Thus, Nichols gives Cariwoma the mythological power to represent and move beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic past which cannot be accounted for through rational thinking. In this context, Cariwoma mythicizes herself and turns into a Janus whereby she could have a holistic and omniscient view of the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and endings and the symbol of change in general, is depicted as having two heads, one facing the front/future and the other facing the back/past. According to many sources, Janus was a heroic mortal who came from Greece to Latium where he gained great respect from the public. He was so highly respected that the Romans, in their prayers, held him equal with Jupiter and prayed for his help before starting a new process (Murray 146-148). Janus was credited with "the origin of all things, the introduction of the system of years, the change of season, the ups and downs of fortune, and the civilization of the human race by means of agriculture, industry, arts, and religion" (146). It was believed that Janus had the power to open and close all things whereby he was depicted with two heads; "one being that of a youth, to indicate 'beginning', the other that of an old man, to indicate the 'end'" (147). Besides, Janus was believed to have saved Rome from its enemies by scalding them in hot springs. From then on, a temple was built in honour of Janus. The gates of this temple remained open as long as Rome was at war so that Janus could protect the city while they stayed close during the time of peace (147-148). In *Startling the Flying Fish*, we observe that Nichols uses the mythological story of Janus. In “Yes, I Cariwoma watched history happen”, Cariwoma becomes “like a two-headed Janus, / however far apart heads can be” (11). Similar to Janus with two heads facing the future and the past, Cariwoma sees the beginning of Afro-Caribbean people’s traumatic past and its dreadful consequences in the following generations. On the one hand, Cariwoma’s head that looks into the past recognizes Columbus’s ships approaching the Caribbean with “[b]right dreams which soon turned / for us [Afro-Caribbean people] into nightmares” (11). On the other hand, Cariwoma’s head that looks into the future distinguishes the appalling consequences of the arrival of colonizers after Columbus’s discovery of the New Land. She sees ships full of enslaved Afro-Caribbean people and children. She sees the horror in black children’s eyes which is similar to “duennes”. As Nichols explains in the glossary to the collection, “duenne” is the “spirit of unbaptised child that wanders the forest goblin-like with feet turned backwards” in Caribbean mythology (92). Cariwoma resembles black children to such duennes:

> Face as faceless as a duenne,
> those bewildered little souls
> gazing back in limbo
> at the shards of broken pots (11)

The representation of the little souls in limbo and staring at ruins in perplexity evinces connections with the black children lost over the Atlantic. Obviously, these duenne-like children suffer from their traumatic experiences over the Atlantic. The poem concludes with the arrival of new slaves from other shores: “A cautious welcome across new shores” (12). As argued above, the mythicization of traumatic past makes its representation and transmission possible (Onega “Affective” 88-90). Therefore, Nichols, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, mythicizes Cariwoma into a Janus-like goddess whereby the collection represents the beginning of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and its dreadful consequences in the following years. Besides, Nichols relies on the imaginative power of myths to account for Afro-Caribbean traumatic past (Pugliese 18).

In other words, Nichols imposes the mythical story of Janus embodied in Cariwoma on the historical fact of Afro-Caribbean people who were transported from Africa to the Caribbeans and enslaved there. Thus reinforced by mythicizing herself as Janus, Cariwoma relates the traumatic history of slavery and colonialism from a contemporary perspective.

Consequently, Nichols subverts and reconstructs Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past and provides us with an alternative mythical reality instead of their recorded traumatic history. In other words, Cariwoma rewrites Afro-Caribbean traumatic past in a mythical form whereby she repositions Afro-Caribbean people's historical reality. Therefore, the mythical speaker Cariwoma revisits climactic episodes in the fragmented history of the Caribbean by re-embodying historical figures such as Columbus and Malinche and giving voice to their thoughts. In "Oceanic voices", for example, Cariwoma questions Columbus, the discoverer of the New Land and the initiator of colonization and slavery in the Caribbean accordingly. Cariwoma treats Columbus as if she holds a trial and asks questions to him:

> Is that you Columbus
> I discover in a breeze
> still startling the flying-fish
> in search of the Indies? (23)

Evidently, Cariwoma blames Columbus for disrupting the lives of the Caribbean people who are identified as the flying fish. In the following lines, Columbus appears and apologizes for what he has caused in the Caribbean: "*But how could I have foreseen the dark vistas and the tears / the seeds of destruction that would flourish in discovery's wake?*" (23, italics in the original). Obviously, Columbus is aware of the dreadful consequences of his discovery of the New Land and implicitly asks for forgiveness. In this way, the mythical speaker Cariwoma not only puts Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past into words but also re-interprets it in order to move beyond it rather than remaining entrapped within it. Therefore, Columbus's apology is an apt example of Nichols's subversion and reconstruction of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. In other words, Nichols subverts the powerlessness of the Afro-Caribbean people at the hands of the colonial master and presents an alternative cosmology where Afro-Caribbean people have the right to question the colonizers and the ensuing destruction (Donnell 426). In fact, the dominant western ideology would never recognize Columbus's discovery of the New Land as something to regret. Thus, by making Columbus apologize for his discovery, Nichols redefines what happened in the New Land; the discovery and the ensuing colonization and slavery are acts of violence which require apology and forgiveness.

Cariwoma's subversion and reconstruction of history and emphasis on forgiving traumatic past continue in the poem "And you Malinche". Malinche was an Amerindian woman who lived during the colonization period and betrayed her own people. In her notes to the collection, Nichols describes Malinche as "an Amerindian woman who was the translator for Hernán Cortés during the Spanish Conquest of 1521" and therefore became the symbol for the "expression of betrayal" (94).[31] By providing an opportunity for Malinche to express her opinions, Nichols underlines the necessity of forgiving past wrongdoings in order to move beyond one's traumatic past. In "And you, Malinche", Cariwoma talks to Malinche about her betrayal during the colonization period. When Cariwoma asks Malinche why she became the traitor-translator, Malinche responds that she does not exactly remember what happened: "*Time and the green jaws of the jungle / have out holes in the leaves of my memory*" (27, italics in the original). Cariwoma thus suggests that Malinche had no true recollection of her wrongdoings and decides that the Caribbean people should no longer blame Malinche for what she had done but forgive her: "But how long can we stare into a mirror of blame? / Accept, O prodigal mother of the mestizo—/ this marigold flower for the black cloud of your hair" (27). As argued above, "Sunris" gives voice to Montezuma and offers various reasons for the fall of the Aztec Kingdom instead of putting all the blame on Montezuma. "And you, Malinche" similarly suggests that Malinche should be forgiven for her mistakes. Evidently, the examples of Malinche and Columbus allow Nichols to rebuild their stories and present an alternative world of forgiveness and harmony. Nichols's urge for a harmonious world in which perpetrators of trauma such as Columbus and betrayers such as Malinche are forgiven resonates with Onega's call for building an empathic union with the whole world in order to heal one's traumatic past ("The Notion" 491-99). Hence, through Cariwoma's agency as a mythical speaker who has the power to construct an interrelationship between different time periods and cultures, Nichols's *Startling the Flying Fish* capitalizes on and rewrites emblematic traumatic moments in Afro-Caribbean history. In doing so, Cariwoma presents us with an alternative mythical reality of Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic past. In other words, Nichols offers an alternative cosmology and thus creates a new trauma paradigm which tends towards forgetting and forgiving past traumatic wounds.

Thus, while rewriting traumatic moments in the history of Afro-Caribbean people, Cariwoma goes beyond the hegemonic definitions of an Afro-Caribbean trauma inheritor and multiplies the possibilities of building a world of peace and harmony by building empathic union with the sufferings of other people around her. She gradually transforms from a two-headed Janus-like mythical speaker to a many-headed mythical being looking into and moving beyond other traumatic places and epochs in South America. In other words, the mythical speaker Cariwoma increasingly gains more power to connect with the world around her. In "Today I sing," for example, she relates to Macchu Picchu: "O sacred city in the clouds— / Macchu Picchu wrapping itself in shroud / from conquistador-gaze" (35). As Nichols explains, Macchu Picchu is a "fortified city, high above the Urubamba River. [It is] [a] ruined complex of terraces, gabled houses and sacred plazas carved out in the Andes that bear witness to Inca architecture" (93-4). When Cariwoma thinks about this ancient city, she is "filled with a strange sadness / and a pride" (36). Obviously, Cariwoma builds empathy with other people's sufferings such as those in Macchu Picchu in order to move beyond her traumatic past. Cariwoma not only pays homage to the ancient city of Macchu Picchu but also to many unnamed tribes waiting to be revived through her poetry. For example, in "Woman paddling canoe", she relates to forgotten tribes and verbalizes their sufferings:

> So many forgotten gods and tribes
> So many hardened ritual sites—
> the skeletons of so many stories
> all waiting to be re-fleshed by me
> all waiting to be awakened with a kiss
> like sleeping beauty. (40)

Obviously, Cariwoma is the long-time expected mouthpiece for unidentified gods and decimated tribes. As argued above, contemporary Caribbean poets like Nichols regenerate lost Afro-Caribbean lives (Dwyer 440). Accordingly, Nichols gives nameless bones an identity and re-affirms their individual histories. An example of such nameless individuals is the children in Las Margaritas, a city in the Mexican state of Chiapas. In “The Children of Las Margaritas”, Cariwoma sees them dancing and wonders who they are honouring with their dance: the rain god Tlaloc, Mary, Jesus, or the goddess of the ripening maize Chicomecoatl (83). The children’s ancestors have become deities “through their suffering and dying” (83). So, the children dance for “freedom”, “justice, recompense / for old and new violations” (83). Evidently, Cariwoma presents openness to care and love through the children’s dance; they do not take revenge violently but opt for dancing as a ritual act of redress and atonement as well as remembrance of their traumatic past. As argued above, delving into trauma for its own sake does not produce any healing effects. In fact, trauma needs to be attached to other personal experiences such as being physically and psychically strong (van der Kolk and McFarlane 19). In line with this, the children’s dance for freedom and justice resonate with this need to attach trauma to other daily experiences. Besides, van der Kolk and McFarlane underline the need to build empathic union with the world around in order to survive and move beyond one’s traumatic past (19). Accordingly, Cariwoma’s agency to reflect on the predicament of other people such as in Macchu Picchu and Las Margaritas attests to the power she has gained as a mythical being and the need to establish empathic relationship with other people’s sufferings.

The progressive healing achieved through Cariwoma observed in *Startling the Flying Fish* moves towards embracing and moving beyond all the sufferings embedded in the Caribbean Sea. Accordingly, towards the end of the collection, we observe the transformation of Cariwoma from a many-headed mythical being into a goddess of sea by uniting with the Caribbean Sea whereby she gains the power to renegotiate and treat the traumatic past embedded in the Caribbean Sea. In the penultimate poem to the collection, “Sea right here on your lipshore”, Cariwoma calls out to the sea and familiarizes herself with it: “Sea right here on your lipshore / is where I Cariwoma must come / to reacquaint with all of me” (87). Onega states that the sea is “the origin of life”

("Affective" 92) while the shore is "the liminal space between sea and land where all forms of life breed" (93). Accordingly, the sea becomes the site which Cariwoma identifies with while the shore turns into the ground for new beginnings in her life: "Right here on your shifting sands / is where I [Cariwoma] must face up / to life's cosmic exclamations" (87). After hearing the sea's voice, she finds its "echoes in my own [Cariwoma's] voicespeak" (87). By imposing such an archetypal frame on Cariwoma's relationship with the sea, Nichols transforms Cariwoma into a mythic character with the capacity to renegotiate life's global outcries. In other words, Cariwoma is reborn at the end of the collection and relates to the outer world with the potential to establish harmony and love instead of the traumatic past rooted in the Caribbean Sea.

Accordingly, Cariwoma, as a mythical being that unites with the Caribbean Sea, offers recuperation for Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. In "Today I sing of Sea self", she sings a song for and about the Caribbean Sea. It seems that the Caribbean Sea has finally gained peace and tranquillity "[w]ith no boat or ship to darken / the hem of her horizon / no shadows cast" (88). Obviously, Nichols refers to colonizer and slave trade ships that sailed over the Atlantic and invaded the Caribbean. Instead of these ships, the sea is now saturated with the flying fish which are the living emblem of Afro-Caribbean people and the harmony of nature in general: The Caribbean Sea is "[c]onstantly stitched and re-stitched / by the bright seamstresses of flying fish / adding a thousand sapphire touches" (88). As argued above, in "The Pinta", Columbus's ships startled the flying fish, the symbol of Afro-Caribbean people. However, Cariwoma's identification with the sea gives the flying fish the power to bring new life to the Caribbean. Thus, Cariwoma looks out to "this new world / awaiting the footprint of [her] arrival" (88). In other words, Cariwoma looks forward to the beginning of her new life which has the potential to erase the traumatic past of the Caribbean Sea and bring peace and tranquillity instead.

In conclusion, it is evident that *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* are concerned with the recognition of the traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean people and the role of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and mythical agency in healing trauma respectively. In this way, living in a harmonious and peaceful world becomes possible. Accordingly, *Sunris* has resort to the Carnival which is the platform to articulate both hedonistic and defiant feelings rooted in the slavery period. By attending the carnival, Sunris, the speaker of the long poem “Sunris”, recognizes not only Afro-Caribbean peoples’ sufferings but also those of the world surrounding her. Further, Sunris is able to keep the traumatic past of her ancestors in an endurable form through the musical component of the Carnival. The subversive aspect of the Carnival is what helps Sunris to go beyond the boundaries of her existence as a carnival attendant and become a goddess-like history writer at the end of the collection. In this way, she can cast alternative meanings on her ancestors’ traumatic experiences of slavery and colonization. Thus, *Sunris* uses the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as a means of achieving reconciliation and recovery from Afro-Caribbean traumatic past of slavery and the Middle Passage. Similar to *Sunris*, *Startling the Flying Fish* is concerned with acknowledging and moving beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic history. *Startling the Flying Fish* achieves this through Cariwoma, an archetypal, representative character of Afro-Caribbean people in the traumatic past of slavery as well as in our contemporary world. In this regard, Nichols creates in Cariwoma a mythical being with the power to connect Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with the present. This all-encompassing endeavour is enhanced by the inclusion of the traumatic histories of other collectivities and/or individuals such as the Aztecs or the people in Macchu Picchu and Las Margaritas. In other words, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, the focus is more on the mythicization of Cariwoma herself as identical with the Caribbean Black who offers an alternative world of peace and tranquillity by uniting with the other people around. In this context, Cariwoma is introduced as a figure that embraces not only the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past but also its present and future healing mechanisms as well the sufferings and healings of other collectivities around her. Evidently, Nichols, in both *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish*, represents the need for the recognition and moving beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic past of slavery and the Middle Passage through the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and mythical retellings of Afro-Caribbean historical reality respectively.

CONCLUSION

Grace Nichols's *I is* (1983), *The Fat* (1984), *Lazy Thoughts* (1989), *Sunris* (1996) and *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005) belong to the representations of trauma and trauma healing strategies in literary works that have emerged almost simultaneously with the rise of interest in trauma theory in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. The Holocaust, the two world wars, the wars of decolonization, international terrorism, ethnic and racial discriminations, sexual and physical abuse, the Middle Passage and slavery have been among the most represented traumatic events in trauma literature. Works such as Nichols's represent different traumatic events and trauma-coping mechanisms. In fact, Nichols's trauma poetry shows that trauma and the trauma coping strategies of non-western people represented in postcolonial literary works require recognition and analysis on their own terms.

Accordingly, this study has considered five of Nichols's poetry collections in terms of their presentations of trauma and trauma coping strategies and shown that Nichols, one of the most important poets in contemporary British poetry, represents the Afro-Caribbean traumatic past and healing mechanisms in these poetry collections. The main argument of this study is that we can trace a gradual evolution of the treatment of trauma and trauma coping strategies in Nichols's collections. This evolution is the result of the poet's need to challenge Afro-Caribbean people's status as desperate victims of trauma. Instead, Nichols's collections depict an alternative identity formation for present-day Afro-Caribbean people by revisiting and rewriting Afro-Caribbean traumatic history in the earlier collections (*I is*, *The Fat*, and *Lazy Thoughts*) and offering an alternative world of peace and harmony in the later collections (*Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish*). In lieu of a homogeneous description of an Afro-Caribbean descendant of the traumatic past of the slave trade, slavery, and colonialism, Nichols's poems offer an alternative identity formation for Afro-Caribbean people in her representations of trauma and trauma coping strategies. Accordingly, in Nichols's collections the world of Afro-Caribbean people is depicted as one of recovery and healing instead of merely traumatic entrapment. In this way, the collections not only hold up mirrors to the different stages of trauma—from the acting out phase towards healing alias working through—but also enact trauma and trauma coping. In other words, as can be surmised from the analysis and discussions in this study, Nichols's poems are an embodiment of the predicament of traumatised Afro-Caribbean people who manage to work through their traumatic past and look towards a better future built upon it.

This thesis has shown that reading Nichols's representation of trauma and trauma coping strategies in *I is* necessitates a retrospective view of the traumatic history of the Middle Passage and Afro-Caribbean slavery in the New Land both at individual and collective levels. The poem is embodied in the voice of a "long memoried woman", a poetic construct who acts sometimes as a collective speaker for the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people and sometimes for other trauma victims and trauma itself. Hence, trauma representation in the collection is focused on particularly voicing and expressing a part that has been long suppressed. As can be inferred from the title, *I is*, the poems in the collection are directed at addressing the specificity of the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean people, especially black slave women. However, individual poems in the collection have proven that the representation of trauma and healing is not limited to Afro-Caribbean female slaves but addresses black slave men and children as well. Similar to the autobiographical accounts given by Holocaust survivors, the poems narrate the traumatic experiences of slavery and the Middle Passage even if only after centuries. In this way, the story of traumatised Afro-Caribbean people could be heard and transmitted to the following generations in our contemporary world.

In this regard, it is observed that *I is* addresses different types of trauma caused by various experiences of Afro-Caribbean people such as torture, brutalization, rape, death, suicide, and work exploitation. In order to represent these traumatic experiences, the collection employs four main trauma representation strategies adopted by the collective speaker; repression, haunting, repetition, and traumatic pastoral. Nichols's poems present Afro-Caribbean people who manage to work through their traumas by having recourse to two basic trauma coping strategies; a return to religion and spirituality and dissociation which is manifest in escape through imagination and developing revenge fantasies. Thus, *I is* presents the possibility of the recovery of a traumatised subject. In doing so, the collection offers the possibility of trauma victims turning into perpetrators. Hence, in *I is*, Nichols presents the strength Afro-Caribbean people have gained after all their traumatic experiences through the power of their language. In other words, rather than acting out the traumatic past incessantly, Nichols offers the possibility of healing through trauma coping strategies. In this way, *I is* represents the first step of the evolutionary identity formation of Afro-Caribbean people as resilient agents rather than victims of trauma.

This study has discovered that in Nichols's poetry collections there is a continuity that starts with an emphasis on the representation of trauma and develops progressively towards the presentation of trauma coping strategies. In this regard, similar to Nichols's representation of trauma and trauma healing in *I is*, Nichols's following poetry collections, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts*, also attend to the continuity of the traumatic past of Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain in the post 1960s rather than Afro-Caribbean slaves in the Caribbean. The collections change their focus from the traumatic experiences of the Middle Passage and slavery towards their repercussions in the lives of Afro-Caribbean people in Britain in the post 1960s. Although different in their choices of place and time, all of these three collections are inextricably bound with each other. The continuity in their concern is also emphasized in eight poems of *I is* added to the last section of *The Fat*. Similarly, *Lazy Thoughts* can be considered as a continuation of *The Fat* since both of these collections address adverse living conditions of the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain in the post 1960s. The collections present readers with the fact that although centuries have passed since their Afro-Caribbean ancestors were exposed to traumatic experiences of the Middle Passage and slavery, the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Britain are still haunted by their transgenerationally transmitted traumatic past. Besides such haunting, the collections present the second generation of Afro-Caribbean people's difficulties at racial, economic, and social levels in Britain. They are othered and excluded and suffer from alienation and anxiety in Britain. In order to alleviate their suffering and move beyond their traumatic past, they turn to their nostalgic imaginations of their homeland in the Caribbean which they find to be the source of hope and belonging. Particularly, the nostalgic yearning for their homeland in the Caribbean offers a peaceful and benign place for the second generation Afro-Caribbean diaspora at the expense of repressing their traumatic past. Besides nostalgia, *The Fat* and *Lazy Thoughts* have recourse to the strategy of grotesque images of Afro-Caribbean females in order to move beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic past. In this regard, grotesque body images of the speakers, being unusually fat and lazy, are employed not only to cope with their traumatic legacies but also redefine and endorse the negative stereotyping that perpetrates their traumatic past.

It is clear that Nichols's collections, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* plunge readers deeper into the traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean people, but this time in a more positive and affirmative way. These two books are engaged in re-visioning and rewriting the traumatic history of Afro-Caribbean people through the employment of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival and through the agency of mythical retellings, respectively. In other words, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* aim at redressing the fragmentedness of Afro-Caribbean history by offering the Carnival and mythical retellings as healing strategies. Further, the employment of the Carnival and myths helps to establish connections between the collective and individual traumatic histories of other groups of peoples. In doing so, *Sunris* and *Startling the Flying Fish* acknowledge and reinforce the importance of living in a harmonious and peaceful world by forming a union with other groups of people. In "Sunris", the long title poem of *Sunris*, Nichols presents us with a speaker (Sunris) who attends the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. Sunris acknowledges not only Afro-Caribbean people's traumatic experiences as part of their history but also those of others in different parts of the world. Thus, Sunris manages to build an empathic union with the world surrounding her. Besides, Sunris relies on the musical component of the Carnival to help her preserve and acknowledge the traumatic past of her Afro-Caribbean ancestors in a tolerable form. Finally, through the subversive agency of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, Sunris is able to confer alternative meanings onto her ancestors' traumatic past of slavery and colonization. In this way, the Carnival becomes the medium of reconciliation for the Afro-Caribbean collectivity. In other words, in "Sunris", the

Trinidad and Tobago Carnival provides the opportunity to reform the present Afro-Caribbean identity by casting alternative meanings on Afro-Caribbean traumatic history.

Similar to *Sunris*, Nichols's following collection *Startling the Flying Fish* acknowledges and moves beyond Afro-Caribbean traumatic history but this time having resort to the power of myths instead of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival as in *Sunris*. *Startling the Flying Fish* presents Cariwoma whose name is the combination of "Caribbean" and "woman". Cariwoma becomes the collective consciousness of Afro-Caribbean people. Nichols, in *Startling the Flying Fish*, creates her own myth out of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past that is far too dramatic. Nichols's creation of her own myth is certainly an example of turning trauma into a productive and useful agency for Afro-Caribbean people. In this regard, Nichols draws on two main mythological stories; Penelope's patient waiting and Janus's omniscient view of past, present, and future. Cariwoma subverts the mythological story of Penelope who waits for Odysseus's return. In fact, Cariwoma emphasizes the fact that African slaves went on a one way journey to the Caribbean. More importantly, however, Cariwoma gradually transforms into a Janus-like mythical being that connects Afro-Caribbean traumatic past with their present and future. What Cariwoma does as a mythical being is to rewrite Afro-Caribbean traumatic history by talking to historical characters responsible for colonialism such as Columbus and Malinche and presenting us alternative mythical retellings. Besides, Cariwoma carries the characteristics of a many-headed mythical being that articulates traumatic experiences of other groups of people. Towards the end of *Startling the Flying Fish*, Cariwoma unites with the Caribbean Sea and thus gains the mythical power to reconsider her traumatic heritage and move beyond it. Through such mythical agency, Cariwoma gainsays her traumatic inheritance and offers a world of tranquillity and peace instead.

Hence, this study has found out that Afro-Caribbean history as marked by the traumatic events such as the Middle Passage and slavery are recognized as important in understanding and representing the collective trauma and healing mechanisms of Afro-Caribbean people as represented in Nichols's *I is a Long-Memoried Woman, The Fat*

Black Woman`s Poems, Lazy Thoughts, Sunris, and *Startling the Flying Fish*. The poems in Nichols's collections have the power of complementing what other types of narratives, including history, cannot say. Often ignored by mainstream culture, the collective and individual experiences of a suppressed culture like the Afro-Caribbean are given testimonial voice in these poems. Accordingly, Nichols provides us with a portrayal of the past and present lives of traumatised Afro-Caribbean people. Giving voice to the traumatised other in her collections, Nichols makes the past unforgettable and also underlines that it is necessary to remember and recognize the traumatic past fully in order to understand not only the present difficulties of Afro-Caribbean people but also their trauma coping mechanisms peculiar to their cultures and necessary for their identity formations.

By placing Nichols's production within trauma theory and drawing on relevant theories, this study has argued that there are various ways of representing trauma and trauma coping strategies in Nichols's poetry. The speakers in Nichols's collections depend on the power of their words in order to heal the wounds of their traumatic past and thus reclaim their agency in the present. In this respect, this study has acknowledged trauma theory built on Freudian psychoanalysis as a point of departure and carried out further research to enable an understanding of trauma and trauma coping strategies represented in Nichols's poetry collections. Having recourse to the theoretical background of the discipline of trauma studies together with related areas such as theories of nostalgia, grotesque realism, carnival, carnivalesque, myths, and mythical re-writings of Afro-Caribbean traumatic past, this study has carried out a thorough analysis of Nichols's poetry collections. Hence, this study provides not only detailed theoretical background information of trauma theory and an analysis of Nichols's collections, but also offers an understanding of the strategies for the representation of trauma and its healing experienced by Afro-Caribbean people during their slavery in the Caribbean and in the present in their diasporic lives in Britain. This study has made its intervention in the prevailing discussions about and analyses of Nichols's poetry but does not lay claim to definitive status. However, this study has attempted to provide conclusions that go beyond established theoretical insights into

Nichols's poetry by reading her collections from the perspective of trauma theory and trauma coping strategies.

NOTES

[1] Since the early 1990s—especially after the publication of Cathy Caruth's interdisciplinary studies of trauma theory—various articles and collections of edited essays have been written which analyse literary texts from the perspective of trauma theory. Among these the most important works are Onega and Ganteau's *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary British Fiction* (2011), Robert F. Garratt's *Trauma and History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead* (2011), Onega and Ganteau's *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature* (2013), Christa Schönfelder's *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction* (2013), Onega and Ganteau's *Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and the Ethics of Form* (2014), Marita Nadal and Monica Calvo's *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation* (2014), Reina van der Wiel's *Literary Aesthetics of Trauma: Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson* (2014), Alan Gibbs's *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (2014), and monographs such as J. Brooks Bouson's *Quiet as It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (2000), Cynthia S. Hamilton's *Sara Paretsky: Detective Fiction and Trauma Literature* (2015) and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín's *Eva Figes' Writings: A Journey through Trauma* (2015). Evidently, trauma theory has been applied mainly to works of fiction although there are only a few studies on poetry; these include Daniel Hipp's *The Poetry of Shell Shock: Wartime Trauma and Healing in Wilfred Owen, Ivor Gurney, and Siegfried Sassoon* (2005) and Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva's *The Testimonies of Russian and American Postmodern Poetry: Reference, Trauma, and History* (2014).

[2] Furthermore, Craps asks us to reconsider the definition of trauma as an unexpected disastrous event, including "ongoing, everyday forms of violence and oppression affecting subordinate groups" (4). Craps notes that trauma experienced by "people of colour, women, gays and lesbians, lower-class people, and people with disabilities are routinely denied, dismissed, or disregarded because they fail to meet the criteria of singularity and exceptionality" (5).

[3] From this point onwards, the study refers to the collections by their shortened titles; *I is*, *The Fat*, and *Lazy Thoughts*.

[4] Since the beginning of her writing career, Nichols has been a prolific poet. She has written six adult collections of poetry; *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983), *The Fat Black Woman`s Poems* (1984), *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989), *Sunris* (1996), and *Startling the Flying Fish* (2005) and *Picasso I want my Face Back* (2009) as well as various collections of children's poems such as *Trust You, Wriggly* (1981), *Baby Fisher and Other Stories* (1983), *Leslyn in London* (1984), *A Dangerous Knowing: Four Black Women Poets* (1985), *The Discovery* (1986), *Come into my Tropical Garden: Poems for Children* (1988), *Poetry Jump-Up* (1990), *Can I Buy a Slice of Sky: Poems from Black, Asian, and American Indian Cultures* (1991), *No Hickory No Dickory No Dock* (1991), *Give Yourself a Hug* (1996), *Asana and the Animals* (1998), *From Mouth to Mouth* (2004), *A Caribbean Dozen* (1994), *Paint me a Poem* (2004), *The Poet Cat*, *Under the Moon and Over the Sea* (2004), *No, Baby, No* (2011), *Whoa, Baby, Whoa* (2012), *Sun Time, Snow Time* (2013) and *Cosmic Disco* (2013). She has received various awards including The Commonwealth Poetry Prize (1983) for *I is a Long Memoried Woman*; the Arts Council Writers Award (1986); the Poetry Book Society Best Single Author Children's Collection (1994); the Guyana Prize for Poetry (1996) for *Sunris*; the Cholmondeley Award (2001); the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education Poetry Award (2003); the Children's Poetry Bookshelf Best Single Author's Collection (2004) for *Paint Me a Poem* and the Guyana Poetry Award (2008). In 2007, Nichols was chosen as a Fellow of the UK's Royal Society of Literature.

[5] Similar to poetry collections, various novels present the same focus such as Caryl Phillips's *Higher Ground* (1989), *Cambridge* (1991), *Crossing the River* (1993) and *The Nature of Blood* (1997), Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger* (1992), Fred D'Aguiar's *The Longest Memory* (1994) and *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), and Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*. (2008)

[6] Al Alvarez's poetry anthology, *The New Poetry*, first published in 1962, influenced poetry anthologies in the following years.

[7] The plurality of voices in poetry in the 1980s was closely related with the political and social flux in the same decade. The consensus between the USA and Britain dismantled, Spain, Portugal, the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc disintegrated, Britain lost its place on the world stage, the New Right and its brutal politics rose into power, the underclass faced unemployment. (Hulse *et al*. 15)

[8] So far as anthologies of poetry were concerned, it was difficult for poets of Caribbean origin to be included in the standard canon until the 1980s. It was even more difficult for women poets of Caribbean origin such as Grace Nichols, Valerie Bloom, Amryl Johnson, and Accabre Huntley to be included in poetry anthologies—until they were first included in *News for Babylon* in 1986.

[9] Drawing on Freud's suggestions in relation to "working through" and referring to Sandor Ferenczi as the coiner of the term, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, in their famous work *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1994), reconceptualise mourning and accordingly traumatic experience.

[10] Freud and Breuer refer the readers to Pierre Janet's *l'Automatisme Psychologique* (1889) in a footnote: "In Janet's interesting study on mental automatism (1889), there is an account of the cure of a hysterical girl by a method analogous to ours" ("On the Psychical Mechanism" 7). Critics like Judith Herman have also acclaimed Pierre Janet as the pioneer in developing a way to cure psychic trauma. (175-77)

[11] About the function of literary texts in representing trauma, see LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. (2001)

[12] Since it disregards the traumatic experiences of the subordinate groups, Claire Stocks argues that trauma theory "reinforces ethically weighted distinctions between 'good' Western, healthy conceptions of self and 'bad' pathological, fragmented 'others'" (77).

[13] In the analysis of postcolonial literary texts from the perspective of trauma theory, Whitehead underlines the vitality of three basic questions: "do postcolonial texts articulate the effects of trauma in terms of the individualist self, or do they emphasize alternative notions of the self and its relation to the wider community", "does the category of trauma map straightforwardly onto the postcolonial text?" and "can we see the postcolonial text as a site for articulating local, non-western concepts of suffering, loss, and bereavement or alternatively of recovery and healing?" (15)

[14] Neil J. Smelser defines cultural trauma as "a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative affect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions" (44).

[15] As argued in the first chapter, Afro-Caribbean women were deprived of any sexual control over their lives because rape and sexual abuse were normalized. Besides, Afro-Caribbean slave women were stereotyped as licentious and promiscuous by slave owners.

[16] Contemporary British writers of Caribbean origin such as Caryl Philips, David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar, and John Agard have represented traumatic experiences of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in their works.

[17] It is a well-known fact that these three places suffered the atrocious brutalities of colonial practices. The Congo refers to the Congo Free State which was established during the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 and gained a notorious place in the history of colonial Africa (Nelson 305). Under the tyranny of King Leopold II of Belgium and his European agents, African slaves were terrorized to collect wild rubber and other exportable commodities. Unless they could get the required amount of these goods, they were whipped and tortured, villages were burnt, and women were captivated (Nelson 306). Besides, the increasing demand for commodities caused famine, illness, and

depopulation in many regions (306). Similarly, Sierra Leone witnessed the sale of slaves (Megill vii) and the Gold Coast was a slave coast where slaves worked in households, on farms, in the gold mines, in the forts and castles (Essah 308).

[18] Robin Cohen carries out an anthropological study about the origins of Caribbean peoples that go back to the Caribs and Arawaks who lost their lives during the colonization period because of being a victim to conquistadors, working too much, or becoming ill. After Caribs and Arawaks, new people arrived and settled in the Caribbean from different parts of the world—the slaves from Africa, the white colonizers from Europe, and workers from India (137). Considering this, Cohen considers Caribbean people as members of other diasporas migrating to the Caribbean as African slaves, Indian workers, or European colonizers (137).

[19] The history of Afro-Caribbean peoples in Europe goes back to the seventeenth century but, within the scope of this thesis, we will analyse the predicament of Afro-Caribbean diaspora after the Second World War.

[20] For more information on the first-generation British Afro-Caribbean peoples, see Winston James's "Migration, Racism and Identity".

[21] Homi Bhabha's conceptualisation hybridity might be regarded as an important tool to understand Afro-Caribbean people's sense of alienation in Britain. Within a philosophical, psychological, and political framework, Bhabha argues that hybridity "is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences," but instead is "the perplexity of living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life" (314). Further, Bhabha argues that hybrid elements are "neither the One […] nor the Other […] but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both" (28). Bhabha calls this in-betweenness as the "Third Space" (28). In other words, Third Space enables an understanding of "the identities of cultures in terms that transcend the binary dialectic between 'us/them,' 'insider/outsider,' 'inclusion/exclusion'" (Childs and Fowler 112).

[22] Oliver-Rotger argues that "[a]s immigrants and exiles often look backwards to the originary home to define themselves, there is always nostalgia, the desire for someplace else, to be away from the host country in order to see, know again, and fill in the void left by years of geographic and cultural separation" and the concept of home is ingrained by an "idealization of the country far away" (2).

[23] Nostalgia is a widespread phenomenon which has emerged as a form of trauma coping mechanism employed in postcolonial literature. Nostalgia has consistently been used in literary narratives by various postcolonial writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Edwidge Danticat along with many others. Many critics, in their analysis of postcolonial literary texts, underline the healing power of nostalgia. For example, Oliver-Rotger argues that nostalgia provides writers with the opportunity to "imagine the past, present, and the future in alternative terms that cannot be envisioned beyond literature" (12). Similarly, John J. Su argues that "only narrative refigurations of experience that use the past to envision some degree of agency rather than victimization can enable a community to move beyond its traumatic history and to imagine a more satisfying future" (148). Nostalgia contributes to this process by providing "a richer and more complex picture of the past" and emphasizing "moments of lost possibility and communities that were never fully realized" (149). Thus, nostalgia inspires the faculty of imagination and facilitates traumatized subjects' efforts to go beyond trauma as represented in postcolonial literature.

[24] Onega, in her lectures on trauma and the grotesque, emphasizes that this image is also reminiscent of *The Dog Woman* in Jeanette Winterson's novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Onega argues that both Nichols's and Winterson's mountain-like grotesque heroines, like Angela Carter's Fevvers, the fat aerialist in *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Ruth, the abnormally tall and ugly housewife in Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983), and many other feminist renderings of resilient women in the British fiction of the 1980s, are intertextually indebted to the Brobdingnagian princesses who made Gulliver their toy in his second journey, in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. (n.p.)

[25] In 1530, Trinidad and Tobago was colonized by the Spanish and captured by the British in 1797. Also, French Catholic colonial powers settled there in 1783 and introduced their masquerades. (Forbes-Erickson 240)

[26] Born in Castries, St. Lucia in 1930, Derek Walcott is a contemporary postcolonial poet and playwright and the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992. He is noted for his works that explore Caribbean identity, culture and life that use not only verse but also prose and elements of pantomime, realism, fable, and fantasy. Thus, he has created his own Caribbean tradition by drawing elements from the Caribbean as well as from European sources. (Krueger et al., 384; Thieme 2)

[27] McCartha Lewis with the stage name Calypso Rose is recognized as the first woman to become a calypso star. After making a breakthrough in 1964, she became the first woman to take the Calypso Monarch title. Calyso Rose believes that calypso is an African musical form that each member of the Afro-Caribbean community must recognize as their cultural heritage. (Mendez et. al 81; Mason 139; Gadsby 64-65)

[28] The re-writing of the traumatic past of the Caribbean has been a major concern for various Caribbean writers such as Edward Brathwaite, Frantz Fanon, Roberto Fernández Retamar, Edouard Glissant, José Luis González, Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, Derek Walcott, and Grace Nichols. These writers analyse the traumatic history of colonialism and slavery as recorded from the Eurocentric perspective of the colonizers who have exploited their lands for ages. They aim to re-write such "'flawed' accounts of Caribbean historical development" and thus to re-structure "the region's history into narratives that could serve as the basis for a reinterpretation of the roles played by Caribbean peoples in their own history, and by extension, for a reformulation of the prevailing concepts of Caribbean national and individual identities" (Paravisini-Gebert 215). In lieu of such Eurocentric approaches to history, they develop indigenous approaches which mirror "essential aspects of the struggles of Caribbean peoples to assert their own sociocultural values in opposition to those imposed by the various colonial metropolises" (215).

[29] C.L.R. James's *Black Jacobins* (1938), V.S. Reid's *New Day* (1949), Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* (1970), Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970), Lakshmi Persaud's *Butterfly in the Wind* (1990), and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996) are among such creative works that unfold different aspects of the Caribbean history (Donnell 423-26).

[30] By focusing on the rewritings of myths by Afro-American women writers such as Philips Wheatley, Henrietta Cordelia Ray, Pauline Hopkins, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison, and Rita Dove, Walters argues that not only Afro-American but various Black writers such as Caribbean poet Derek Walcott in *Omeros* (1990), Black British writer Bernadine Evaristo, in *The Emperor's Babe* (2001), and African poet/novelist Wole Soyinka in *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1974) have recourse the agency of myths in rewriting history. (170-172)

[31] As stated above, Cortés was the leader of the Spanish invaders in Mexico.

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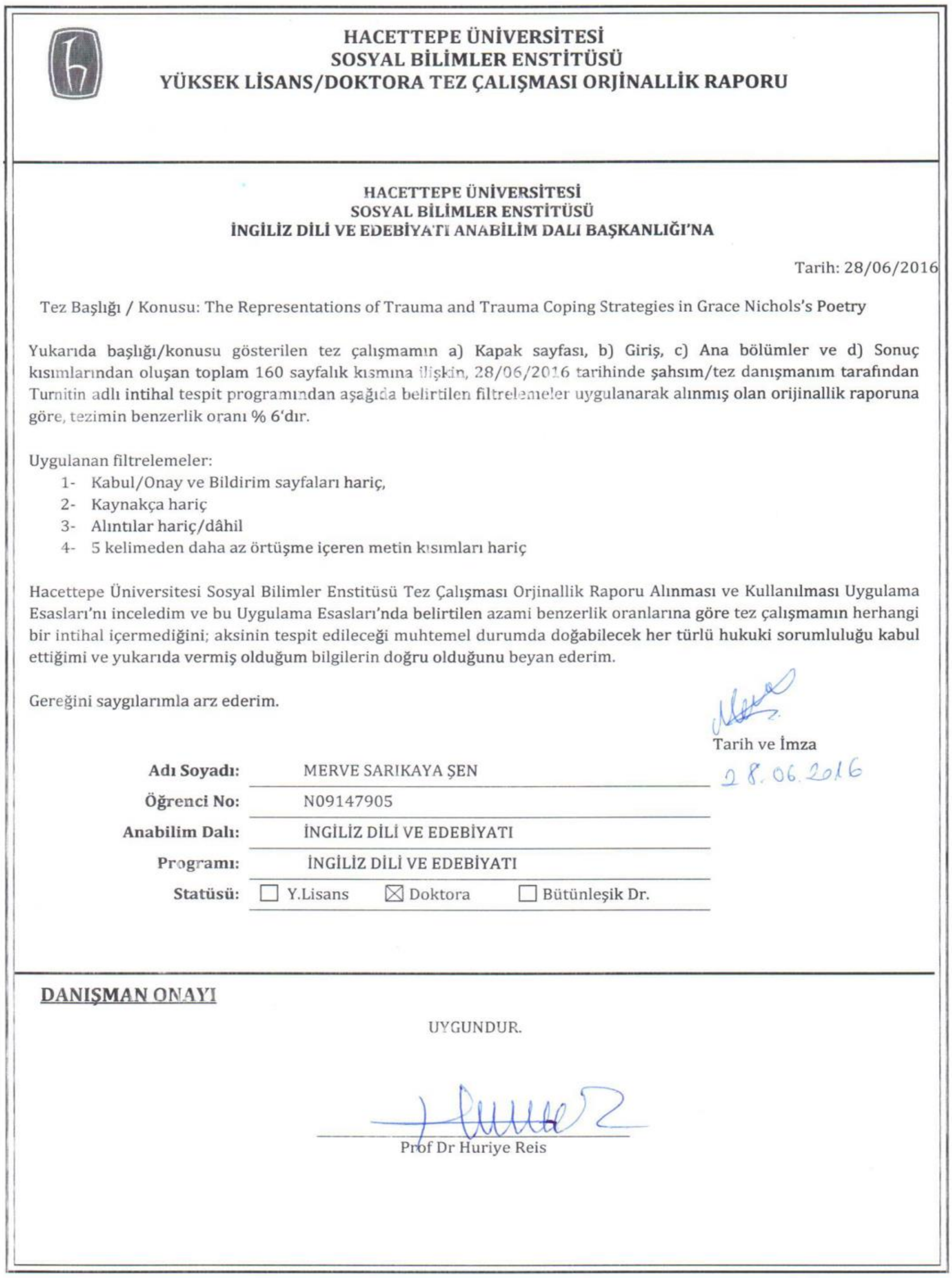
APPENDIX 1: ORIGINALITY REPORTS



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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 28/06/2016

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: The Representations of Trauma and Trauma Coping Strategies in Grace Nichols's Poetry

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 160 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 28/06/2016 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 6'dır.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler:

1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç,
2- Kaynakça hariç
3- Alıntılar hariç/dâhil
4- 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orjinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Tarih ve İmza
28.06.2016

Adı Soyadı: MERVE SARIKAYA ŞEN
Öğrenci No: N09147905
Anabilim Dalı: İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI
Programı: İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI
Statüsü: ☐ Y.Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐ Bütünleşik Dr.

DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.

Prof Dr Huriye Reis

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THESIS/DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 28/06/2016

Thesis Title / Topic: The Representations of Trauma and Trauma Coping Strategies in Grace Nichols's Poetry

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I respectfully submit this for approval.

Date and Signature
28.06.2016

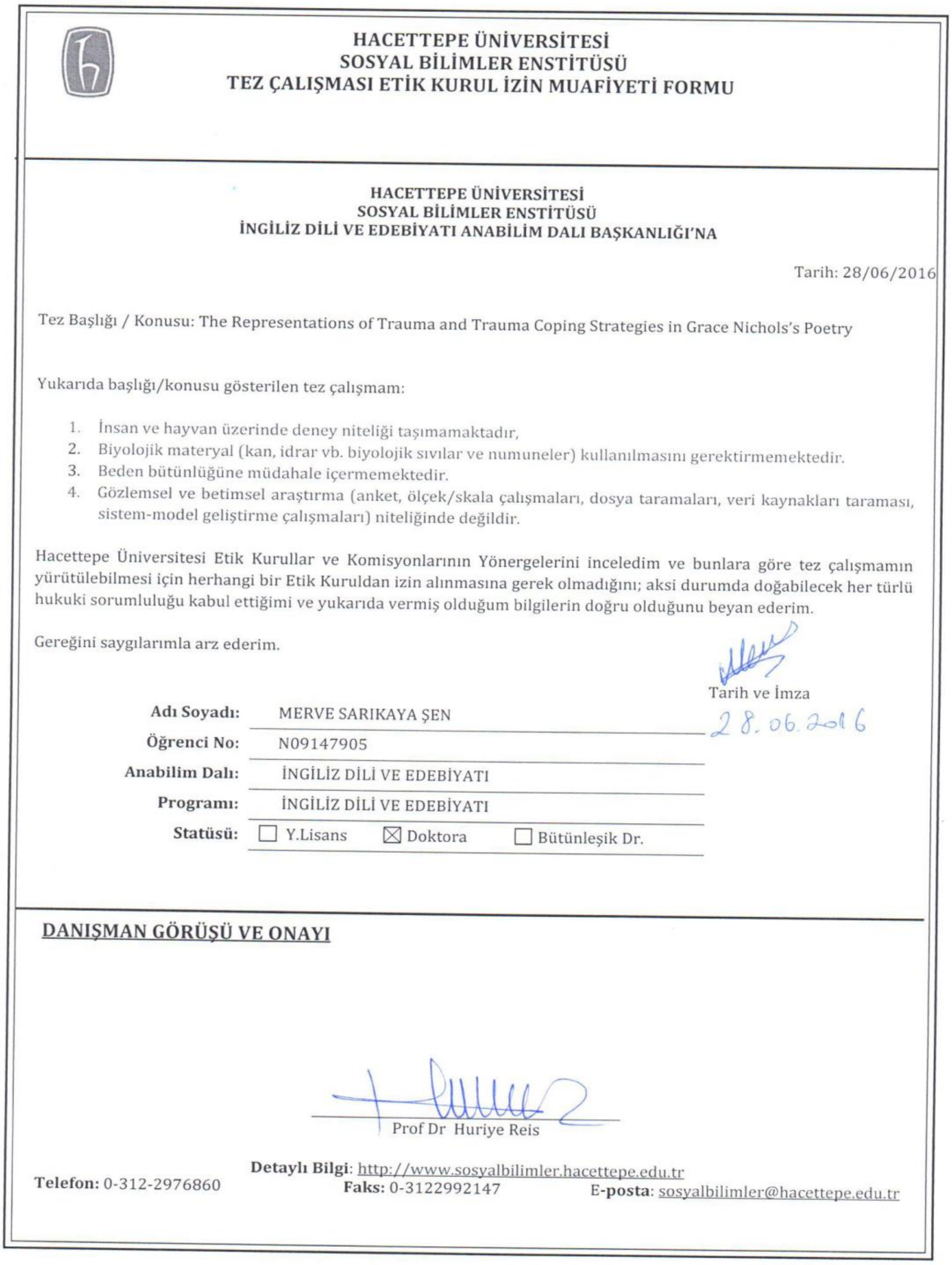
Name Surname:	MERVE SARIKAYA ŞEN
Student No:	N09147905
Department:	ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
Program:	ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
Status:	☐ Masters ☒ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Prof Dr Huriye Reis

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORMS



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HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 28/06/2016

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: The Representations of Trauma and Trauma Coping Strategies in Grace Nichols's Poetry

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
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Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kuruldan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Tarih ve İmza
28.06.2016

Adı Soyadı: MERVE SARIKAYA ŞEN
Öğrenci No: N09147905
Anabilim Dalı: İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI
Programı: İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI
Statüsü: ☐ Y.Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐ Bütünleşik Dr.

DANIŞMAN GÖRÜŞÜ VE ONAYI

Prof Dr Huriye Reis

Detaylı Bilgi: http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr
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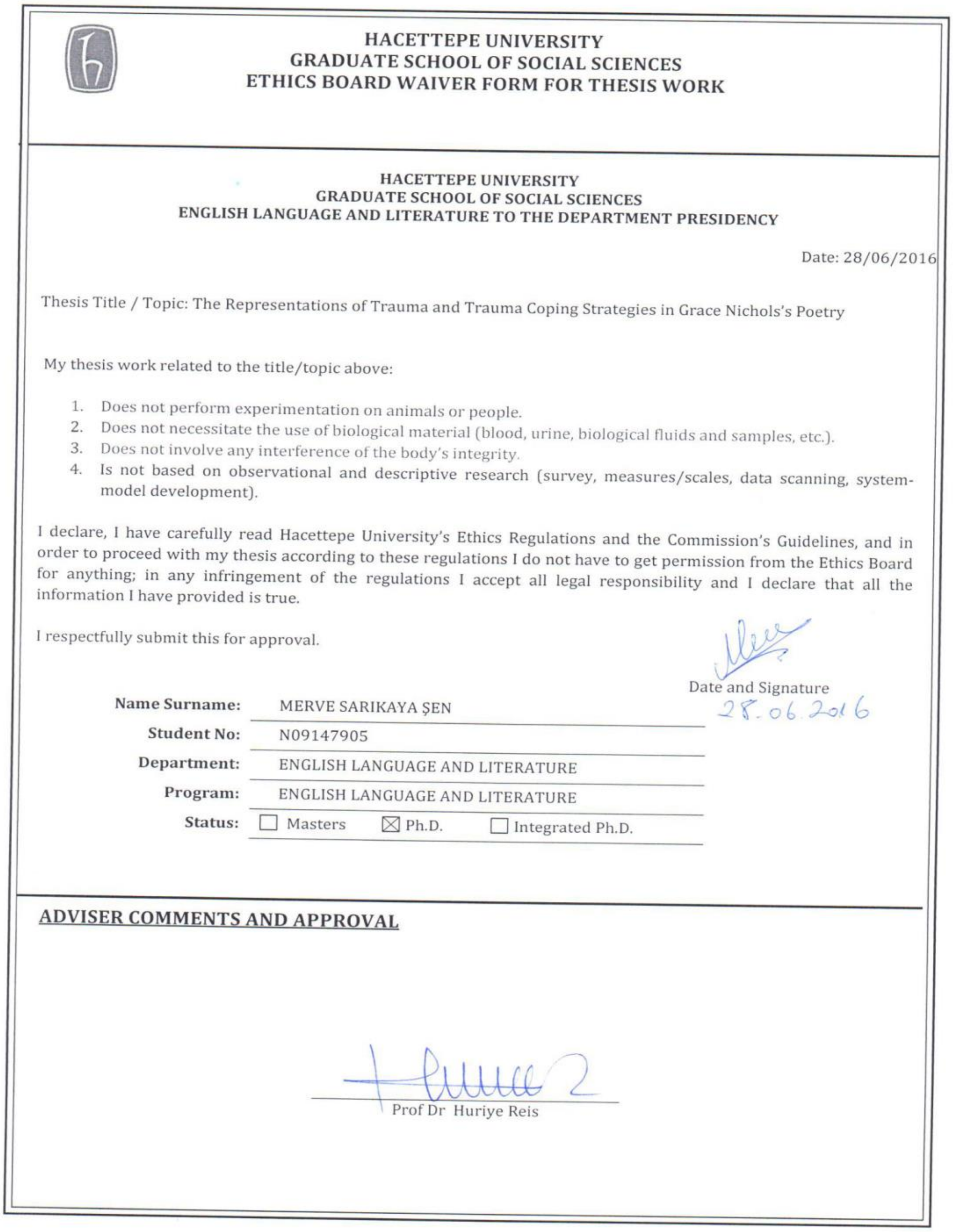

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY

Date: 28/06/2016

Thesis Title / Topic: The Representations of Trauma and Trauma Coping Strategies in Grace Nichols's Poetry

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
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I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

Date and Signature
28.06.2016

Name Surname:	MERVE SARIKAYA ŞEN
Student No:	N09147905
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Program:	ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
Status:	☐ Masters ☒ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Prof Dr Huriye Reis