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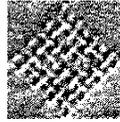
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The Spider and the Ghost in the Machine: Erna Brodber's Louisiana and Kamau Brathwaite's "Namsetoura"



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The weight of history for diaspora Blacks has been explored in literature quite regularly through the trope of the ghost. The work that has come under the most scrutiny in contemporary Black Studies is probably Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The title character is the spirit of one female child murdered by her mother, a freed slave, but she also recalls the myriad slaves who suffered and perished (Spearey 171); Sethe's guilt-bringing daughter has been perceived by critics as representative of the buried history with which African-Americans must deal (Spearey 172). If the figure of the ghost in African-American literature is imbued with so much meaning, how might we read some of the spectres that appear in the writing of Caribbean people? The ghost is, in fact, a common figure in our writing, too.¹

Why does the ghost recur in Caribbean literature? Of course, its symbolic meaning is a fundamental factor since the region is *haunted* by a particularly brutal past. Another major reason though, is that the spiritual is a fundamental aspect of our African ancestry. Brathwaite argues in the seminal essay "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" that

A study of African culture reveals almost without question that it is based upon religion-- that, in fact, it is within the religious network that the entire culture resides. Furthermore, the entire culture is an organic whole... In other words, starting from this particular religious focus, there is no separation between religion and philosophy, religion and society, religion and art. Religion is the form or kernel or core of the cultures. (34)

It is important to note that traditional African religion, steeped as it is in the numinous, distinguishes itself from Western religion. African religion is *conceptually* spiritual. As Molefi Asante and Ama Mazama explain,

In Africa the world exists as a place full of energy, dynamism, and life and the holding back of chaos by harmonizing the spirit world is the principal task of the

¹ See *Palace of the Peacock* by Wilson Harris, "Sometimes in the Middle of the Story" by Edward Baugh, *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* and "One Bubby Susan" by Erna Brodber, and *At the Full and Change of the Moon* by Dionne Brand.

human being in keeping with nature. In the African world spirits exist. This is not a debateable issue in most African societies. The existence of spirits that are employed in the maintenance of balance and harmony represents the continuous search for equilibrium.... (23)

The ghosts in Caribbean literature are usually either the actual forebears of central characters, other deceased individuals connected somehow to the characters, or victims of slavery or other colonial ravages who appear to represent the collective. The ancestor is a key figure in African spirituality, but Asante and Mazama explain that not all of the deceased attain the status of ancestors: "One becomes an ancestor by living and dying in a particular way" (45). They discuss the key role of the ancestors in African thought:

Ancestors appear more important on a daily basis than the supreme deity. It is the ancestors who must be feared, who must be appeased and to whom appeals must be directed. They are the ones who must be invoked and revered because they are the agents of transformation. (24)

To explain the significance of the ancestor in literature by Black writers, Melvin Rahming makes reference to Karla Holloway's idea that the "mediation of ancestral forces in a text allows for the full acknowledgment of cultural mythologies that were once 'sublimated and/or unacknowledged by traditional methods of reporting the past'" (Holloway as cited in Rahming 310-311).

Western histories are directed by a very different worldview from that of Old World societies such as West Africa's. As Rahming articulates it, Western culture "revolves around the twin axes of scientific rationality and the politicized ideology of power and control" (308); colonisation supports this view. Additionally, the numinous is not a linchpin for modern Western societies, so, of course, the crucial spiritual dimension of African culture is absent from traditional histories. Nevertheless, this dimension might be transmitted through art, and both African and diaspora artists have regularly explored matters of the spirit in their works. Kei Miller describes Caribbean writing that deals with the spirit as a kind of "counter discourse to colonial narratives" (451).

Erna Brodber and Kamau Brathwaite are artists whose works emerge out of spirit and who, as a result, traverse very similar paths in their writing. The resemblance between Brodber's novel *Louisiana* (1994) and Brathwaite's poem "Namsetoura" (2003) are striking. Both feature the ghost and/or ancestor and they handle these figures in uncannily similar ways. The purpose of this paper is to explore these corresponding representations of the ghost and, ultimately, what it might mean that they should resemble so closely.

Set in 1930s Louisiana USA, Brodber's novel presents a Jamaican-American protagonist, Ella Townsend. A promising Anthropology student, she is recruited through the Federal Writers'

Project² to “retrieve the history of the Blacks of South West Louisiana using oral sources” (3). Her subject, Mammy King, is a matriarchal figure among the cane-cutting community of St. Mary’s parish. The tape recorder that Ella is entrusted with is new technology at this point, and she is hyper conscious of the responsibility she has been given.³ The musicologist Alan Lomax once declared that the “portable recorder put neglected cultures and silenced people into the communication chain” (xi). This indicates its importance and its potential metaphorical weight as an instrument that gives voice to the unheard. Alan and his father David were two of the few people using a tape recorder at the time in which the novel is set, so Brodber intends to emphasise how privileged Ella is to have been given this responsibility. However, the old lady, her subject, dies suddenly during the second day of the interviews before she has said much of anything at all.

Enter the spirit at this juncture: the ghost of Mammy King co-opts the tape recorder and speaks to Ella from the dead, giving her access to a lot more than she expected, including the stories of a number of other Blacks dating back to slavery and the Civil War era. In time, Ella becomes a medium who is respected and consulted not only by the African-Americans among whom she lives but also by the Caribbean Blacks who pass through New Orleans on the ships that trade between the United States and the Antilles. The tape recorder allows the living and the dead to access each other: the dead have access to the ears of the living, and the living have access to the voices of their dead ancestors and others. And Brodber’s ghosts *are* ancestors. The lives they have lived entitle them to this honour: lives of resistance against oppression and active participation in the effort to uplift their communities. Their earnest communication with the living through Ella also establishes them as ancestors since they obviously care about their people’s welfare.

Kei Miller’s idea that stories concerning the spirit are counter discursive certainly applies here since Mammy King’s notions of history are a far cry from those of Ella’s American academic advisors. The ghost takes control even in the actual world, determining whose voices are heard, what parts of the past are revealed and how those parts are conveyed. Her history is a collage of monologue, dialogue and song that challenges Western assumptions about form. Mammy King and her Jamaican friend Lowly are the principal speakers, but they tell the stories of various ancestors, both Jamaican and African-American, and occasionally those long dead ancestors add their own voices to this authentic history with its singular shape.

Kamau Brathwaite’s poem “Namsetoura” appears in the collection *Born to Slow Horses* published in 2005. However, the story of the ghost Namsetoura was introduced a few years before at UWI’s

² This was an initiative of the Franklin D. Roosevelt government intended to make work for writers during the Depression.

³ In fact Ella’s hyper consciousness suggests she feels unworthy as a Black person-- and probably especially as a Black woman-- of what America has given; however, Brodber makes us aware of the irony that a nationally funded U.S. project should bear such sweet fruit, i.e., authentic history, for the African American minority.

annual West Indian Literature conference held at the University of Miami. Out of that presentation came the paper “Namsetoura and the Companion Stranger”⁴ published in the very first issue of the institution’s online literary journal *Anthurium*. The poem and the essay are printed in what Brathwaite dubs *Sycorax video style*.⁵ Eighty four pages long, the text includes government documents, poems from various previously published works, academic discourse, extracts from journals and newspapers, narratives in creole, songs and more. Moreover, it is in essence an autobiography. Poems written at various key points in his life are incorporated, and he describes the essay as “the record of a spiritual journey” (“Namsetoura and the Companion” 4). The alterations from essay version to *Born* version are both style and content related. Two key passages are left out in the second version and this will become relevant later. Many small changes have been made to diction, and line breaks have been altered in several instances. As well, the *Born* draft is less difficult to comprehend because of linguistic choices and because the *Sycorax* script has been toned/ turned down. Both drafts include a monologue that Brathwaite has said was transmitted to him from the mouth of the ghost of a female slave who appeared in

⁴ In an interview with Joyelle McSweeney, Brathwaite explains why he has given the ghost this name: “‘Nam’ is a concept of mind which is the opposite of man’s mind, ‘man’ spelt backwards and ‘nam’ also means an imperishable spirit; so ‘man’ is a distortion of ‘nam’. And Namse is a version of Anansi the Spider. So the Spider is part of the ‘Nam’ and the ‘Nam’ is part of the Spider. And ‘toura’ is a way of telling stories.”

I read the nam/man idea as a reminder that spirit and human are not one in the same but the spider acts as a bridge between them.

The companion stranger is described in the essay in this cryptic fashion: “And the word is God w/God but separates from the Tree and become(s) a Companion Stranger” (“Namsetoura and the Companion” 5). What is implied here is that the speaker’s numinous experience removes him from our circumscribed space to one where he might better understand an important message. He is a stranger in the space but is privileged to have been addressed there by Namsetoura. In the essay, Brathwaite refers to the spirits as “stranger companion(s)” reversing the phrase. The reversal suggests difference, but perhaps it could also suggest relation-- two sides of one coin, like the mystifying connection inherent in paradox.

⁵ Nicholas Laughlin comments on Brathwaite’s groundbreaking (and often bewildering) ‘*Sycorax video style*,’ which he describes as ‘a use of computer fontage to visualise his sense of dream & morph & riddim drama — videolectic enactment.’ It emerged fully in *Dreamstories* (1994): a visual poetry, using the resources of an early computer word processor, deploying a variety of typefaces and styles, unconventional syntax and punctuation, and sometimes idiosyncratic spellings. ‘*Sycorax video style*’ cannot properly be quoted; it must be visually reproduced. As his name for it makes clear, Brathwaite sees this form as a rebellion against ‘Prospero’s’ poetry, staid lines advancing in orderly fashion from left to right, and stanzas marching in ranks down the page.

The unsettling experience of reading work in this typeface evokes the spirit of the Trickster who provokes in order to make us question the status quo. He initiates turmoil, disorder, discomfort that could precipitate positive change.

a photograph he took (cited in McSweeney). The mixed bag of media, of course, recalls Brodber's historical collage.⁶

The story behind "Namsetoura" was given as part of Brathwaite's keynote address at the conference. He moved seamlessly and entertainingly between registers and modes, one of which was the account of buying land in Barbados in Cow Pasture/Cow Pastor only to be told that he would have to give it up to the government for a golf course. He went to the area to do a kind of walkabout-- presumably in defiance or in resistance -- when he noticed a spider web in the bush and two large spiders in it. He decided to take a photograph, but was hampered by what appeared to be a malfunctioning camera. He was determined, so he borrowed an instamatic camera from his companion and was able to take a photo. When he developed the film, this image is what he says appeared:⁷



⁶ This kind of structure that merges many forms is a sign of the Trickster who brings chaos, but out of the tumult, design invariably emerges. Notice that Mammy King's history has a similar shape in that it incorporates disparate voices, spans various periods and includes song and oratory amidst the regular narrative. The Trickster's role in these texts is a subject of discussion later in the paper.

⁷ The image included here was copied from the first volume and issue of *Anthurium*.

Readers who are able to suspend their disbelief⁸ will surmise, in keeping with the text of the poem, that this is the image of the spirit of a slave. Thus, despite the fact that it did not appear to co-operate with Brathwaite at first, the camera delivered the image of a ghost initially invisible to the human eye.

Here is one major conjunction between Brodber's and Brathwaite's texts: they both present a technological gadget that serves as a channel for communication with the spirit world. Like the camera, the Federal Writers' Project tape recorder delivers the voices of spirits initially inaudible to the human ear. The fact that technology facilitates the intersection of the spirit world and ours suggests the inevitability of the numinous; despite our resistance, the Old World dimension adapts and finds ways to break through. The high tech contemporary world does not deter it; instead technology is used as a tool to facilitate the dominance of the spiritual.

Another major concurrence is that both works intertwine not only technology and ghosts but also the Trickster Anancy. In *Louisiana* there is a tape recorder, various actually speaking spirits of Blacks, and anansesem, or an Anancy story; in Brathwaite's poem there are two cameras, one telepathically speaking ghost of an African slave and two actual spiders in a web. Ultimately, both works interface technology with the spiritual, and both feature Anancy the spider as a medium between the spirit world and ours. What allows for this odd triad to be duplicated? The strange combination of ghost, machine and spider must, in and of itself, have metaphorical weight-- a mathematical equation that works like a key to unlock conundrums of a certain sort.

And everywhere we find Ananse/Anamse we know that
we are home

Kamau Brathwaite

Brathwaite's representation of Ananse in the paper "Namsetoura and the Companion Stranger" locates the Trickster as crucial for the descendants of Africans:

-god-power-presence of Africa of ancestral Africa
ca. beautifully transported to the Caribbean/ Americas
But altered in that subtle Middle Passage transage....
& therefore very much a part of ourselves & very much
a part of our enterprise/enterprize/hnterprise of creoliza-
tion/plurality/multiple representation.⁹

⁸ Many members of the audience at the 2001 conference in Miami were perplexed by Brathwaite's tale of the Cow Pasture experience; not everyone could suspend their disbelief.

⁹ I have done what I could to represent Brathwaite's Sycorax Video Style and his line breaks, but I am not sure if hnterprise is the word that appears here. It is definitely a coinage but is hard to decipher.

The spider Trickster has profound significance for the people of the region.¹⁰ Sharlene Poliner explains that Ananse is the agent of the sky god for the Akan of Ghana, and his liminality determines the foundation of his significance. The spider came to the New World with the transported Africans but his status changed; he became Anancy, half human-half animal, and no longer held the position of demi-god, but he retained his Trickster role. Both the Caribbean and the African spider depends upon his facility with language; both are shape-shifters-- sometimes a spider, sometimes a man; both dwell in the interstices, the unnameable gaps from which any possibility might emerge; and both frequent the crossroads - their domain is the crossroads, where paths intersect to create the potential for any outcome. But because he is a figure from Old World myth that has metamorphosed to suit the Caribbean context, Anancy signifies the Caribbean identity rooted in, but not limited by, the ancestral past. In mutating to fit his New World context, he represents the endurance, adaptability, and inventiveness of the Caribbean people. Thus, it is fitting that the spider would be featured in works by these writers who both regularly tap the African cultural and spiritual inheritance for elements by which they might infuse their own culture.¹¹ It should be noted, though, that Brathwaite represents the Trickster as Akan Ananse, the demi-god who has adapted rather than as Caribbean Anancy, the adaptation. In other words, he keeps us conscious of Africa, the source of the archetype.

The general mythological significance of the creature is also telling. J.E. Circlot states that its meaning is derived from its aggressiveness, from its creativity (as exemplified in its spinning of webs), and from the figure of the web itself-- "a spiral net converging towards a central point" (304). He continues: "The spider sitting in its web is a symbol of the centre of the world," and "in

¹⁰ Harris's ghosts in *Palace of the Peacock* are not African ancestors, but they have been described as the archetypal ancestors of Guyana as a whole and even of the Caribbean with their multi-ethnic heritage. In addition, Harris, too, associates ghosts with the Trickster figure. It is a spider-spirit that propels the quest upon which the multiracial crew embarks. Vigilance is the sailor with vision: when he finally perceives that linearity is society's prison, and when the barriers between past and present and between death and life melt away for him, the spider becomes his totem. He "alone preserved the vessel straight ahead, steering with Trickster arm and engine" (85). Wilson Harris envisions the Caribbean as a locus of limitless imaginative and artistic potential because its history is characterised by upheaval but particularly because it is comprised of so many varied elements. As a cross-cultural figure Anancy represents the inventive energy forged by the joining of diffuse fragments. The Trickster, who operates out of chaos and presides over crossroads, serves as a metaphor for the creative spirit generated at intersections.

¹¹ Anancy appears in other works by both of these writers. For example, Brathwaite's spider in the poem "Ananse" serves as archetype for the African heritage of black Caribbean people. Brathwaite incorporates the entire poem into his essay "Namsetoura and the Companion Stranger". Brodber's *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* not only contains an Anancy figure, Baba, who leads the protagonist Nellie out of her psychosis, but bears the Trickster stamp metaphorically, structurally, vocally, and linguistically. I argue in my unpublished dissertation that this novel is a Trickster text, using the definition of the aesthetic devised by Jeanne Rosier Smith.

their ceaseless weaving and killing-- building and destroying-- [they] symbolize the ceaseless alternation of forces on which the stability of the universe depends" (304). The term "alternation of forces" reveals where the meaning of the Trickster archetype and that of the spider overlap: both figures embody flux, the flux that is necessary for balance to be achieved. As the *spider* Trickster, Anancy is especially symbolic of these principles.

How does the spider appear in *Louisiana* and in "Namsetoura"? In Brodber's work, when Ella and her partner Reuben move to New Orleans from the rural cane cutting district of St Mary, their landlady, Madame Marie, also a medium, tells them the tale of Anancy and the magic cooking pot which produces food at the spider's bidding in hard times. When Ella tells her newfound confidante that she's perplexed by how the voices got onto her tape recorder, Madame Marie equates the tape recorder with Anancy's cooking pot; the idea is that Ella should simply accept the supernatural. If the cooking pot is Anancy's magic tool in the tale and the tape recorder can be equated with the cooking pot, then, it, too, must signify the Trickster spirit. It makes sense, because the novel is about exchange between Caribbean Blacks and African-Americans as well as between the dead and the living and, of course, Ananse/Anancy is the spirit of communication and confluence.

In "Namsetoura" the spider is actual. It has spun a web in the bush at Cow Pasture/Cow Pastor. The reason the speaker wants the photo in the first place (he believes, anyway) is to capture the image of the spiders in the web. When he looks at the photograph that he has developed [that develops] he hears the slave speak with his spiritual ear:

Tree hundred years uh starin here under dis spider
web an bush. ananse at my door of herbs an now yu come disturb
me wit yr camera destroy the ruin of my spiral¹²
with yr flash. (120)

By the ghost's acknowledgment, the spider guards the passageway between the living and the dead. Thus, in both Brodber's and Brathwaite's texts, there is communion between the living and the dead through an apparatus of modern technology, and in both cases a spider is present-- one virtual, one actual-- keeping the crossroads. The association between ghost and Spider Trickster then is natural since the spider facilitates the exchange between dead and living. The association between Old World Trickster and technology may seem odd, but it is an indication of the archetype's flexibility and his ubiquity. Both the tape recorder and the camera are tools for correspondence; and in his function as mediator, Anancy is associated with language and with communication. The fact that he controls these gadgets speaks to his timelessness and, ultimately, his power.

¹² There is a suggestion here that the ghost is the Trickster since the spiral would refer to the web. Perhaps the ghost is speaking through Ananse or perhaps the Trickster is speaking through the ghost. This indefiniteness is typical in a Trickster climate.

The manner in which the ghosts are represented in the two texts is also worth examining. When Ella first approaches Mammy King, the matriarch is not cooperative, and Ella remarks sarcastically to herself that she needs “braille to access those thoughts”¹³ (14). Mammy King takes over, questioning the interviewer on her ancestry, and upon discovering that Ella’s parents are Jamaican, she rattles off what she knows about the island’s geography, history, etc. She even sings a Jamaican folksong, but none of this is what Ella believes she needs. She leaves, frustrated. What the scholar does not recognise at first is that although Mammy King will not cooperate with the Federal Writers’ Project agenda, she has a mission of her own that will be a gift to Ella-- not a gift to her ambition but to her inner self. After all, Ella eventually discovers her calling as medium and serves as a conduit between her community and the spirit world but also as a link between African Americans and people from the Caribbean. In addition, because her partner is Congolese, an African is also part of this drawing together of Blacks. This leads to the strengthening of their ties to each other, to their ancestors and to their culture as a whole.

The spirits in *Louisiana* seek contact with the living; they want a partnership. Mammy King and her friend Louise or Lowly, who has been dead for years, see Ella as a potential medium whom they can use to help African-Americans and Caribbean Blacks recognise how they resemble and whom they can use to help Blacks to heal themselves. The perplexing dialogue that occurs in the first chapter between Mammy King and her already dead friend indicates this:

“This be the kid?”

“This is the horse. Will you ride?”

“Will she do?”

“Best I have seen. Will you ride?”

“Let’s see if she will.” (17)

Maureen Warner-Lewis has documented her interview with a Kumina Queen who explains the reason that devotees are mounted by spirits in Kumina religious ceremonies. The ritual involves the spirits “riding” their chosen “bareback” because it is the “only avenue to revelation” (“Nkuyu” 78). Ella will be their horse, or their medium, but she is green. They appropriate the tape recorder to reach her. Perhaps they decide that the modern technology carries authority that is likely to convince a modern woman. On the tapes Mammy King records after her death are dialogues between herself and her Jamaican best friend Lowly. She also records monologues detailing the lives of her forebears, among them a great grandfather hanged for his refusal to submit as a slave, as well as a grandfather and a mother prone to civil disobedience. Sometimes they themselves speak. These spirits appear to crave contact; their monologues and dialogues go on for pages. They want to share their story with their descendants, and as Holloway reasons they might, these

¹³ A figure of speech here since Ella is blind to the inheritance of her heritage.

stories provide a counter narrative to the official histories that have misrepresented the disadvantaged or left them out altogether.

On the other hand, the ghost in “Namsetoura” is *vex* to have been disturbed. She begins with a beautiful lyrical lament, but works up to a busing in a form of creole derived from the Akan language. Brathwaite explains some of the creole in the essay. She has no welcome for the speaker; in fact she mocks him as we hear in this passage:

But looka yu doa nuh! Look wha be. come- a yu! mirasme buckra broni half-white back site bwoy. eatin de backra culture. Dah backra backsite culcha eatin yu! (120)

He is especially shocked because he sees her as a sister, mother, aunt or ancestor, As Brathwaite himself says:

normally one would expect a sybil to speak in an oratorical manner, in a very correct, abstract system. But instead of that she used very salty language. She spoke in a mixture of Asante Twi, Ga, and Barbadian Nation language. But she spoke in a very—not a hostile manner—but she used a lot of four letter words. I mean, she chewed me out properly. And that was also, as you can imagine, quite humbling. (qtd. in McSweeney)

This is not our conventional image of our forebears; we generally have a sense of them that resembles the one that Brodber portrays in *Louisiana*-- wise, protective, vibrant and perhaps even playful. If we acknowledge them as our blood and revere them, they guide us. We do not expect a cussin', nor do we expect mockery. Brathwaite's ghost mocks the speaker for feeling dispossessed of his land since in comparison to her dispossession, his is miniscule. She mocks his Western education; she mocks his ethnicity; she mocks him for being weak and not standing up against the dispossession of Bajans. She berates him for allowing the ancestors to be left for centuries in unhallowed ground and for not performing the appropriate rituals. This representation of the ancestor is unsettling.

Nevertheless, it is appropriate in an Anancy space. The Trickster is a dissembler who upsets the balance. As Christopher Vecsey explains, “By breaking the patterns of culture the trickster helps define those patterns” (106). It dawns on the reader that if Brathwaite's ghost did not want to be found, her image would not have appeared when the film was developed. Like Mammy King, this ghost is in control of the technology. But the spider should not be forgotten. We must recall that the speaker was not trying to take a photograph of the dead slave; he had not seen her. He wanted a shot of the spiders in their web. He appears to believe that the arachnids did not want to be captured on film so they hexed the camera. We know though that once the spider is involved, we should expect trickery and irony. If Anancy/Ananse was reluctant to be photographed there would not have been images to examine. One might even wonder if the speaker, who knows the power of the Trickster, has not himself seen through the ruse and is playing along to confuse and/or test the reader.¹⁴

¹⁴ In fact, I see Brathwaite as a Trickster artist—a challenging and visionary mediator.

Interestingly, Brathwaite has excised a segment of the poem that softened the ghost's *cussin*:
 they are here. under the scarface under the coral under the sea . under the
 crunching of headlandsghosts we now know who won't leave mwe . the
 past of at last . out of this past . ure. *can yu believe it* . walking us out of the
 farrow . when we most need it . its Word thawing out on our tongues . salt .
 the white grains of anger . gone . *wd you believe it* . into regret . then into
 something like silence . something like peace . so you can almost taste it. (73)

This passage in the original draft suggests that the speaker's shame leads him away from anger (presumably at losing the land) into regret (presumably at forgetting the ancestors) and eventually into a feeling of peace at the assurance that the ancestors are, in fact, still there. Another excised passage that appears in the "Namsetoura and the Companion Stranger" version of the poem helps us to understand why the poet atones in the later draft through his revisions:

A spider poem w/like all
 Anansesem, a moral, a terrible
 Accusation. bent into this story
 Like a hook or a broken knife
 Of the consequences of neglect
 & ignorance and forgetting
 -the IMMORALITY of it
 .outghost. loss of immortality
 Which those outcast from home
 know

The *Born to Slow Horses* version does not give the speaker room to move from anger, to regret, to peace as the earlier draft does; it is packed with the ghost's rebuke. But it ends with the word *liberation* writ large at the top of the final page followed by an unglossed graphic and a few explanatory, though incomplete, notes. The suggestion is that the confrontation brings liberation; but in this more recent draft, Brathwaite goes no further than that. He seems to be saying that it is enough to know that facing the ancestor's reproach and acknowledging one's errors results in a kind of release.

Kamau Brathwaite and Erna Brodber are both occupied with bringing consciousness to the descendants of Africans in the Caribbean, and both recognise that it must grow from a spiritual foundation. The association of the spider with the ghost and the machine makes perfect sense. Anancy is a facilitator-- he might use any medium to bring about exchange: tales, song, a tape recorder, or a camera. The liminal point in both texts is between the world of humans and the world of the spirits, and there is Anancy, squatting at the crossroads, waiting to facilitate confluence.

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