

Abstract

Through the works of Rhys, Brodber and Warner-Vieyra one of the preoccupations of nineteenth century literature is highlighted - woman and her role in society. However, Woolf's hope in the early twentieth century that woman's possession of her own space would begin to address issues of her creativity and femininity is inverted in the texts under study. What is highlighted is the room not as a refuge but as a prison, a place of banishment.

Within the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the consciousness of these West Indian heroines highlights the role of woman as other/outsider, pushing her further outside the boundaries of economic, political and social stability, and ultimately, outside the ranks of sanity. In discussing woman's relationship to the room, the ambiguity of the spatial imagery of enclosure and escape becomes a means by which the self is re-defined.

But it is in finding a language - acquiring a voice, 'her' voice - that the 'space' she creates will be meaningful. Chapter three points to this language - this alternative discourse that endorses the non-rational, intuitive, subjective and unconscious. When woman's life becomes art, everything she embodies points to the alternative to patriarchy and phallic-symbolic patterns. This becomes the act of self definition.

The final chapter illustrates the act of redefining the self through Brodber's alternative, the kumbla. In spite of its atten-

dant risks, the prison/room can be converted into a kumbha. By re-experiencing its imprisoning confines, woman will see the possibility to transform it into a creative, nurturing space.