



MAMMY FORBES, THE HEALER

Jade Lindo

## I-Land Song

CARE, CURA AND THE CARELESS

3

*the manipulation of care*

4

OBEAH

6

*the violence of care*

8

KINSHIP

10

*the colour of care*

12

*coda*

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*Birthered as Rose Anne Forbes, but they call you mammy forbes and for that reason I have travelled beyond the present to you.*

*I represent the unknown, the stranger passing, the personhood deep with compassion, empathy and love for you.*

*The you that stands for photographs, holding the young and protecting our souls.*

*You are known for your help, and your healing across the island, but WHO AH LUK BOUT YUH?* [who is taking cares of you?]

*I speak of care, and its association with suffering but also as a noun, the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of someone or something.<sup>1</sup>*

*A burdened and contested word, but you understand that feeling all too well.<sup>2</sup>*

*Your manner of caring is so subtle but intrinsic to the larger factors on the island of ill health and suffering, you provide a 'balming sanatorium' but there is much more to this level of care.*

*I see your deep contentment in the lowering of your eyes, she is feeling downcast and unsettled by those watching over her every move.*

*Without care or consideration.*

*Some heckle, "SORRY FI MAWGA DAWG, MAWGA DAWG TUN ROUND BITE YUH"* [sometimes the persons we help are the ones who cause us harm].

*But yet she entangles herself with providing care, being a carer offering up unmeasurable amounts of c-a-r-e.*

*Who is this baby you hold so dearly? Is she or he of kin? Why are you off-centre in this story and why do they watch so closely? Is it admiration, confusion or is it to keep you safe from the care, 'cura' and the careless.*

*The community relies on your skill to maintain life.*

*The island reaches for you through, tumultuous rain fall and the delight of mangoes falling from ripeness.*

*Children and the adults that guard them and hold them closely look upon your abilities of 'care' to continue this world of community.*

*Bound by a connection beyond blood but by ties of kin. Usually dominated by the overarching overworked, manipulated constraints of the period I come to you within.<sup>3</sup>*

*Your presence speaks beyond your involvement.*

*The performance of care 'has and holds' the members of downtown and even beyond the parish, Clarendon.*

*She is enveloped in intention, concern and filled with emotion.*

*Those emotions call to the passer by, the I in this song.*

*I feel your energy, loved by many but you are tired, and jaded being thrust into an action of giving care.*

*I acknowledge Rose, the mother, the being, the rose growing through the tended fields of sugarcane and I bid you to walk good [take care].*

*A substitute for farewell, a pleasantry to indicate my time may be fleeting but I will always come back to you.*

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<sup>1</sup>Madeleine Bunting, *Labours of Love*, 1st edn (London: Granta Books, 2021).

<sup>2</sup>María Puig De La Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative ethics in more than human worlds*(University of Minnesota Press) 2017 [PP. 1-24]

<sup>3</sup>bell hooks, *All About Love*, 1st edn (New York: WmMorrowPB, 2016).

*You are a Black woman, a mother, an anchor in the occupation of caring but this role is not a profession of choice.*

*Working endless hours with no formal restitution, with no urgency in the labour of appreciation.*

*Enslaved, pulled in front of the law.*

*Unpicked and distributed; she, her, I is manipulated. A form of chattel, incidentally also a wife and a homemaker.<sup>1</sup>*

*Lessened in your position of womanhood.*

*A TEGAREG [person of no class] is how they refer to you.*

*The you, whose caring is broadcasted as hallucinations of dark whispers in the ocean's breeze,*

*Only really this is an opportunity to develop a new packaging of care.*

*Tightly bound in a CROCUS BAG [burlap bag] filled with unlimited pretentions.*

*COOYAH! [Look at this]*

*Wellness, powerfully structured as a gift.*

*A neatly packaged tale, infused with crystals and appropriation.*

*They are taking her for granted, misaligning her guidance.*

*Every decoction finely represented in Times Roman size 12 font, easily digestible and ready for insertion.*

*The words ring empty despite the ramifications attached in the 'accept cookies disclaimer'.*

*This wellness is not for the parish, it lives off the strength of your being.*

*The faces that you once knew have resurfaced and no longer deem their actions necessary for justification.*

*Now it's just parades of unveilings of hauls that showcase your remedies.*

*No longer personalised expressions of healings, they are now duplicated, mass produced and glorified.*

*A wellness not for your and I, too idealised for us to fit in.*

*No place for exchange, no room to call our own.*

*Holistic spiritualities legitimised by the relational and emotional care work, focused on supply and demand.<sup>2</sup>*

*This 'woman's' work entrenched with labours of a bodily nature, transformed within new social settings.*

*Now valued and repurposed in favour of the women, but not her.*

*She has no place here, I become unrepresented in connection to woman's wellness beyond traditional paradigms.*

*Whiteness washes over the I-land*

*No documented understanding of herbal wellness, the ignorance is indeed at bliss.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race And Class*, 1st edn (London: Penguin Classics, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Bridget Conon, 'How Goopy Are You?' *Women, Goop And Cosmic Wellness*, *European Journal Of Cultural Studies*, 24.6 (2021), 1261-1281 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211055735>>

<sup>6</sup> 'The Take, "The Problem With Goop, And Why Controversy Makes It Stronger"', Youtube.Com, 2022 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3gMPBpEDhg>>

*Exploiting methods of care, as shop bought unnecessary and unproven products.*

*Claiming to hold deep rooted in secrets of inclusion.*

*All walking in the light of wellness of wealth and possession*

*Dictating about a lifestyle seated in confusion and microaggressions.*

*She is told this is the new woman.*

*Developed on the structure of feminism as a product.<sup>7</sup>*

*A product that cannot be purchased with a thousand dollar leaving you with any change.*

*Issues swept onto the veranda, left for all to wade through.*

*Messages lost in translation, written in unreadable or understandable dialect.*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

*Colonial rule, West Indian aesthetics.*

*Complexities in religion and cultural ties.*

*A tool of resistance against domination, a device engaged with the reverse of colonial hierarchy.<sup>8</sup>*

*Reaped and sown on the plantation, a response to captivity, bondage and exile.<sup>9</sup>*

*Fighting for freedom, surviving through a modification of the King James Version.*

*The Caribbean becomes the home of lost identity.*

*OBEAH!*

*Unspoken, resisted and an undocumented realm.*

*What cannot be said, or understood by many and without control.*

*Vindicated as 'witchcraft' and 'black magic', deeply entrenched in dated stereotypes.<sup>10</sup>*

*Nevertheless, this is the sense of spirituality that lives within your nurturing care.*

*The Middlesex county residents travel to you for the cure.*

*Your speciality is called upon by workers, lovers and a higher power.*

*The coloniser and colonised live amongst each other, searching for the answers only you can provide.*

*Answers full with constraints about fear and revenge.*

*She takes on illegalities that her care is constructed upon.*

*Risk of flogging, surrounds every corner.*

*A narrative, a feeling, an unmoveable territory.*

*Binding her tightly to this paradigm.*

*I read the 'spells' casted to provide an excursion to reality.*

*A place where love and desire has no bounds.*

*Caring through the understanding of the unsaid.*

*A conversation with eyes and gestures.*

*Who is her softness in this overgrown, thorn infused turmoil.*

*She clings to the baby, innocent and helpless without expectations.*

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<sup>8</sup> Janelle Rodrigues, *Narratives of Obeah in West Indian Literature* (London: ROUTLEDGE, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

*Over casted and out of focus by the shadows.*

*Possessed by the diversion of care, bathed in assumptions and wellbeing.*

*Discourses of out of body aspects of tourism,*

*A journey put together in the creation of an idealised package of colonial power, neatly wrapped up with a cane  
sweetened with sugar:<sup>11</sup>*

*Moving through one parish to a next, the translations become undone.*

*Once misunderstood, now reclaimed.*

*Taking form as a practice of religion, a source of authority desired between enslaved people.*

*But to on lookers, it is merely a cosmological exploration of spiritual beings.*

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<sup>11</sup>Diana Paton, 'Witchcraft, Poison Law, and Atlantic Slavery' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2012), pp. 235-264

*The photograph is inscribed with “Mammy Forbes, the Healer” under a sensitive but compelling portrait of you.  
Mrs Rose Ann Forbes, the wife of George Forbes, is not a name they call you by.<sup>12</sup>*

*Why have they given this name to you? Is it pertaining to the culture you have found yourself enveloped within?*

*A label of significance to whom gave that name to you.*

*An exercise of power and alternative agendas with ever growing to do lists.*

*A photograph or even a postcard,*

*Ready for those sun burnt faces in search of an ‘object of desire’, connecting themselves to another geographical location.<sup>13</sup>*

*Hair; covered.*

*Cloth wrapped and encased around the head, fashioned as a ‘tie head’.*

*Full of floral dignitaries, dried leaves and braid filled coils.*

*A head handkerchief, ready to wipe away all the forgotten dilemmas.*

*Her apron extended into a frill and pleated dress, a defining feature of peasantry.*

*Working class considerations, ‘aproned’ in formalities.*

*‘A joy to behold.’<sup>14</sup>*

*A voluminous skirt, patterned from calico.*

*A-line shaped, approved by the masses, mastering her position.*

*Pristine, pure and white in colour but black, suspicious and stained in presence.*

*No pockets in sight but a small bag with prized possessions.*

*The small fineries advanced to you.*

*With repercussions.*

*If any niceties are given to you at all.*

*Colonists generalise and misconstrue the translation of your cure.*

*They dismantle your care and justify it to their own assimilation of traditional African practices.*

*Witchcraft, a popularised term given to your aversions of care,*

*A verbal method of violence.<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Carol Tulloch, *The Birth of Cool* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> ibi

<sup>14</sup> ibid

<sup>15</sup> Diana Paton, ‘Witchcraft, Poison Law, and Atlantic Slavery’ *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April 2012), pp. 235-264



*Legislations brought to OBEAH in order to allow authorities to capture the life of the enslaved.*

*Spiritual power repurposed in an unrespectable manner.*

*The emergence of a criminalised term, coats the arms of the island.*

*The meanings fallen into disrepute, entrancing the interpretations as demonised words such as poison, medicine and sorcery.*

*Medicine, curing the sickened delusions of the masses.*

*A 5ml dose of witchcraft leaving a bitter taste.*

*Dangerous and malicious; accusations sighted in the most slanderous crimes, any undoing involving the word only dared to be whispered.*

*Inspiring fear mixed with anxiety*

*Troubled faces under suspicion that they had been dosed with this intoxicating care.*

*Powerful association enticing to those seeking out such methods of access.<sup>16</sup>*

*This is a magic like no other!*

*Categorised as evil, which could be manipulated as a weapon against the peach fleshed pariah.*

*Traditionally unaccepted therefore leaving room to question this as an accepted religious practice.<sup>17</sup>*

*She is casted a side in a bondage of blackness.*

*Rooted in the projection of African parables dictated by the imagining of you as an object.*

*The renaming, restoring and weaving of you into another self far too distant from the person you once knew.<sup>18</sup>*

*Overtime communicated as a practice that dabbled in the work of devil speech and evil spirits.*

*Superstitions taken as word of mouth.*

*Bypassing any acknowledgements to the truth.<sup>19</sup>*

*A well-kept secret.*

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<sup>16</sup> Diana Paton, *The Cultural Politics Of Obeah*, 1st edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

<sup>17</sup> Jerome S. Handler, 'Slave Medicine and Obeah in Barbados, Circa 1650 to 1834' *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 2000, Vol. 74, No. 1/2 (2000), pp. 57-90

<sup>18</sup> Tamura A Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Jerome S. Handler, 'Slave Medicine and Obeah in Barbados, Circa 1650 to 1834' *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 2000, Vol. 74, No. 1/2 (2000), pp. 57-90

*Closeness to the segregated few that rely on you.  
A forming of family based on commitment to care.  
Varied members representing souls you have touched amongst your work.  
Creating a bond, a feeling across people and things.<sup>20</sup>*

*Kin.*

*Healing through reputation  
Responding to the outcries dismissed as a disobedient nature.  
Daunting responsibilities beyond boundaries.<sup>21</sup>  
Domestic medicine is her sphere.  
Woman's work but no longer sung by Maxwell.  
Rarely working without supervision,  
Prying eyes dressed in shades of authority.  
Still she takes on the affinity to possess this method of healing.  
Fraying the boundaries between public and private<sup>22</sup>  
Work manoeuvres between the sanatorium and the home little left for you.  
Who holds your hand in kinship?  
& lays gentle kisses on your head or rubs in the richest olive oil into your scalp?  
I offer you softness and concern, a foundation of love missing from the healing work of care.  
Your knowledge does not exclude conjuring, but it is hearts that you have captured with your allure.  
A relationship of enduring attachments.  
Despite a saddening structure of power, you amplify joy.  
She rejoices in the simple pleasures afforded to her.  
Little to none.*

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<sup>20</sup> "Kinship", Dictionary.Cambridge.Org, 2022 <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/kinship>> [Accessed 13 January 2022].

<sup>21</sup> Sharla M Fett, *Working Cures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

*Family comes in many shades and creed, but gestation is a privilege only afforded to a few with hue considered to be just right.<sup>23</sup>*

*Sub-humanity and a privatisation of care.*

*Sadness greets your eyes and floods your pillow, whilst you long for compassion in the image of kin.*

*Punished for your work because it was unable to be capitalised*

*Living within restrictions to sustain a system.*

*A system designed against your very nature.*

*Entangled decisions encoding transcripts of love.*

*Tightly spun into the reactions of friend and even foe.*

*Timeless affection is seen as deserving of all but you.*

*Your love can be found in surrounding yourself with kin.*

*Kin across the island and in my heart.*

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<sup>23</sup> Sophie Anne Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family* (Verso, 2021).

*Black women all over cling to the desire to be respected, included and loved.*

*She is no different.*

*Regardless of her method of care and the energy, she gives her all to this profession of care.*

*Subservient to the low hanging fruit of hierarchy.*

*Care shall only be demonstrated by those that share your skin.*

*Darkened from your arduous work in the brimming sun.*

*This skin is a badge but not of honour, it is seen as lesser.*

*Other.*

*A daily reminder for what you should represent.*

*Women of care, never to be cared for or about but to produce care.*

*Healing those that come before you without second thought to her feelings,*

*Her longings to be seen for who she is.*

*Caribbean woman exploring the image set in the curves of her body.*

*Thickened shape, rounded on colonial and racial ideologies.<sup>24</sup>*

*Historically a body likened to this is fit for consumption and bred for purpose.*

*Seen as inhuman and so easily manipulate through words likened to deviant and monstrous.<sup>25</sup>*

*The contrasting skin to clothing are the telling signs to the on looker that you shouldn't desire the love that belongs you.*

*The you that bends over backwards to console the visitors in search of a remedy purer than the cloth that shields you from the sea salted air.*

*A cloth purposefully coloured to divide you from the centre of desire.*

*This cloth white in colour holds the hands of the coloniser keeping them safe in their delusions.*

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<sup>24</sup> Kamile Gentles-Pearst, 'Fearfully And Wonderfully Made': Black Caribbean Women And The Decolonization Of Thick Black Female Bodies', *Feminism & Psychology*, 30.3 (2020), 306-323 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353520912983>

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

*A tokenised transaction without any repercussions for them.  
Colour truly matters, it embodies every factor of your being.  
Identity remains a centre point of your entirety.  
I see your dignity in the movement of care  
How you embody all that is good and rich,  
Richness in your hands healing those feeling severe pain and confusion,  
Richness in the soil that meets your feet, heavy from the burden pulled through the loops of several holes of  
situations  
All featured in the chronicles of your life.  
Black skin.  
Black stereotypes.  
Black consumption.  
Black bodies resisting the very apparent signifiers given to them by Eurocentric ideologies.<sup>26</sup>  
Ideologies based within hegemonic values run through this image of care.  
Caring removed from your tone,  
Your presence.  
Your desire to move within these parameters aligned to hold you back.  
She flourishes.  
She has become the weapon that was used and manipulated against her.  
Now she controls her narrative.  
A story full of entanglements, desires and revenge.  
Court appearances, one through to three concluding your impact.  
Dotted around the parish in the form of retuning customers and their word of mouth recommendations.  
Filled benches,  
Warmed by the passengers on a journey to deliverance, fulfilment and joy.*

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

*My melody comes to you as a warm smile,  
A tight hug lasting just long enough for you to take in the scent from my coconut oil infused hair.  
I can only imagine the emotions you have felt and how you have manoeuvred within this space.  
Your form of care lives on through your daughter.  
She, her, I carry these burdens and jump over these obstacles  
Represented to us as mainstream conundrums designed to disable us.  
Lead us a stray,  
Yet we emancipate ourselves from covert ramifications built on the constraints of us dwindling in the evening's  
breeze.  
Upsetting our souls as the sunrises  
Stealing our first bite of the JUNE PLUM.  
Sweetening our bush tea with hopes and dreams  
Manifestations unspoken as not to alert RED YEYE [red eye, covetous, envy]  
We shall rejoice in the untimely work that has taken place  
A well-deserved pat on the back  
A HOWDEEDO in the street  
A look of admiration as I watch you go about your day  
Handling care like a fragile element, desired by all but only deserving to a few  
This bares no remark on th work you do  
However things may come to you, you remain the unmoveable version that I have come to love  
This is unconditional type of love, no need to prepare a performance in my presence.  
Here, with me you can be yourself.*

*Yourself is the only version that is desired.*

*I long to for you to know how your care has unravelled itself to me.*

*It sits nicely on the self of my heart,*

*Awaiting acceptance from the masses but to most that matter,*

*You, Rose Ann are all the love we need.*

*A woman, a Black woman in the image of the Venus*

*So striking that they try to overshadow your presence with their eyes.*

*Eyes that stand to attention but look on with emptiness.*

*x*