

MOTHER TONGUE

CHAPTER 4: CARIBBEAN COMMUNITIES

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Marlene Nowbese Philip

WHEN IT WAS BORN, THE MOTHER HELD HER NEWBORN CHILD CLOSE. SHE BEGAN THEN TO LICK IT ALL OVER. THE CHILD WHIMPERED A LITTLE, BUT AS THE MOTHER'S TONGUE MOVED FASTER AND STRONGER OVER ITS BODY, IT GREW SALIENT - THE MOTHER TURNING IT THIS WAY AND THAT UNDER HER TONGUE, UNTIL SHE HAD TONGUED IT CLEAN OF THE CREAMY WHITE SUBSTANCE COVERING ITS BODY

English is
my mother tongue
A mother tongue is not
not a foreign lan lan lang
language
/anguish
anguish
- a foreign anguish.

English is
my father tongue.
A father tongue is
a foreign language,
therefore English is
a foreign language
not a mother tongue.

What is my mother
tongue
my mammy tongue
my mummy tongue
my momsy tongue
my modder tongue
my ma tongue?

I have no mother
tongue no mother to tongue
not tongue to mother
to mother
tongue
me

I must therefore be tongue
dumb
dumb-tongue
dub-tongued
damn dumb
tongue

EDICT I

*Every owner of slaves
shall, wherever possible,
ensure that his slaves
belong to as many ethno-
linguistic groups as pos-
sible. If they cannot speak
to each other, the can-
not then foment rebellion
and revolution.*