

seek assistance for law enforcement and local advocacy groups to seek legal and social reprimand against the aggressor. Other women routinize the violence, defining most threats and assaults not necessarily as abuse but as a taken-for-granted hardship that is “just part of life.” Other women are overwhelmed by it, turning inward and dissociating, carrying a heavy psychological and physical burden of fear, pain and joyless despair. Still others respond in a combination of these and other ways.

For those of us working in this field as scholars and advocates, we search for ways to ensure that responses to violence can be effective and long-lasting. This is indisputably a daunting task. However, as forms of violence fold in upon themselves, exacerbating social hierarchies and colliding with the traumas of uprootedness, it is important to look for those moments when violent displacement allows for momentary emplacement and social connection.

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<sup>1</sup>Burying a baby's umbilical cord after birth is a common cultural practice on many Caribbean islands to signify the grounding of that individual to a local community.

<sup>2</sup>It is important to deal with the thorny issue of language and representation. For the purposes of this paper, I am using the phrase “systems of prostitution” to refer to the intersecting forces of poverty, racism, and patriarchy that perpetuate the sexually exploitive situations that the participating women recognize as restrictive and harmful. I distinguish this phrase from “sex work” which I use to refer to those situations where participants define themselves pri-

marily as workers and who reject victim status. I use the phrase “sex trafficking” to mean the coercive and exploitive relocation and brokering of humans for sexual activities from which the brokers profit materially. And I differentiate it from “cross-border sex work” based on the degree of influence that those involved feel they have over their own material circumstances.

<sup>3</sup>Ashley-Mika” and “Charlene” are both pseudonyms chosen by the young women themselves.

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## LE FIL DE LUMIÈRE

### Claudine Bertrand

Femme du lointain  
bouche nomade  
cherche un visage  
pour évoquer  
son jardin des vertiges

Se jette sur l'ombre  
ivre du silence  
garni de paroles

La nuque en sueur  
je vis sa poitrine nue  
le premier instant

préfère se taire  
ou se cacher  
derrière le rideau  
pour épier  
faire des gestes

La main les repousse  
pour panser l'obscurité

Ne laisse pas la terre  
se tordre de douleur  
mâche le fil de lumière