

ABSTRACT

The study of slave society in the New World has engaged the attention of many contemporary and current writers. The views presented by male writers have always predominated the literature, and until the more recent decades of the twentieth century, little was known of the way women thought and felt during the period of slavery. I firmly believe that this has been due either to the lack of relevant archival material, or to what had been, until the early nineteenth century, a lack of interest in the role of women, except that of the dainty female whose place was "fixed" in the home. Until the development of the "Women's Liberation Movement", women, with a few exceptions were regarded as insignificant players on the stage of life.

Having examined contemporary and current literature from the male's point of view, there was an impelling desire on this writer's part to obtain first-hand information on various women's perceptions of slave society, and in particular, their fellow women. This has led me to the examination of four contemporary European female writers. There was a need to know their psycho-cultural attitudes and the extent to which their observations and opinions corresponded with or deviated from those of male writers. Hence the female perspective is very important to the historiography of the British West Indies during slavery.

Women have played a significant role in society, and being typically people-centred their opinions reflect concern with human problems. It is the hope of this writer that the information gained in this research will contribute to a more balanced picture of the historiography of the period.