

ABSTRACT

“Turn and wheel them on the tongue”: Dialogism in Lorna Goodison’s Poems

Dahlia Jacqueline Robinson

Lorna Goodison’s manipulation of language in her poetry affords her the ability to dismantle boundaries around a range of discourses. The dialogical nature of her poetry allows for negotiations across racial, gender, class, and religious lines. The interplay of different voices in individual poems, in clusters of poems, and between poems and various stylistic genres such as novels, songs, chants, and letters renders Goodison’s poetry open-ended rather than monological.

The nature of dialogism in Goodison’s poetry may be situated within postcolonial concerns with hybridity and creolization since her major stylistic strategy is the integration of disparate impulses. She is therefore able to engender “dialogues” which foster a range of perspectives on issues relevant to women, Caribbean people in general, and all who are oppressed in one way or another.

The ease with which Goodison is able to harness the linguistic codes at her disposal enhances her dialogical project. However, dialogism in her poetry is not limited to the blending of these linguistic codes to release distinct voices in the poems. It incorporates the pulling together of a number of stylistic impulses such as the blending of the local and the foreign, the spiritual and the physical, the mythic and the modern, the personal and the communal.

Keywords: Dahlia Jacqueline Robinson; Dialogism in the context of hybridity and creolization; Lorna Goodison’s poetry.