

## In Review: *Military Occupation* by Dionne Brand

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### Dictatorship and Occupation

I read Brand's Poem as an attempt to complicate ideas that are often constructed in opposition. She takes up issues of complicity and non-complicity, domestic and foreign policy, benevolence/rescue, and conquest through occupation to demonstrate entanglements that allow for the persistence of Western Hegemony. Using the United States military invasion of Grenada as her site of analysis, Brand's poetry recovers/uncovers a more complex relationship between the internal dilemmas of the revolutionary movement and U.S expansionism whether through occupation, annexation or pointillist regimes that further rationalized the U.S frontier, that is, the U.S was politically, culturally and ideologically superior and had a responsibility to usher Grenada into civilization.

In pointing to the skillfulness of the United States to mask its real interest in the lands it occupies, Brands gestures to how the circulation of grounded knowledge is cut off - knowledge that would otherwise serve to raise consciousness and resistance to western regimes of control. She writes:

*Fire burn  
Tuesday, Butler House  
Wednesday, Radio Free Grenada  
Thursday, The Police Station  
A voice at the window looking  
'the whole damn town should burn*

And later

*at 9:30 p.m. the radio  
Jackie is dead. dea ...  
9: 30 p.m. the radio  
dream is dead  
in these Antilles  
how do you write tears  
is not enough, too much to say  
I tour mouths reduced,  
informed by grief*

This image is particularly useful for making her point as what we know of government houses, news media and police stations ( at least in theory) is that together they regulate and socialize local populations. The image of the destruction of these sites signals the disturbance/destruction of the revolutionary consciousness building under Maurice Bishop. Further, throughout the poem Brand repeatedly alludes to vulnerability via reference to *5:30 a.m.* I assert commensurate with what I see Brand as setting up, that at 5:30 in the morning most people are not fully awake and that in this state are more pliable and vulnerable to both overt and covert attacks. It is in the state that Brand also sees rationalizations arising that centers the presence of the U.S military as peacekeeper, as rescuers as providing law and order; decentering Western nations contributions to the internal problems that led to the murders in the first place as well as the sustained distribution of the violent economy of occupation- domination through subjugation, profit through desecration, and the articulation of U.S structural adjustment policies that renders their occupation of Grenada as plausible.

Conscious of the connection of Grenada to the wider Caribbean amidst moves to establish sovereign nation-states, Brand's declaration that 'dream is dead' or that they have "murdered the revolution" is meant to foretell what awaits the wider Caribbean. Repeatedly she writes some version of:

*dream is dead*  
*lesser and greater*  
*Dream is dead in these Antilles*  
*windward, leeward*

Brand is not only describing what has happened in Grenada following the death of Bishop and others and the US invasion of that geographical space but she is suggesting that similar modalities of U.S control will soon take root in the Caribbean and the Pacific. Thus :

*back to jails in these antilles!*  
*back to shackles! back to slavery!*  
*dream is dead*

The imagery in Brand's poem does significant work in constructing the state of gloom and doom in Grenada as well as the impossibility of fully rescuing the Caribbean from the grasp of coloniality. Images of 'Badluck Crickets', 'metal skies', 'house(s) Burn(ing)', 'marks of rapists', 'open vaults of the morning', 'fire' and the absence of 'rain taken together ( and sometimes in single instances) speak to the expanse of this domination, its pervasiveness, the vulnerability of the region and absence of a solution that could stem the tides- in this case, the absence of rain.