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## Silence As Resistance, Survival And Agency In Tiphanie Yanique's Novel Land Of Love And Drowning

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### Abstract:

Tiphanie Yanique is a Caribbean American writer from Virgin Island. Through her novel Land of Love and Drowning, she depicted the trauma of female characters who are the heart and soul of real Caribbean history. The women are given enough space in this modern society, but still she is torn apart in the real make belief world. She is nurtured to endure in her own way. The circumstances built her soul rigid and tough. The female characters Anette, Eoene and Eve Youme raised questions in our minds whether women truly are freed from the patriarchal bonds which seemed to be the spinal structure of the society. Eoene had to witness the plight of her own baby who was thrown out off the balcony by her male counter part. Anette came to know the fact that Jacob was her half brother who became the father of her daughter Eve Youme. Eve Youme had to lead a life of a girl who happened to be the result of the incestual relationship. Women are bound by the double shadow of gender binaries. No one could save her from the ties of stereotypical image imposed upon her by the society. She is just like a ventriloquist's dummy as suggested by the post colonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and she is either spoken of, or spoken at. Moreover by gender and class she is double binded. The coming generations should save the women from the shackles of binary opposition and epistemic violence. Through the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak raised the question whether women have any space provided for her in the male dominated world. Her voice became unheard, she became voiceless. Her identity became marginalised somewhere in the corner. She had to come out of her shell. All these years she lived a life of a cocoon. Now its time for her to be in the world which is there out for her. Surely she could straightened her wings and able to come out in flying colours just like Eve Youme. She is the only woman who initiated the protest against the privatization of the natives' beach. This situation proved the need for the Spivak's concept of strategic essentialism. The whole society supported and followed her. She could become an icon in the world which always tried to marginalise her in one way or the other.

**Key-words:** Patriarchy, Voiceless, Stereotypical image, Subaltern, Ventriloquist's dummy, Gender binaries

Women writers in Caribbean literature ensured defiance against patriarchy, colonialism and gender binaries. Moreover they preserved Caribbean identity, myth and story telling. Women became the agency through which the voice of the unheard became audible to the whole world. They are the reservoirs of their cultural memory. They passed down their Creole to the next generation. Instead of being looked down upon by others she came to the forefront asserting that she too needed a space in this chaotic world where men always uphold how women should be.

She crushed every aspirations of men who thought how she should behave in the male dominated society. Actually she is doubly marginalised by this patriarchal society. Women could become what a woman wants to be, not a man wants she should be. She totally demolished the male dominations. She proved through her writing how a woman felt about her pregnancy, cyclical periods and the urges of her body.

Woman is dominated by the stereotypical image imposed upon her by the male dominated society, thereby she became heard by the outer world through her writing. She could never be stopped by anyone until her voices being heard by the whole world. The traces of her aspirations could be sensed when she found a wide space through her mighty lines. She is marginalised in her family as well as by her society as she is either spoken of, or spoken at. She became like a ventriloquist's dummy as suggested by the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?". No one fought for the freedom of women folk, especially for the black women. The black women found solace in forming sisterhood.

The Caribbean Literature provided space for women writers such as Jamaica Kincaid, Maryse Conde and Tiphany Yanique. They explored womanhood, loneliness and depravity. Tiphany Yanique through her writing emphasised the need of women to come forward in the present society. She wrote about contemporary issues in this world. She is a Caribbean American novelist, poet and essayist from Virgin Islands. Her contributions to the world are *How to Escape from a Leper Colony: A Novella and Stories*, *Monster in the Middle*, *I am the Virgin Islands and Wife*. She is awarded for her debut novel *Land of Love and Drowning* (2014) for the Centre for Fiction First Nobel Prize.

In *Land of Love and Drowning*, Tiphany Yanique spoke through her female characters as the narration itself is carried out by them. Eona is the elder sister who is always rigid and stern. On the contrast Anette followed her desires and not abide by the rules or ethics laid down by the current society. As a result she had to give birth to Eve Youme whose father seemed to be her half brother, Jacob. Jacob is the son of her own father Bradshaw with his mistress Rebekah.

Yanique never romanticised the relationship between Jacob and Anette but admired the truthfulness she hold. Even though she knew the reality she could not restrict herself. As a result she is gifted with a child, Eve Youme, against the norms of the society. The very word Eve resembled the first woman according to the biblical reference. Eve Youme became the fruit of the forbidden relationship between Anette and Jacob. Their insensual relationship is not accepted by the society in which they lived.

Anette used the Caribbean Creole language which seemed to be in the margins of the society. Through the character Anette, the novelist throws light on the need to conserve their colloquial language which is always looked down upon by the Europeans. She resisted against the epistemic violence as suggested by the critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The term epistemic violence meant rule by knowledge. The white's language is considered as the superior where as the natives' narration is considered as inferior. Yanique resisted against the dominated language through her writing.

The society always shows light on the rules, but they never followed that. According to the gender the norms varied. The woman is always considered as the inferior. She is never shown in the limelight. She secured a place somewhere in the margins. She is defined in terms of men. What is not the men is women. It is high time to swipe it out from our minds. Women have to strike out the binary oppositions from the existing world.

Eve Youme belongs to the third generation of Owen Arthur Bradshaw family. She remained silenced by the outside world. She never tried to correct or react to their commands. She stepped ahead her first step into the beach and stood against the privatisation of the public beach. When she struck and went into the beach which

owns the public, the whole society followed her. There lies the concept of strategic essentialism put forward by Spivak. All united together and fought for a common cause.

Rebekah is a black women who is the mistress of Owen Bradshaw. Even she is a part of marginalised, she imparted hope and inspiration to her son Jacob. Rebekah always kept her cultural identity. The chorus old wives also imparted the value of preserving Caribbean folklore. They are also the part of the narration of the novel. Thus the feminine voice become resonated through out the story. They stood for the bygone cultural diffusion.

Eeona struggled from loneliness and mental health. Still she regained her strength. She clinged to her resilience and became a part of the society. Where as Anette remarried Franky, an activist. She moved on in her life as she ought to give birth and nurture her baby. Eve Youme never got depressed about her identity. She protested against a social cause and the whole society stood with her. Rebekah is marginalised somewhere at the corner of the dominating world. Still she imparted a ray of hope to her son. Eeona represented resilience as endurance where as Anette represented resilience as rebuilding. For Rebekah endurance is sacrifice and for Eve fortitude is legacy.

Feminity is given the multiple space in the whole structure of this novel. The worn out of the old tradition is seen through the female perspectives of the narration. Women became the reservoir of the inborn cultural fluctuations. They became the heart and soul of their culture. Through their myth, magical realism and story telling they embedded the seeds of their folklore to the next generation. Thus women became the preservers of their culture.

When the hurricane named Mary, washed out the island, the women folk together faced the disaster. They fought against the natural hazard with unity. At that moment they never judged the societal imbalance. They tried to regain their familial bonds as well as their survival in the same island when nature returned against them. They tried to overcome the natural hazards just like they tried to unite their familial affection.

In this novel, silence acted as a form of resistance, survival and agency. The narration itself is carried out by the women folk which is against the norms of the society. Women are the preservers of memory, story telling, and Caribbean folklore. She expressed her resistance through storytelling. She revealed her trauma through fragmented narrations. She endured every grief that happened in her life silently.

When she suppressed her emotions, she became rigid in her life. Silence is seemed as a strategy to confront every difficulties in her life. Eve Youme never interfered in others life. She had no voice to resist others commands. She kept numb. But when a situation had arrived about the privatisation of public beach she revealed her strong resistance for a common cause. The whole society approved her act. There is a time to show resistance across silence.

Silence is viewed as a survival in this male dominated world. Rebekah is a subaltern black woman. Though she remained as a mistress of Bradshaw, she nurtured her son Jacob with unending expectation and confidence. This is seen in his character also. She tried her best to save his son from reuniting with Anette from their childhood itself. They belong to the same blood as they are the son and daughter of the Arthur Bradshaw. It is an open secret of the island. Eeona also tried hard to separate them from being united together. But fate united them and as a result Eve Youme is gifted to their family. When Anette came to know about this secret she felt that her life is ruined. To survive, the women folk kept numb. Still they are able to swim across the tides that they confront difficulties in their lives.

Again silence acted as an agency in this novel. Even though the women are silenced they are able to take brave decisions in their lives and made it happen in reality. For instance Eeona lead a life of an independent women even though she is repressed by the hard realities in this modern age. More over she is torn apart when she went to explore the world for her living. Later she regained her strength. She lost her baby as well as her partner and she faced the cruel realities of the world bravely. At last she came back to her island which nurtured her as a strong woman.

Women folk faced the natural hazards and their emotional traumas whole heartedly. Nature seemed to be a destroyer as well as a nurturer. Women are so close to nature even though it imparted strong tides in their lives. They are the carriers of story telling, myth, believes and so on to the next generation.

Yanique narrated that the mothers never said it outright, but the daughters understood. Some truths couldn't be shared, but understood by the coming generations. They are the preservers of their communal knowledge which seemed to be lost somewhere in their legacy. It is the collective trauma that they withstood rather than individual inheritance.

Thus silence acted as resistance, survival and agency in Tiphany Yanique's novel *Land of Love and Drowning*. Yanique through her narration disclosed the fact that a good woman knew when to keep her mouth closed. Here silence is viewed as a strategy and not as a failure in their lives in the midst of colonial Caribbean patriarchy. They are psychologically and socially restricted in the limited space. They are constrained in both inside and outside her scenario. Sometimes silence saves, sometimes it wounds.

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