

Exclusive Interview With The Canadian Filmmaker: Dawn Wilkinson

Written by Patricia Turnier

Wednesday, 21 November 2012 15:28



Dawn Wilkinson was born in Montreal (Canada) and raised in Toronto. Her father is from Barbados and her mother is a Jewish-Canadian (from Montreal). Dawn Wilkinson is proud of her Bajan and Jewish origins. She wears many hats: filmmaker, writer, director, producer and entrepreneur. She owns her production company, Afterlife Films Corp. in Toronto. The short comedy, *Instant Dread* (1998), is one of Afterlife's previous productions.

Wilkinson studied at the Canadian Film Centre Director's Lab¹ and Short Dramatic Film Program in 2000. She earned a BA with high distinction at The University of Toronto in 1996. Throughout the years, she has produced music videos, commercials, short films and documentaries. Among the short films she directed are *Instant Dread*, 1998, *Dandelions*, 1995,

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Girls Who Say Yes

, 2000, and

Wilderness

(which premiered at

Cinefest Sudbury

), 2012. In addition, she directed an episode of

Murdoch Mysteries

, a popular Canadian drama television series. Working in documentary, Dawn Wilkinson co-directed

Unexpected

for the NFB's Filmmaker in Residence project at St. Michael's Hospital in Ontario, and the

Teamwork Video Project

, a Web-based documentary series for the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation.

She worked also as an apprentice with Norman Jewison on

The Hurricane

and Ernest Dickerson on

Our America

. Her first feature-length movie was

Devotion

(in 2005) which had its U.S. TV premiere on the Black Family Channel. Noteworthy, the smart

Dawn Wilkinson is among the most hard-working directors in Canada. From 2001 to 2008 she

was a teacher at the Toronto Film School and at Humber College from 2009-2010. She also

taught at Trebas Institute between 1999 and 2001. Moreover, Dawn Wilkinson has been

commissioned by the NFB (National Film Board) to train local youth in video-making. She is

also a member of the Director's Guild of Canada since 2008, and a member of the

Writer's Guild of Canada

since 2004.

Dawn Wilkinson receives support for her work from organisations such as the Canada Council

for the Arts. Her work was showcased (in 2004-2005) at the *Reel World Film Festival* and

Urban Kids Film Festival

(in San Francisco). In addition, she has been featured in

www.whoswhoinblackcanada.com

. She was interviewed for Global Cinema TV, featured in

Sway

(magazine) and

Caribbean Tales

among other media.

Dawn Wilkinson has been recognized for her work. In this regard, in 2008, she was the recipient

of "Women in Film & Television's Director's Guild of Canada Emerging Television Director

Award". In addition, her feature film script, LOVE CHILD received the Best Screenplay award at

the "African American Women" in

Cinema Film Festival

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Wilderness

won the "Platinum Remi Award" (where the U.S. Premiere occurred at Worldfest Houston) this year for Dramatic Original Independent Short Subject.

Wilkinson directed an episode of the *Gemini* nominated half hour series HOW TO BE INDIE for Heroic TV, Sudden Storm and YTV. She also directed an episode of the half-hour sitcom *She's the Mayor*

for Hungry Eyes Film & Television and Vision TV. Mrs. Wilkinson is developing several TV series and feature film projects, such as

Revealing Rachel

, a coming-of-age comedy-drama that received the "African-American Women in Cinema Screenplay Award".

Dawn Wilkinson is the first African-Canadian from Montreal who will direct a movie TV adaptation from a bestselling Giller2-winning novel, [The Polished Hoe](#) 3 (it was shortlisted for the "Governor-General

Award

Clarke

4. It will be the second novel by this author to be adapted. Clement Virgo created the TV version of Austin Clarke's

One Heart Broken Into Song

for the CBC in 1999. The plan for

The Polished Hoe

is to begin production in February 2013, with interiors being shot in Toronto, and exteriors in Jamaica or Barbados. Toronto-based Manks Productions has acquired exclusive television rights to adapt the novel for the small screen, with James Russell producing and writing the script.

Mrs. Wilkinson enjoys making films with educational element and likes to showcase them in schools. Her diverse background can bring a lot to the table in the movie industry. *Mega Diversities had the pleasure to speak to Dawn Wilkinson last summer. She was very generous with her time in sharing her professional path. This is the first in-depth interview where she talks thoroughly about her movie in progress, The Polished Hoe, among other topics.*

THE EDITRESS-IN-CHIEF PATRICIA TURNIER TALKS TO THE FILMMAKER DAWN WILKINSON:

P.T. You have a mixed heritage: Jewish and Barbadian. As a biracial individual, did you go through an identity crisis, racism and/or anti-Semitism when you were younger? If so, how did you overcome it and how have these experiences shaped you as a filmmaker?

D.W. This is a big question! I did experience racism. During my childhood, it started when I was 6. I lived in a predominantly white small town for my first five years. I was born in Montreal and we had to relocate when I was 6 to Acton (Southern Ontario). At the time, my father and I were the only Black people in the area. My mother is Jewish. Our family was perceived as different. I experienced racism there, but not anti-Semitism. Then we moved to Brampton, which was also predominantly white. I experienced racism there and confusion about my family. People had questions about my mother and wondered if I was adopted. I could see the difference in skin tones, but in my home, we were not focusing on that because it was irrelevant. However, this was not the case outside of my house, and as a child I didn't know how to deal with it. When I was treated as different at school, it was shocking to me. From an early age, I was really interested in TV and movies. I didn't see things which reflected my reality in terms of observing similarities between people instead of focusing on differences. I didn't see any mixed families.

P.T. Until now, in North America we don't see for instance interracial couple storylines on TV and I am not just talking about Black/White people.

D.W. Exactly! I didn't see a family like mine represented. Beside the race aspect, my father is Christian and my mother is Jewish. I don't recall that I saw this type of diversity in movies and so on. About anti-Semitism, I hate to admit it, but I had to face some Black people who made comments against Jewish people without knowing that I am Jewish. I also had to deal with some Jewish people who made me feel that I was different from them. These experiences gave me material for my own personal story telling.

P.T. How did you overcome the issues you just described?

D.W. [Silence] I went to an alternative high school called Seed, in downtown Toronto. I did several independent research projects related to Black Studies (more than Jewish studies): African arts and culture. I discovered great authors such as Bell Hooks. It allowed me to learn more about how the society is built and structured with its impacts. This is how I stopped taking things so personally. I began to see racism and all the negative attitudes (the *isms*) coming from a specific historical place and not something which has to do with me. I educated myself on the issues as mentioned. Later, I went to University of Toronto to specialise in

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Women Studies. It was an interdisciplinary degree which allowed me to take courses in sociology, history and so on. I was planning to be an academic. I also enjoyed going to the *Toronto International Film Festival*

In addition, throughout the years, I saw several movies such as *Do The Right Thing* when it came out. Seeing the perspective of different Black filmmakers definitely shaped me. It inspired me to become a filmmaker. In this regard, I went to a workshop offered by Sheridan College with the filmmaker Phil Hoffman. He is best known as an experimental filmmaker. He makes very personal experimental movies. Under his guidance, I made a short film of 5 minutes called *Dandelions*

. It was about being identified as a Black Canadian. It was kind of a monologue in which I repeatedly ask "Where are you from?" The main focus concerned identity because all my life people asked me where I was from. In some cases, it meant where are you born but in other cases they wanted to know my origins (my parents and so on). Or worse, in other situations, it meant what are you? So, my film was about all these issues in a visual format. When it screened publicly, it made me realise that this platform allows me to communicate on a larger scale than writing. It can also be more accessible to myriad people instead of using an academic style or jargon to share ideas. In addition, it gives an immediate response from the audience. The people from the public were of different backgrounds and they shared with me they knew how it feels having to justify their identity. I really enjoyed connecting with them. It also confirmed to me that as people we often have more in common than we think. We live in a society which focuses too much on differences and creates artificial divisions.

To summarise, in my alternative high school, I was encouraged to explore creative aspects. For instance, I had projects on the depiction of Black women in music videos. This was a great learning experience and it was a preparation for university, including the future projects I embraced later. This is how I came later to produce feature films such as *Devotion* that I wrote and directed.

Devotion

is a coming of age story about struggling with a biracial identity among other issues.

Overall, I really enjoy discovering a new way of expressing diverse issues thoroughly through the visual medium. This helped me to overcome the difficulties I encountered concerning my diverse identity. It was cathartic to communicate and address these issues visually without carrying it with me anymore. In other words, I no longer internalize these problems. So, I overcame these issues through filmmaking with an educational purpose while using history and culture. My work often combines comedy, fantasy and social satire with a critical perspective in a visually stylized presentation. Throughout the years, it was a healing experience to find like-minded people who encouraged my work and the stories that I wanted to showcase. A lot of

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positivity emanated from these experiences. I still observe the ongoing issues I brought up, but I don't take them personally anymore and I don't allow them to shape my state of mind or my work, which includes my professional goals.

P.T. Earlier you spoke about your alternative high school. It makes me think about the Grammy Award-winning singer, Erykah Badu, who attended the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (in Dallas) which allowed her to grow artistically like you. This shows that different roads can lead to success.

D.W. This is an interesting point! I would like to add also that I had an entrepreneurial spirit at a very young age. During high school, I owned a vintage clothing store. My first video documented that experience, when I was still a student at North Park Secondary School in Brampton.

P.T. I am sure this is part of your Jewish heritage.

D.W. [Laughs] You are right, it definitely shaped me. I was inspired by my mother who had a clothing store.

P.T. You make me think of my mother. She could have been an actress if she wanted to, she was as gorgeous as Dorothy Dandridge when she was young. She is still gorgeous actually. You could have been an actress. You decided to work behind the camera instead. We need to see more the Black and female perspectives in the movie industry. Maybe in the future, we will see you in your movies, like Spike Lee.

DW. [Laughs out loud] Sometimes, I say to myself maybe things would have been easier if I decided to be an actress because it seems that when you bring elements of visibility it does help the filmmaker to thrive. It allows the public to associate you with future work seeing that they got to know you on camera. However, when I started in the business I had no interest in being in front of the camera. As a kid, I enjoyed public speaking, but I felt uneasiness with performing. I realized that I didn't want to be part of the show rather I was interested in creating it. In retrospect, when you are an actor, people know your image, you become a brand and the transition to filmmaking can be facilitated. Also, throughout the years, as an actor you learn things surrounding your profession seeing that you observed how things are being operated on

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the set. About me, I am more discreet and reserved, so taking the acting path wasn't my cup of tea. I didn't aim for being visible. I love to work with actors and I have a great respect for their craft, but my interest concerns storytelling and creating new concepts.



P.T. There is a scarcity of [female filmmakers](#) in the movie industry. What was your defining moment to embrace this path and who in your field were you looking up to when you were younger?

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D.W. I think that when I decided to be in filmmaking, I didn't really grasp how few women were in the business. I became more thoroughly aware of this throughout the years with the statistics, etc. It was a good thing that I was naïve from the start [chuckles] because nothing was holding me back. It also depends on which avenue we are talking about. For instance, in English Canada feature films is a domain where few directors can make a living because we mostly watch American movies so the market is smaller for us. By the way, it was a great thing that I didn't think about this additional challenge when I started in the business [laughs out loud].

Throughout the years, I realised that if you have money and connections it is easier to make it in the industry. These things alone do not guarantee success but can help because you have easier access to resources such as a great studio, locations and so on. I had the opportunity to work with experienced directors such as the Canadian Director Norman Jewison. This convinced me even more that I chose the right career path. It allowed me to see the creative core elements. I took a lot from this experience of shooting, especially with his big Hollywood production, *The Hurricane*. I have to say that I was also inspired by Phil Hoffman to teach filmmaking. I did this in career colleges. I taught music video and film productions. At the same time, I did my own film projects. After I went to the Canadian film center for directing I basically started my company. So, throughout the years I taught, raised funds for my projects and executed them.

P.T. In 2010, at the Academy Awards, Mrs. Kathryn Bigelow broke the glass ceiling with her movie *The Hurt Locker*. She became the first woman director in history to win an Oscar. The Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta had earned a best foreign-language film nomination for the Oscars in 2007. The movie was "Water", which covered and focused on women issues. What do you think it will take for [female filmmakers](#) to get more recognition for film projects concerning women's conditions?

D.W. I had this conversation with other female directors because we are preoccupied with this very important issue that you brought up. Unfortunately, it seems to be true that if you focus on male oriented storylines it is easier to achieve this level of recognition which brings more international attention. The Academy peers who do the voting need to be more diverse.

One of the most challenging parts in the filmmaking process is financing. To get more financing, you need to prove that you have an audience and a track record which is a catch 22, especially for beginners. However, I believe things will be easier with digital distribution because it might help to find audiences. However, I noticed that getting financing online is challenging, in other words it is still in its infancy.

Women at a certain age are thinking about having a family and this can make it difficult to thrive in filmmaking. For instance, I attended a panel discussion where a female producer said that the people who have the power to finance your movie don't want to hear that you have to cancel a meeting because your kid has a fever. There are still stereotypes of who the director is supposed to be and most of the time the perception is the male image. This is what female filmmakers have to face. So, many hurdles can get into the way of women and we have to find a way to overcome them. We also need support because the remaining glass ceilings won't fall by themselves.

Males and females often communicate differently. Women have to know how to speak the language of the film business. I believe that female filmmakers definitely need to be assertive in the movie industry. But to be honest, this trait is not necessarily encouraged in our upbringing and often not perceived positively by society.

To finish, if you pitch a project which is not familiar to the people who are listening to it and have the power to green light it, it can be hard to sell because you are asking them to view the world differently. So, I think it is also up to the public to request more materials on female issues. The people who are stakeholders, broadcasters and publishers, can all play a role, especially if they are sensitive to these topics.

P.T. You mentioned to the media that directing is a physically, mentally and emotionally demanding pursuit. Can you elaborate more on how challenging it can be? In addition, let us know what fuels you to continue in this domain.

D.W. It can be difficult to go through the entire process of filmmaking. Some filmmakers start a movie and never finish it. You have to be really focused. Some complete their film and it was not the vision they had in mind in the beginning. To produce a movie which meets exactly what you had in mind, it can be done when you have experience, not with a first film. You also have to be patient because it can take years for a visual project to come to fruition. It takes time to get the right combination of elements: the right people, the right script, the money and so on. This may result in much anticipation as to what might happen. This process can be very frustrating which is a challenge in itself. It requires a lot of mental energy. You have a lot of details in your mind all the time as a filmmaker. You also have a lot of questions that you need to address. When you are in production, it is physically demanding because you must work at least 12 hours per day. It can be very intense. Directors do not really have a day off because of meetings, etc. So, it is also demanding physically.

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Moreover, as a filmmaker it is important to find material which resonates with you. If you are working on a novel from another author for instance, it is important that you are able to relate to the material otherwise the process will be heavy. The pre-production process often raises many questions: how the movie will be done, where the shooting will take place, and so on. So, the director has a lot to think about. Furthermore, movies are an expensive art form which depends on a crew among other things. Generally it is costly to make mistakes, so for novices it can be very nerve racking.

This domain is fulfilling to me even if it can be difficult. What nourishes me is my passion to convey different stories and so many of them have not been told. I always get involved in projects which speak to me and mean something to me. I really enjoy being in a production and creative environment. I love to give the actors the feedback they need which will allow them to do their best performance.



P.T. Describe to us your directing style. In other words, are you completely in charge of guiding actors or do you allow them to put their ideas on the table?

D.W. I always want their ideas on the table. However, ideally I prefer to receive those ideas prior to shooting because it is easier to incorporate new elements required. I am open to discuss with actors who have been cast in the relevant scenes, the back stories, the physical behaviors (non-verbal communication: the body language, facial expressions, the moments when silence is required, etc.), the physical direction (the length of the shot, a fast or slow walk, etc.) and so on. Rehearsals in advance do not always happen, but at least having conversations may be useful. Sometimes I give actors additional information in a page -- for example about the description and the psychology of their characters -- before they arrive on set.

I observed that the more experience the actor is, the more he/she will feel confident to provide his/her input. I also study the cast to know how I can work with them to make sure they give their best performance. That way, I know which actor wants a lot of feedback, which one needs less direction or guidance, etc. In other words, I know how to adapt myself to the actor's personality. I am aware that some might be vulnerable when they are shooting, so I make sure to communicate with them properly. I discuss with them, for instance, their comfort level about nudity, etc. These conversations definitely need to take place before the shooting.

Overall, my directing style is eclectic. With many projects filmed on location I enjoy taking photographs and shoot a video storyboard. I will definitely use this technique with *The Polished Hoe*. About the actors, as mentioned, I listen to them and I am open to their input. When enlightenment is needed, I take the time to explain the psychology of the characters (their motivations for a particular scene, etc.) to get the right emotional tone from the actor. The work is definitely easier as a director when everyone is on the same page.

P.T. There are professional services in the mental health field and associations for families in this realm. In your latest short film, *Wilderness*, you showed the despair and loneliness of a mother who had to deal with the mental health problems of her son. Why did you decide to cover the subject from this angle? Was it based on testimonials you received?

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D.W. The script was written and created by Penny Eizenga. She wrote and produced the film. She did the research and she had some related personal experiences. I also had some sort of family-related experiences. I believe on one hand that there are some resources available, but on the other hand there are a lot of gaps, especially for family members when the mentally ill is an adult. There are parents who have been cut out from being involved in their children's files for confidentiality reasons and they still have parental responsibilities, especially if their adult offspring live under their roof. I think there are not enough resources for people struggling with mental health issues and the scarcity is wider for their family members. It is not easy for them to find balance in their lives.

The stigma attached to this problem does not help. In the film, there is one scene where the mother cannot share the mental health problems of her son with her co-workers because she is not comfortable and has no idea how it would be received by her colleagues. She has to keep a lot of things to herself and it is heavy. So, there are a lot of emotions involved here: the guilt of the mother, the refusal to be associated with the mental pathology and so on. The mother is isolating herself with all her fears and pain that she feels uncomfortable to share. It happens that family members do not have the support and knowledge to find the strength to function when a loved one is in crisis which can be a nightmare for them. The film is addressing all these issues which are susceptible to occur even when the patient is not hospitalised.

Overall, the movie is about a mother's perspective. It is the first film I did after having my son, so I can understand the maternal vision, and it was easy to explore it as a filmmaker. In addition, *Wilderness* is my first short film without Black characters.

P.T. As a director of Barbadian origin, what does it mean to you to be in charge of the bestseller *The Polished Hoe*?

D.W. I am honored. I was really excited when James Russell contacted me. It turned out that he was familiar with my work and with the people I collaborated with. He didn't know that I had Barbadian origins. Actually, my father is Bajan and has lived in Canada since 1957. He even went to the same high school as Austin Clarke, The Combermere School, which was in Bridgetown at the time, and they knew each other.

When I read James Russell's adaptation of *The Polished Hoe* I definitely see Barbados in his screenplay. I mean the way he describes it. Many elements come from the book: the colonial

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history and so on. The novel is about a complicated history with all its power struggles. It depicts how it plays out in personal relationships. The human side is important to portray and there are people who can relate to it. As a director, I am definitely fascinated to tell thorough stories such as this one.

I was really happy when Russell approached me because I am familiar with Clarke's writing. Austin Clarke is a respected author. He has a great body of work. He got a *Governor General's Award* nomination for his novel *The Question*. In addition, he had Canada's largest and most esteemed annual award for fiction, the *Giller Prize*, for his book *The Polished Hoe* which has a rich historical context.

The *Polished Hoe* was praised by Canadian national newspapers, such as *The Globe and Mail* which stated that the book is a deep compelling tragedy of Shakespearean scope. The *Ottawa Citizen* described the novel as a magnificent, breathtaking plunge into the secret depths of human relations...a wonder-filled gem.

To finish, Barbados is part of me. It is my second home. The island is creating a film industry as well. It means a lot to me to make a film based on a recognized novel and to have Barbadian heritage. I admire the book so it really is an honor to be involved. I am really looking forward for the opportunity to translate the novel into a visual experience while being true to the translation of it. [Silence] It is also special because it will be the first time I will make a film with people that I am familiar with about its history and so on. It is going to be close to home. I believe it is destiny.

P.T. I think so also. Things like that do not happen just by coincidence. It came into your life because you were destined for it and you are ready.

D.W. Thanks! It will be challenging to shoot the movie because a part of the story occurs during a hurricane. Furthermore, there are two important parts of history that the novel covers, the first happens during the 19th century and the second one during the 1950s. Also, the book has

many descriptions surrounding atmosphere and setting which will need to be translated visually as well.

I was speaking with James Russell about the script he has adapted from *The Polished Hoe* and he said it well: the screenplay has different pacing than the book. James [Russell] definitely nailed the main elements of the novel in the scenario. For me the script is the blueprint and Russell did a good job with it by streamlining the action with back and forth transitioning between the two time periods. A lot of time is spent in the novel on descriptions of the atmosphere and visual details. My challenge as the director is to ensure that the visual world of the book is portrayed with integrity.

P.T. In the novel, the characters speak with a local language (Semi-Bajan dialect of English) from Barbados (known as Bimshire in the book). Based on these specificities, what will be the criteria in the selection process regarding the actors for your movie?

D.W. [Silence] Some Black Canadian actors will be cast. It will be important for them to depict the Bajan dialect authentically. We will find a language or speech person to work on that. When I hear and imagine in my head my father speak since my childhood, I almost don't hear the Bajan accent [chuckles] because it sounds natural to me, in other words I don't notice it. I want our actors to have a subtle Bajan accent in the film. It will have to sound natural, it cannot be a caricature. The actors will have to retain the essence and the flavor of the Barbadian language with its rhythm.

The characters in the novel are rich and vivid. The storyline is full of conflicts, ambiguities with nuances. The story depicts historical pain, so in the casting process we will definitely need actors who have the abilities to communicate and transmit all the right emotions in their performances.

P.T. Will Austin Clarke be involved in the casting? Did he also participate in the writing of the script?

D.W. He wasn't involved in writing the screenplay. There is a possibility that they will meet him. We will definitely consult Clarke.

P.T. Austin Clarke explores diverse themes in his novel such as memory, classism, time, nationalism, gender, labor/servitude, history, language, racism/ [colorism](#), the brutal impacts of slavery (which ended in Barbados in the 1830s) and colonialism. Without giving too much away, share with us some of the subjects that we will find in the film.

D.W. All of what you just named [chuckles]. The main theme is how colonialism plays itself out on a female's life and her family. It covers how it shapes her world and her choices. The colonial aspects will be contextualised. Classism will be covered in terms of status during the colonial era. It is really interesting that you named memory. That comes across, but it is more in the structure because we go back and forth in different periods. In other words, memory will be an overall structural frame. The main character, Mary Gertrude Mathilda, was alienated in a power struggle relationship with her master. In the novel, her words and recollections are evoked in a deep meditation about the power of memory and the unyielding strength of the human spirit.

What is interesting is despite her oppressive environment, I believe she still had some choices like early on where she gets attention from her master, at some point she wants it. It is not that it is a good thing but she gets something out of it. There is complexity and ambivalence in this oppressive "relationship". She gets some advantages out of it -- despite the sexual exploitation -- such as getting a good education for their son, Wilberforce, who becomes a successful doctor, living in a nicer house (with domestic workers) than the majority of her people. This lifestyle separates her from her community and gave her an elevated status. The story has an historical context and it portrays how stratified the society can be in the West Indies. The master was not appreciated by the community. People are not sad about his death. They are to some extent even glad that he passed away.

The metaphor is about the hoe used in the field and the main character employed the same tool to kill the man, Mr. Belfeels, the village plantation's owner (one of the island's most powerful men). She was his mistress and her hatred towards him escalated with time. She took care of his family for 38 years. Eventually, she gains control when she kills him. She went to jail and escaped; she finds justice for herself. The murder has a lot of motivations. She resented his behavior and her oppressive situation. All her life she lived in an island with a painful history and its complex caste system.

The challenge of the adaptation of the novel is the cumulative history – with its crescendo – which leads her to this act of violence. It has nothing to do with a typical movie which showcases a simplistic murder (after a quick escalation of a particular event) in a ten minutes

scene for instance. There is a whole history behind this violent act. My film will need structural moments, but it won't be done in a typical frame. This is how the memory and flashbacks will play.

In the novel, Mary-Mathilda's confession is communicated in a monologue form. She admits her crime to the local constable that she has known all her life. She reminisces about her long life on the plantation, relating not only the history of the plantation but also the island itself. Mary-Mathilda "graduated" from field hand to servant in the main house to mistress of the plantation manager. The fabric of her existence is intertwined with colonialism, racism, servitude, and sexual exploitation. As a director, I will have to execute creatively the book in a visual form. The movie will be shot in two locations (a studio and on location in Barbados or Jamaica). This will give more authenticity to the story. Clarke is a wonderful poet who communicated in his book the sensuality and the tragic wealth of Island culture. As a director I will make sure to do justice to this -- visually speaking.

P.T. Some filmmakers are faithful to the novel for the adaptation of a movie. Others decide to add their own creativity which provokes surprises for the people who read the novel. In addition, the novel is filled with symbolism. Which approach will be used in the movie and how will the allegories be presented?

D.W. I will use my creativity to stay true as much as possible to the novel. I will do my best to not invent new elements. I don't want to change the book. I believe it is important to tell the story with integrity. The book also offers descriptive and very specific visual aspects. As a director, I will provide a picture with the right setting, objects and compositions. The story structure was framed for the movie by James [Russell] and I will collaborate with him to provide the accurate picture. Again, preserving the authenticity will be very important. James [Russell] didn't change the main plot of the story and I will definitely maintain that. However, certain events might be left out.

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Wilkinson tells us about the journey from her first short film to her first feature film, *For Dawn*. She discusses the challenges of being a Black woman in the film industry and the importance of representation. [Read the full interview with Dawn Wilkinson.](#)