

**OUT OF THE DEPTHS:
A Literary Exploration of Post
Vatican II Caribbean images of God
and the Church**

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EPIGRAPH

Literature and the arts are also, in their own way, of great importance to the life of the Church. For they strive to probe the unique nature of man, his problems, and his experiences as he struggles to know and perfect both himself and the world. They are preoccupied with revealing man's place in history and in the world, with illustrating his miseries and joys, his needs and strengths, and with foreshadowing a better life for him.

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VATICAN II

- 1962-1965
- New way for the Church to see itself
- Church in the center of the world

Vatican II (cont'd)

- Vatican II may, in fact, be considered a turning point because, during the Council, modern problems were methodically studied from a universal and interdisciplinary angle, and fresh theological answers were formulated for the new needs of human societies (Hervé Carrier, S.J. 1990).

Gaudium et Spes

- Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on one part, and religious life on the other (#43)

Ratzinger Report

There is, instead, a continuity that allows neither a return to the past nor a flight forward, neither anachronistic longings nor unjustified impatience. We must remain faithful to the *today* of the Church, not the *yesterday* or *tomorrow*. And this today of the Church is the documents of Vatican II, without *reservations* that amputate them and without *arbitrariness* that distorts them (emphasis in the original)

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Gaudium et Spes

- It is sometimes difficult to harmonize culture with Christian teaching (#62).
- The Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life or any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent” (#58).

THE CHURCH

- Does not only “teach” to societies but it also “learns” from them (Carrier 1990, p.14).

THE 1960s

- Period of change also for Caribbean Literature
- “the racial politics of the imperial and colonial experience surfaced into national consciousness and put people in touch with their anger and pain, thereby releasing new energies, some of which were channeled into creative work, some of which were squandered in racial chauvinism” (Shinebourne 142).

POST VATICAN II

- A world of literary change
- Emphasis on the reader
- Poststructuralist literary theory –
 - multidisciplinary
 - intertextual readings
 - disestablishes authority of the text

*she tries her tongue, her silence
softly breaks*

- 'I set out to be unmanageable. I refused to "know my place," the place set apart for the managed peoples of the world" (296).
- 'How does one make readable what has been an unreadable experience?' (298)
- 'As women writers we each attempt in our own way to write and rewrite our experiences; in my own case it often is the Caribbeaan experience in its myriad forms' (30ⁿ)

Catholic Culture and identity

- A managed system
 - Images
 - Symbols
 - Language

Challenges to Catholic Culture and Identity

- *Cyclamen Girl*
- *In the Beginning*
- *What the Periwinkle Remember*
- *On Holy Week*
- *Canticles*

CARIBBEAN CULTURE

‘When fiction draws upon our world, when it recreates our reality, it helps give validity to our world. It helps us first make sense of our world, for it shows us underlying patterns and connections which give our reality a satisfying order’ (Hodge 206).

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SOME IMPLICATIONS

- Is there a right way to articulate one's faith?
- When does language become sacrilegious?
- Does Catholic culture and identity have boundaries?

Poststructuralist Literary theory

- The reader is responsible for making meaning while reading and interpreting a text.
- The reader questions established notions of history, gender, race, religion, culture
- The reader recognize those notions as cultural and ideological constructs.

Poststructuralist Approaches

- Feminist literary theory
- Postcolonial literary theory
- Marxist literary theory
- New Historicism

CREATOR and CRAFTSMAN

- The one who creates bestows being itself, he brings something out of nothing ... and this, in the strict sense, is a mode of operation which belongs to the Almighty alone.
- The craftsman, by contrast, uses something that already exists, to which he gives form and meaning.

LITERATURE and THEOLOGY

- ‘The work of the historian of theology would be incomplete if he failed to give due attention to works of art, both literary and figurative, which are in their own way “not only aesthetic representations, but genuine ‘sources’ of theology’ (John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, 1999).

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

without the begin of word
grist in a grind and pound of together
in the absence of a past mortared with
apart
the harsh husk of a future-present begins
Marlene Nourbese Philip

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THE END

LET THERE BE LIGHT!

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