

Confronting Prospero: Elizabeth Nunez's Exposure and Critique of Hegemony and Its Industries in *Beyond the Limbo Silence and Boundarie*

by

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Abstract

According to sociologist Robert L. Allen writes about how liberalism is defended by a kind of Black tokenism run by hegemony that puts Black individuals in high administrative places only to still continue an economic system based on these exclusions. Elizabeth Nunez crafts stories with protagonists that confront liberalism the way Prospero tried to confront and murder Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This paper will discuss how Nunez in her fiction specifically exposes liberalism in the academic and book publishing in her second and eighth novels (*Beyond the Limbo Silence* and *Boundaries*) in ways that challenge hegemony and its liberalism. Nunez shows through her protagonist Sara in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, how her scholarship from her fictional College of the Sacred Heart depended on her distancing herself from the local Black population and see herself in isolation from the emerging civil rights movement. Through her protagonist Anna in *Boundaries*, Nunez shows how her function in the book publishing industry required her promoting books for their "commercial value" and not "their aesthetic and intellectual merits." Through her protagonist Emile in "Even In Paradise," Nunez shows how the newspaper industry in Jamaica is run by editors who dont want writers, like Emile's love interest Corinne, writing pieces deeply "involved in politics." Although Nunez's novels make incredibly profound statements on the dysfunction of Black tokenism in these academic, book publishing and newspaper industries, her protagonists except Sara, ultimately commit to joining these tokenist systems and make profound statements on the hegemony's still influential propaganda that discourages independent ownership by Black communities of schools and presses.

In her memoir *Not for Everyday Use*, Elizabeth Nunez writes about remembering her “white European” high school teacher reading the part of Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* where Prospero claims to have civilized Caliban:

I pitied thee
Took pains to make thee speak / taught thee each hour
One thing or other / When though didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabbe like
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known
(Vaughan, eds. 1.2.354; Nunez *Not For Everyday Use* 120)

Nunez compares the idea that Prospero civilizes Caliban to the general idea that the English civilized the indigenous and those of African descent on its colonies: “should I be grateful to the British for teaching me?” (Nunez, 120). Elizabeth Nunez writes novels with protagonists like Caliban who are forced to be confronted with the idea of being taught how to be British and how to maintain British colonialism. Kwame Ture in his autobiography said that he would give British colonialism a good mark for the educational system except for one thing: “the extent to which it was colonial: the Eurocentrism, the cultural chauvinism, the undisguised, brazen ‘civilizing’ mission of converting we heathen if not into English gentlemen [or ladies] into dutiful colonial subjects” (Ture 35). Caliban certainly resisted being Prospero’s dutiful colonial subject and in fact planned a revolt to murder Prospero. Elizabeth Nunez writes characters that, like Caliban, confront this idea of the imperialist trying to complete their civilizing mission. In fact, not only does Caliban conspire to murder Prospero, he says: “You taught me language,” says Caliban to Prospero, “and my profit on’t is I know how to curse” (1.2.365; qtd in Baldwin 7). Caliban uses the language that Prospero teaches him to first curse the theories within the paradigms of colonialism from the Italian Prospero that teach Caliban’s own inferiority. Elizabeth Nunez has written protagonists who use the English language to resist on some levels the “civilizing” agenda to promote what anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani called “white settler colonialism.” Mamdani describes this colonialism in terms of two characteristics: one, “an unaccountable and unelected native authority; and two, an equally unaccountable ‘customary law’ wielded by this native authority” (Mamdani). These protagonists confront the “civilizing” agenda of a white settler colonialism in varying ways that can be traced to a specific way that Caliban confronted and resisted Prospero’s civilizing mission in William Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*.

Caliban resists Prospero’s effort to colonize him in two different modes. First, Caliban tells Prospero directly that he curses him and essentially warns him against thinking his effort to civilize him would be effortless. Second, Caliban forces Prospero to recognize his presence, even as prisoner and consequently encourages him to leave the Mediterranean island home of Caliban and return to Italy.

This article will look at the way Elizabeth Nunez writes two different industries of white settler colonialism: the academic industry and the book publishing industry. Elizabeth Nunez's protagonists in their confrontations with these two different industries that are part of United States hegemony, demonstrate each of these two modes of resistance by Caliban towards colonizer Prospero. Her protagonist Sara in her second novel *Beyond the Limbo Silence* (1998) resists white settler colonialism most forcefully by refusing an academic scholarship and the tokenism that the academic college industry wanted her part of. Her protagonist Anna in her eighth novel *Boundaries* (2011) resists this colonialism by demanding that the book publishing industry publish books on literary merit rather than commercial value.

Sara's bold rejection of her scholarship by the academic industry is similar to Caliban's commitment to curse Prospero and to banish him from the Mediterranean island. Anna's initial refusal to cater instead of build a Black book buying audience in the book publishing industry is similar to Caliban's resolve to try to reconcile with Prospero. These academic and book publishing industries have two characteristics: liberal internationalism and tokenism. Julian Assange defined "liberal internationalism" as "the justification of military and other interventions by the U.S. if such interventions helps produce a liberal world order: a global system consisting of liberal-democratic nation states connected by more or less [so-called] free markets and ruled by international law" (Assange, 25). Sara's experience of witnessing "liberal internationalism" in her own island of Trinidad with the U.S. military who directly interacts with her labor leader father influences her confrontation and ultimate rejection of her academic scholarship from a Catholic school in Wisconsin in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*.

Both novels' protagonists, like Caliban, are confronted with the assumption that they should behave as tokens in the interests of white settler colonialism. Nunez deals with this theme rigorously in all of these novels. Sociologist Robert L. Allen defines a "tokenist" class as one that "would ease ghetto tensions by providing living proof to Black dissidents that they can assimilate into the system if only they discipline themselves and work at it tirelessly" (Allen, 212). Anna in *Boundaries* initially resists the commercial demands of publishers however ultimately uses the liberal internationalist logic of her lover Paul Bishop to ultimately cooperate and remain part of the book publishing industry as a token. Sara however uses the lessons of her Trinidadian upbringing and her African-centered college peer Courtney to avoid "liberal internationalist" logic and ultimately reject the token position that the academic industry tries to place her in.

In *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, Sara Edgehill tells her experience as a twenty something U.S. college student who is born and raised in Trinidad. She is trying to remember and apply the lessons her family taught her about how to love herself, keep her sanity by embracing her identity. She embraces her identity by finding a new respect, like Nunez did, not only for her African past but "for the beliefs of [her] ancestors denigrated by the British colonial masters" (Nunez *Not For Everyday Use* 127).

Sara's experience throughout this novel is grounded in the experience of "her ancestors," including her mother and her father. One particular memory of Sara's provides the most important framework for understanding her rejection of the tokenism of the academic industry in the College of Sacred Heart that gave her a scholarship: the memory of her father's friend:

the British had made my father's friend a manager on their sugar estate. Thinking they meant for him to manage and not able to accept his role as their token, their contribution to native participation in management, he demanded that the clerk obey his orders. But the clerk was English and he complained to the English boss and the English boss told the Trinidadian manager: "Everybody else but you don't order around an Englishman, even if he is a clerk." "That incident broke him," my father said. "They had been undermining him for a long time" (248).

Sara uses this memory to understand what her lover and civil rights organizer Sam was explaining to her about Jim Crow torture, however this memory of her father's friend applies to Sara's entire view of the academic industry. This rejection begins with her narrating her experience from her upbringing in Trinidad, to her experience of moving to Wisconsin for college, to her ultimately rejecting the role as a token supporting white settler colonialism at the College of Sacred Heart. She remembers how her father describes his friend as being "broken" by this tokenist system that resisted the outright challenge against British authority and learned from that memory not to be broken herself. Sara's new found respect for her African past included "not being broken" the way that her father's friend was broken by the British when he managed the sugar estate. Sara's new found respect for her African past also meant not separating herself from "those burning and looting Negroes" she was taught about. As she is narrating in a linear order her experience at the College of Sacred Heart in Wisconsin, she realizes that the education she received taught her to be a manager, like her father's friend in the interest of white settler colonialism, and not in the interest of her African past and the Black majority in Trinidad.

In her interactions with the mother of one of her classmates, Molly, she said: "I...allowed them to separate me from those burning and looting Negroes as I had allowed my history teacher with her fears of being recognized to carve a space between me and Woodford Square, so that when independence came I did not know how. Bloodless, perhaps. But I couldn't tell for sure" (174). For Sara, not being broken in her interactions with white people in Wisconsin meant not allowing them or any others who are part of white settler colonialism to separate her from "those burning and looting Negroes." There is a difference between what Sara says to those in Wisconsin and what she reveals in her thoughts to the reader. Sara remembers her Trinidad school years where her friend Zeta persuaded her "to cut school after lunch" in order to see Eric Williams speak in Woodford Square: "I suffered detention for a week when I returned to school the next day. My mother cried: her daughter with a bunch of hooligans" (172).

Sara remembers how her mother and her “French Creole” history teacher taught her to separate herself from “hooligans” or “those burning and looting Negroes.” Her mother did not want her to be part of the more radical crowd that was demanding independence from Great Britain. Her French Creole teacher tells her: “let them find jobs. They won’t have the time to be loitering around Woodford Square in the middle of the day. The next thing you know they’ll be in our schools sitting next to you. How’d you like to have the daughter of your mother’s maid sitting next to you in class?” She frightened me” (173). Sara’s “French Creole” teacher in Trinidad is teaching her to separate herself from “those burning and looting Negroes” in order to see herself as exceptional and worthy of being part of what Mamdani calls “an unaccountable and unelected native authority” controlled by the British to continue white settler colonialism. This education is essentially what prepares her for being part of the academic industry. This education is what makes her attractive to another Black token of the Catholic church, particularly a Black Catholic priest who said to her about Trinidad: “your island is part of my territory. Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada.” When Sara asked him to explain what he means by territory, he answered with a reply that recalls Christopher Columbus’s fifteenth century imperial invasion of Hispanola: “I look for raw talent in primitive countries” (28). Sara realizes that this token of the Catholic church which was now promoting, instead of Spanish settler colonialism, U.S. settler colonialism, “had chosen me because of my brains” (28). This is a white settler colonialism whose economic foundations were based on chattel slavery. In her 2015 book review of Carrie Gibson’s history of the Caribbean called *Empire at the Crossroads*, Nunez writes that “the Portuguese had been enslaving Africans with the approval of the Pope” (Nunez Book Review). This token Black Catholic priest was recruiting Sara to a Catholic college built from a slavery based economy to help continue white settler colonialism. Sara’s narration in *Beyond the Limbo Silence* reveals that her brains would be used to promote white settler colonialism that required her to separate herself from “those burning and looting Negroes,” which she refused to do (28).

Sara’s uses the colonial education of her “French Creole teacher,” her mother and her father to learn about the broader struggle against white settler colonialism and to ultimately reject her role as a token that ultimately endorses this colonialism. Sara makes the same conclusion about so-called friendly religious missionaries that Hubert Harrison in 1920 made in his book review of E.D. Morel’s book *The Black Man’s Burden* for Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* newspaper:

“Spaniards led, with unctuous phrases of religion on their lips. They were quickly followed by the English, Dutch, Danish, French and others...Of these the English, especially after the Treaty of Utrecht became the most notorious both for the extent of their traffic and its savage brutality. Back in the sixteenth century the great Queen Elizabeth was the silent partner of the infamous John Hawkins whom she sent out of the good ship *Jesus* to burn peaceful towns and villages on the Guinea coast and seize the inhabitants as slaves. Later in the seventeenth century Queen Anne added to her private income in the same way...[she] forced the Spaniards to give her the monopoly of supplying slaves...the cost of white Christian warfare must be paid by black “heathen” Africa” (Harrison qtd in Perry 328)

Sara's memory of the Black Catholic priest seeking "raw talent" in recruiting her to a Catholic college in the United States belies the Catholic church's appearance of benevolence in Trinidad. It also recalls the imperialist role of pursuing "raw material" particularly gold in their quest for imperial expansion, namely Spanish settler colonialism that by the eighteenth century is overshadowed by a white settler colonialism practiced by the United States. This quest for "raw material" is not on behalf of an imperial monarchy as in the case of Columbus but on behalf of an academic industry seeking to continue white settler colonialism using Black individuals like this "Black Catholic priest" and Sara. About her French Creole teacher, Sara said:

she had relatives who lived on the other side of the East Dry River. My parents had a maid who lived on the other side of the East Dry River. I loved her. But when I turned twelve and started secondary school, my father pulled me away from her." Her father also teaches her to separate herself from "those burning and looting Negroes" when, one day driving Sara to school, he strikes her and grabs her collar: "Ena said *that this* school is harder *than the other* school I *went to*. Repeat it." His eyes blazed. "Repeat what I said, Sara. Now." I repeated his words, my words sounding so different when he said them. I replaced the *d*'s with *th*'s... 'People know who you are by the way you speak,' he said. 'You are not like Ena. You are different. You are middle class. If you speak like Ena in that school, they'll think you come from the other side of the East Dry River (173).

Sara learns from her father to talk more like those part of the bourgeoisie in Trinidad, in order to make herself more presentable and respectable to those with wealth. Her mother and her father both groom her to be attractive to the Black Catholic priest who offers her a scholarship to a Catholic college in the United States because she practiced what her father taught her about not talking like working class Blacks in Trinidad. Speaking with *th*'s was a part of separating herself from "those burning and looting Negroes." Sara remembers this incident with her father when speaking to a Knights of Columbus member in Wisconsin who is obviously sympathetic to white settler colonialism and who tells her "Yup, the people down South could take a page from your book" (174). This kind of confrontation with the Knights of Columbus prepares her to ultimately reject tokenism. When she leaves Trinidad and goes to college in Wisconsin to meet her fellow Caribbean migrant peer Courtney and be introduced to Sam, she begins to introspectively question her separation from "those burning and looting Negroes."

The novel becomes a dramatic saga between Sara and those who represent white settler colonialism, specifically Sister Agnes who discourages her from sympathizing and supporting the work in 1963 of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) that her lover Sam is part of. Two characters help Sara in her development of not allowing herself to be a token, nor "broken," nor separated from "those looting and burning Negroes."

By the time she meets Sister Agnes who represents the leader of the academic industry, she has already endured two experiences with white settler colonists who ridicule or belittle her identity and teach her to separate herself from “burning and looting Negroes”: the taxi driver and the Knights of Columbus member. In her first day at the College of Sacred Heart, Sara is driven by a white taxi driver who is mortified by the fact that she has earned a scholarship and not any of his sons: “and they went all the way out there and gave you a scholarship?” (51) When Sara notices his discomfort at knowing she had a scholarship that he thinks was denied to his sons, she lies in response to his question about the kind of work she will be doing there and chooses an occupation that will appear most menial to this driver, by saying “Cook.” She said “I had chosen the right word. He grinned, brushed back strands of dirty blond hair that had fallen on his forehead and leaned back against his seat. ‘Thought so,’ he said. ‘Thought so.’ A satisfied smile crossed his lips. He didn’t speak again until we arrived at the college” (52).

After Sara meets Sam who is able to put her new found respect for African beliefs in the context of his protracted struggle against Jim Crow in Mississippi, she later says about the incident with the taxi driver: “the social hierarchy that he believed had been thrown into chaos when I—a Black woman, a college student and passenger—sat in the back of his cab with him as chauffeur, would be restored” (151). Sara is also shamed by her interaction with the Knights of Columbus who belittles the process of Trinidadian independence from Great Britain when he says that African Americans in Mississippi can learn how to respond to white settler colonialism by following the example of Trinidadians who gained independence from a “bloodless revolution.” She responded to this belittling of her culture and her people’s history by choosing to be part of her classmate Angela’s original plan of singing and entertaining the Knights of Columbus: “twisting to suit the optimism I wanted, the guilt I needed assuaged. Everything was all right again. It had been a bloodless revolution. One so quiet I did not know when it came” (175). Her interaction with the taxi cab driver and with the Knights of Columbus shames her into questioning the way her education taught her to separate herself from “burning and looting Negroes.” Sara asked as she was leaving Trinidad: “would the nuns make me pay for my scholarship the way Captain McNeil made my father pay for the vaccine that saved my life, in secretive little installments that would strip me of my self-respect and pride?” (49)

Sara learns self-respect through her interaction with her peer and fellow college student Courtney who teaches her the practice of Obeah religion that Sara uses and relies on to help her gain control over her reproductive health. After meeting Sam and discovering she is pregnant, she relies on the work of an Obeah priestess in Courtney to return her unborn child to the spiritual realm in a ritual that reacquaints her with the Obeah gods that she was educated to despise. Before she completes this ritual however, she tells the nun who runs College of the Sacred Heart, Sister Agnes, that she is refusing her scholarship after enduring one too many installments that would strip her of pride.

These installments turned Sara into an object of ridicule by the white working class. She is ridiculed by the taxi driver when she is forced to lie to him in order to make him feel better; she and her Trinidadian history is ridiculed by the Knights of Columbus member who said that African Americans in the South should stop agitating to end segregation and should follow the example of a nonviolent demonstration in Trinidad. By the time she decides to tell Sister Agnes she is refusing the scholarship, she has developed an intellectual and emotional bond with the activist Sam who is joining CORE in helping Black citizens of Mississippi register to vote. Sara is clearly rejecting the token role that the College of Sacred Heart wanted her to play as a passive bystander in the civil rights movement. Sara wanted to do more not only to be with Sam, but also to help CORE's objective in registering Black citizens to vote in Mississippi. However Sam did not let her. Sister Agnes disagrees with Sara's decision to relinquish the scholarship: "Do you know who pays for your scholarship? Mr. and Mrs. Irving Salzer...The fund would end, Sara, if you went to Mississippi. They [the Salzers and other funders] think the Negroes are pushing too fast...I can't judge them and neither can you" (211) Sister Agnes believes, like Christopher Columbus and like the "Black Catholic priest," that those who take money from donors have no ethical responsibility to question the obligation to those Africans whose free labor enabled their wealth. She does not believe that those who take money from donors have any ethical responsibility to publicly question the slow pace of ending Jim Crow that their tokenist colonialism forces. She is unable to critique the ways that the funders of the College of Sacred Heart gained their wealth from a shipping, finance, and manufacturing economy of New England that was based on human slavery, as historian Craig Steven Wilder writes (Wilder 281). This wealth was gained from exacting violence on abolitionists and spaces that denied antebellum free Blacks the opportunity to learn that Sara in a postbellum United States is receiving. Wilder writes how the elite that profited from this economy: "encouraged the antiabolitionist violence that began in New York City in the summer of 1834 and continued through the burning of the American Anti-Slavery Society's Pennsylvania Hall in Philadelphia four years later" (281). Journalist Pauline Hopkins writes that this violence included that attack against Prudence Crandall who founded a school in Canterbury, Connecticut in 1832 that was closed within two years by the Connecticut State legislature for its effort to educate young women of color: "how great must have been the degradation of New England when upon this delicate, lovely woman the torture was inflicted of social ostracism, insult, exclusion from God's house, a criminal trial, and confinement in a murderer's cell—all inflicted by the church, the county, the State!" (Hopkins qtd in Dworkin 159). Prudence Crandall was attacked for trying to educate students of color whereas Sister Agnes is heavily protected by the same state of Wisconsin to ignore basic needs of African Americans in Milwaukee. Sister Agnes is unable to understand how the College of Sacred Heart promotes a slow pace of progress. Their pace of progress is like that of the Alabama clergymen who demanded that Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) end his Project C (Confrontation) Campaign in Birmingham, Alabama that demanded racial desegregation of Birmingham businesses. However because of her intellectual and romantic relationship with Sam, Sara learns to reject this Alabama clergyman-pace, supported by white liberals like the Salzers in the North.

Sister Agnes represents not only the College of Sacred Heart but also the “liberal internationalist” function of U.S. colleges and universities that are part of white settler colonialism promoted in the fifties, the decade before Sara arrives at the College of Sacred Heart. These colleges were especially surveilled to promote a white settler colonialism as a result of J. Edgar Hoover’s “Responsibilities Program” revealed by leaks about his COINTELPRO program in 1971 to *Washington Post* journalist Betty Medsger. Medsger writes that Hoover informed state governors that “he had more than 12,000 informers in various industrial plants” and that this program’s goal was “the firing of professors, lecturers and other university employees [that]...led to the dismissal of more than a thousand professor without due process” (Medsger 358). These professors were fired for being “potentially dangerous” by challenging the assumptions of white settler colonialism, as Martin Luther King, Jr. and members of SCLC, CORE, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were doing in challenging Jim Crow. By the time Sara attends the College of Sacred Heart, where she said her “classes...had turned out to be a disappointment” because “she was learning nothing new,” the college, like all other colleges dependent on state and federal funding had remained in existence because it avoided the destructive scrutiny of Hoover’s Responsibilities Program (158). It had done so by discouraging the type of activism that Sara’s lover Sam had engaged in. Sister Agnes is the arbiter of this kind of college that within the Catholic church promoting a white settler colonialism.

By refusing to be a bystander to Jim Crow oppression, Sara was also “potentially dangerous” in this respect, and the role of Sister Agnes was to affirm the beliefs of her capitalist funders and discourage her protest by encouraging Sara’s distance between herself and the “burning and looting Negroes” or “Negroes” like Sam who were fighting Jim Crow by helping Black citizens in Mississippi register to vote. Sister Agnes says: ‘Force, conflict, wars. They never set things right. If you go to Mississippi, they’ll think you’re using their hard earned money to support a fight they don’t think is necessary” (212).

Sister Agnes is unable to understand that the “hard earned money” of the funders of the College of Sacred Heart came from the holocaust of enslavement of African people and that the education Sara gained from Courtney and from Sam is the most important education Sara will need to practice her new found “respect for her African past” and “the beliefs of her ancestors.” Sara remembers her mother trying to conceive a child in Trinidad and turning to the Obeah woman in her village to conceive a child: “incense smelled like the roots the obeahwoman had burned the day of the canal alongside my house ran red and I found my mother lying on her bed in a pool of blood” (227). This image of Sara’s mother and running blood is mentioned at least three times in the novel. The first time she mentions it, Sara, describes the obeahwoman’s visit as an attempt by her mother to conceive children. However Sara’s father carries very colonial ideas about the Obeah religion and “chased away the obeahwoman” (134). These ideas are representative of colonial Trinidad.

Margarite Fernandez-Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert write that “the systematic repression of African cultural expressions on the part of the British had forced these practices [like Obeah] underground, and they had ultimately been lost, except in pockets of religious activity like Myalism and the Trinidadian Orisha tradition” (Fernandez-Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 136). After returning from the hospital, Sara’s mother told her that “they took everything. The womb. Ovaries” (Nunez 135). Although the memory of her father’s denigration of Obeah causes Sara to resist practicing it with Courtney, the memory of Sara’s father plays a key role in her rejecting the tokenist gesture of the scholarship. Sara remembered at least twice through the novel, her father receiving gifts from a Captain McNeil. Out of a sense of guilt, her father, after seeing Paul Robeson in concert, gathered all gifts from McNeil inside a wooden shed and set the shed on fire. Of the fire, Sara said: “it released the humiliation...the guilt we had not acknowledged...when we accepted our vaccines in silence and watched helplessly as polio ravaged the children of our neighbors” (39). In my interview with Nunez, she said that the 1950s polio epidemic in Trinidad was part of an overall genocide that is part of the overall white settler colonialism that U.S. based industries practices openly against the West. Although Sara’s father overtly teaches her to separate herself from “those looting and burning Negroes,” he also covertly teaches her how the powerful force of fire can help unite her with “looting and burning Negroes.” And in her interaction with Sister Agnes, she shows that she has learned this lesson. Sara tells Sister Agnes she no longer wants her scholarship: “I don’t want it anymore. You give it to a Black girl in Milwaukee” (201). When Sara tells Sam she gave up her scholarship, she remembers her father using fire to destroy the gifts of the U.S. imperialists sent: “the burning tool shed, my back blistering from the heat of the sun on the beach at Maracas Bay. The price, at last. The Price” (201). Like her father rejecting the gifts intended by white settlers to cover for their genocidal polio virus, Sara rejects the scholarship intended by white settlers to promote white settler colonialism.

Sara is taught from her father to repress her memory of practicing Obeah, but her interactions with her classmate from Saint Lucia, Courtney, guide her to appreciate her African heritage. Her classmate from British Guiana, Angela, uses the English language the way Prospero teaches Caliban to see himself, as a savage. Angela denigrates Courtney’s practice of Obeah as simple “chicken sacrifice,” to which Sara replies: “It’s not chicken sacrifice, Angela. It’s a religion. It’s a way to pray to their gods. No more, no less than what your people do” (184). Angela is not convinced and tells Sara “we became educated. Courtney still hangs on to her mumbo jumbo” (185). Sara initially describes the indigenous Orehu god of the manatee as dangerous at the beginning of the novel. But when Courtney assists her in the redirection of her life, she sees the manatee as life saving. Throughout her time at Sacred Heart, Angela ostracizes Sara for her choice to spend more time with Courtney than with her. After she tells Courtney that she is going to give up her scholarship, Courtney replies “there you go. You don’t understand, Sara. There are other ways to fight...Obeah” (204). Courtney helps Sara appreciate the practice of Obeah in her life when she helps redirect the spirit of Sara’s unborn child to help federal authorities locate the slain bodies of the CORE workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney in Mississippi.

Courtney said: “I told you the time would come for you to help Sam. Obeah, the way of your ancestors. Pray to your spirit” (243). Later Sara reveals: “I remembered the stories my father had told of the old Amerindian god, the Orehu, the manatee of the Guianas. The Waraos loved her but they feared her as well. They knew that in a storm she could ride them on her back to safety. And yet there were times she dragged him down to the bottom of the sea” (284). By the end of the novel, Sara speaks with her unborn child she named Yoruba who tells her “the ones they have buried in the basin. The rain will make rivers but no water will fall on them. But the man with six hundred children will hang from the tree like fruit” (311). As Yoruba’s spirit departs from her, Sara pulls the head of a hen that symbolizes the sacrifice: “I wailed as if I were one of the women in the village mourning their dead” (313). The hen that Yoruba symbolizes Courtney’s aphorism to Sara before her own sacrifice: “Our ancestors knew it...there has to be a sacrifice, Sara. You know what I mean. Before resurrection can occur blood has to be shed” (189). The shedding of the hen’s blood allows the release of the information that Sara gives to civil rights workers, which leads to federal authorities locating the bodies of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*.

In *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, she develops respect for her African past by rejecting her role as a token for white settler colonialism that is carried out by the academic industry represented by Sister Agnes and the College of Sacred Heart. Sara supports the efforts by CORE and SCLC to register Black voters and defy the mold that J. Edgar Hoover’s surveillance forced U.S. colleges and universities at this time to follow. Sara asks the question: “why had the nuns given scholarships to three girls from the Caribbean?” (66). By the end of the novel, after her confrontation with the taxi driver, the Knights of Columbus member, and Sister Agnes, she answers it when she discovers the scholarship was to promote white settler colonialism and she chooses to reject this ultimate function. Her most complete development in this novel arrives when she tells Sister Agnes: “I want you to know that I don’t want your scholarship because...there are others who need it more” (208). When Sara tells Sister Agnes “I don’t want it anymore,” “it” means being the model minority intending to teach other minority groups how to assimilate into white settler colonialism that the Catholic church and the funders of Sacred Heart promote. In this moment, Sara is cursing the tokenism of white settler colonialism the way the Caliban cursed Prospero’s colonialism of the Mediterranean island in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. After being forced to belittle her identity in front of the taxi driver, the Knights of Columbus member, and other college students, by the time she meets Sister Agnes, she is able to confront the symbol of white settler colonialism and reject its use of her as a token.

The protagonist Anna in Elizabeth Nunez’s eighth novel *Boundaries* is made very sympathetic by a narrator who dramatizes Anna’s inability to understand the book publishing industry as one that subtly promotes a white settler colonialism. Anna discovers that the book publishing industry she is part of promotes white settler colonialism by promoting “chick lit” and “ghetto lit” that advance the values of what Addison Gayle Jr. called “the polluted mainstream of Americanism” (Gayle, 6). Along with this realization is Anna’s reconciling herself to her ex-husband’s understanding of their marriage as a union of “business partners” (*Boundaries* 142).

At the beginning of the novel, Anna is an editor of an imprint within a larger publishing company. She is editor in the imprint known as Equiano books within the larger company of Windsor Publishing Company and her job is to select, edit and publish fiction books. She is “already married and divorced, a year shy of forty” (113). She is led to believe by her boss Tanya Foster that she is “soon to be senior editor at Equiano” (45). However, as Anna learns the value of not withholding her emotions, she is denied the senior editor position due to a company merger and her resisting her company’s efforts to avoid promoting books for their literary merit. Her first confrontation with Tanya was about the kind of cover Equiano would use for a book by Bess Milford, a Black author that Anna selected. Anna said “the jacket Equiano has decided upon for Bess Milford’s novel” is the wrong jacket cover: “there are the readers who like to read the sort of book that Bess has written. Those readers will never pick up a book with such an explicitly erotic cover. I think we will be making a mistake to go ahead with the cover” (121). Her boss Tanya replied that Anna should have more faith in their sales force and let the marketers keep the erotic cover. Anna resents this and shares her concern with her friend Paula who like Anna is from the Caribbean living in the United States. Anna advises her not to fight on Bess Milford’s behalf: “they want their turn too. Watch your step. You are an immigrant; you are disposable. Don’t go overboard fighting for Bess Milford” (119). The narrator also explains that Anna wants Equiano to tell the truth and that Equiano’s more popular novels from Raine’s and Benton’s “reflect reality...only partially: they perpetuate stereotypes, myths that justify the cravings of the economically and socially privileged for power over the poor, disadvantaged” (119). The narrator in *Boundaries* shows Anna as an editor who is trying to challenge these stereotypes on which white settler colonialism is built. This narrator says “what she wanted was balance, between books published strictly for their commercial value and books one could appreciate for their aesthetic and intellectual value” (180). At Equiano, she got more of the former, and almost none of the latter. Anna believes that books can inspire a Black readership to challenge white settler colonialism the way that Booker T. Washington’s book *Up From Slavery* inspired Marcus Garvey to replicate his Tuskegee school in Jamaica; the way that Abbe Raynal’s book *Histoire Des Deux Indes* (History of the West Indies) inspired Toussaint L’Ouverture to see himself as capable of influencing the history of the Haitian economy and the Haitian people (Garvey, viii; Bell, 254). Anna saw herself as a kind of book editor who challenges the white settler colonialism that the book publishing industry promotes when she writes that “books...are our defense against those who would lead us like lambs to the slaughterhouse” (219). The “slaughterhouse” essentially speaks to the practice of genocide by white settler colonialism to promote the life and well-being of its white settlers. The academic industry of the College of Sacred Heart promotes this by discouraging concerted efforts of CORE to register Black voters in *Beyond the Limbo Silence*. In *Boundaries*, the book publishing industry promotes this by “perpetuat[ing] stereotypes, myths that justify the cravings of the economically and socially privileged for power over the poor, disadvantaged” and these stereotypes, according to Anna, “lead us like lambs to the slaughterhouse.” Her role is to promote books that prevent their readers from being led into “the slaughterhouse.”

The novel takes a dramatic turn when Anna learns that after a merger of Equiano into a larger publishing company, McDuffy, who renames her imprint Tea House Press. The book publishing industry she now works for, Tea House Press, has now morphed into a machine that no longer needs her services: “Tim Greene has been appointed to head Tea House Press” (171). Tim Greene is an African American book editor who agreed with the original jacket cover of Bess Milford’s novel and Anna learns to rationalize the commercial decisions: “Tim Greene was hired to make the company richer” (175). The narrator reveals Anna’s regrets and resentment about her ex-husband who saw their marriage mainly as a pair of “business partners,” and her mother Beatrice who “did not tell her husband that tumors were growing in her breast and under her arm” (94). By the time Anna learns of the merger, she has learned from her ex-husband Tony and her mother Beatrice not to withhold her emotions or her affection for her new surgeon-beau Paul Bishop. Anna vies continually for affection and emotional attention that she believes her mother withheld from her. She resolves that “her own mother had not hugged and kissed her” because of the “colonial times” and that “the Queen of England was demonstrative” (108). The narrator shows these resolutions after Anna’s interaction with Tanya Foster about the salacious jacket cover. By the time Anna interacts with her new boss Tim Greene, she has learned from his secretary that “if she is to stay with the company she has to yield to their vision, she has to do as they say” (210). Anna believes that Tim Greene “and too many like him seem to lack faith in the possibility” of using the book publishing industry to start “remedying an inferior education, of resetting the clock for young men and women whose deficiencies in reading and writing have accumulated after years of neglect” (220). Anna believed firmly that “good books” could in fact remedy this “inferior education” and prevent these “young men and women” from the slaughterhouse. However Tim Greene’s vision was different. He tells Anna: “what you interpret as chick lit and ghetto lit, I see as stories about my people” (217). Anna in Tim’s office notices on his coffee table a copy of the novel *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, but realizes his copy is only for show. She replies saying that “I don’t think that someone who reads *Ghetto Wife* will graduate to reading *Invisible Man*” (220). She triumphs over the years she has been taught by her mother to suppress her emotions and her affections. Her emotional connections to the ignored young people then and now in the school-to-prison pipeline empower Anna to fight Greene’s decision to promote *Ghetto Wife* at the top of his list for the new Tea House Press (220). Where she was fighting Tanya over erotic jacket covers, she is fighting Tim Greene over the choice of books that the book publishing industry promotes. Nunez’s Anna tempers the expression of her emotions because she wants to maintain her job in the book publishing industry; she is careful not to denigrate the kind of books that Tim Greene wants to promote like *Ghetto Wife* for fear of alienating her boss. The narrator says: “she needs her job. She has a mortgage to pay, bills that accumulate” (222). Anna represents the struggle of working in a book publishing industry under the domination of a white ruling class who, according to her mentor’s colleague Lloyd Brown believes that “so called inferior cultures must be re-molded to conform to the Anglo-Saxon ideal” (Brown qtd in Washington, 44). Nunez’s fiction writing mentor, John Oliver Killens organized workshops of the Harlem Writers Guild where she started writing fiction. Killens knew writer Lloyd Brown as a staff writer for the *Freedom* periodical.

Anna's experience at first-Equiano-then-Tea House press tests her own ability to withstand the instinct to suppress her original emotional thoughts and to challenge these categories that aid in the advance of white settler colonialism that leads a "stereotyped" group to "a slaughterhouse." Anna confronts Tim about the email he sent to her at Equiano press telling her "you are my boss" (214). She said: "you knew that was a lie when you wrote it" (214). The narrator dramatizes how Tim Greene's elevation to being her boss was like "the old ruse the British had perfected in their colonies. Give them half a loaf and they won't resist...They won't risk losing the crumbs they have" (216). The narrator shows how Anna considers Tim Greene a token used by the "white ruling class" a token to continue their colonization. For Anna, Tim is part of what Mamdani calls the "unaccountable and unelected native authority" that publishes books that only promote the longstanding stereotypes about the colonized group by the colonizing group. Marcus Garvey's newspaper editor Hubert Harrison wrote in 1922 about his inability to "get the New York representatives of Macmillan and Company to take the Negro reading public seriously" (Harrison qtd in Perry 295). Anna tried to get Equiano-then-Tea House press to take a Negro reading public seriously, however she learned, like filmmaker Haile Gerima, that the works promoted by the mainstream book publishing and film industries "have nothing to do with the enrichment of individuals" (Gerima 30). Gerima asked "What does the mainstream cinema give Black people? Usually its *Barbershop 1*, *Barbershop 2*, *Barbershop 20*, *Barbershop 40*—with little variation" (Gerima, 30). The same is true for the mainstream Black novel publishing industry.

In her 2008 Temple University dissertation that analyzed twenty seven contemporary Black novels from 1992 to 2007, Aimee Glocke shows that fifteen of these twenty seven novels had storylines that privilege what Black psychologist Kobi Kambon called the African worldview over a European worldview. Glocke describes a storyline privileging the European worldview as one that, among other things, sympathetically shows characters who ultimately have a "need for power and control...[a] hatred of Black people...[and a] superficial connection to Black people" (Glocke 521). Nunez's Tim Greene character told Anna that although these "chick lit" books "get them reading", a committed actual filmmaker like Gerima knows that "the audience itself is not your barometer" in terms of selecting a book to promote. (Nunez 218; Gerima 30) Gerima said that the only strategy to accomplish what book editors like Anna is trying to accomplish is to promote "by word of mouth...when Black people, by word of mouth, built audiences, everyone from the *Los Angeles Times* to the *New York Times* took notice. So you can see the power of the word of mouth in the Black community" (32). Glocke writes that "the European worldview needs to be replaced in the contemporary Black novel with characters, scenes, images, and storylines that...show the true potential of Black people [and] increase the life chances of Black people (mentally, physically, emotionally, etc.) and that moves the Black community towards liberation" (Glocke 526). Synthesizing both responses of Gerima and Glocke reveals the necessity of word-of-mouth promotion in moving the Black community towards liberation.

Anna is unable to appreciate this power of word-of-mouth promotion as far as the novel *Boundaries* shows. She tells her father and her new fiancé about the professional differences with her new boss Tim Greene and they both agree to tell her not to fight the stereotypes the book publishing industry promotes, but to “accept it” (235). Her lover Paul Bishop says she should accept her treatment by Tim Greene because “we have not lived their history. They have had four hundred years of suffering and hardships” (254). By “they” Paul means African Americans and in telling Anna to accept Tim Greene’s role as a Black token promoting stereotypes of African American people, Paul is asking Anna to accept a “liberal internationalist” order that expects Black immigrants, like Paula, Anna, and Paul to obey the dictates of the class of “corporate managers” that, as Allen writes, provide “living proof to Black dissidents [like Anna], that they can assimilate into the system if only they discipline themselves and work at it tirelessly” (Allen 212). Anna questions the assumptions of this assimilation that would promote books based mainly on their commercial profit instead of their confrontation with “the most pressing issues of our time.” Anna at the end apparently resolves to accept it, however in the process of being told to accept this tokenism of the book publishing industry, Anna has learned to forgive her mother for her withholding affection and emotional honesty; she comes to an understanding about why her ex-husband is in fact her ex; because her expectation of emotional support and comfort was not unreasonable. From these realizations, she is able to confront her token Black boss of the book publishing industry and promote books more for their dealing with “the most pressing issues of our time” rather than their commercial value. Like Caliban who is unsuccessful in a revolt against Prospero, Anna is unsuccessful in trying to change the way books are promoted by the book publishing industry. However in *Boundaries*, Elizabeth Nunez shows how one individual’s development can lead to major assumptions regarding the book publishing industry being challenged, such as the false equivalence between literary merit and commercial value. Caliban’s revolt against Prospero that he tried to organize revealed the false equivalence between colonists’ silence and their approval of being colonized.

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