

2011-06-27

# (Re)Placing Nation: Postcolonial Women's Contestations of Spatial Discourse

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

(RE)PLACING NATION: POSTCOLONIAL WOMEN'S CONTESTATIONS OF  
SPATIAL DISCOURSE

By

Michelle N. Ramlagan

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

June 2011

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(RE)PLACING NATION: POSTCOLONIAL WOMEN'S CONTESTATIONS OF  
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(Re)Placing Nation: Postcolonial Women's Contestations  
of Spatial Discourse

(Ph.D., English)  
(June 2011)

Abstract of a dissertation at the University of Miami.

Dissertation supervised by Professor Patricia Saunders.  
No. of pages in text. (168)

“(Re)Placing Nations: Postcolonial Women’s Contestations of Spatial Discourses” reads the proliferation of literary representations of landscapes in recent work by Jamaica Kincaid, Shani Mootoo, Edwidge Danticat, Yvonne Vera, Monica Arac de Nyeko and Toni Morrison as a trope for rethinking the nation as a space with physical boundaries. In this project I make the distinction between space as an ideological construct and place as a physical entity. Both place and space are connected to ideologies yet have specific implications for constructions of gender and sexuality. My project considers the dual yet dialectically related processes of creating physical space and identity formation. Recent frames for engaging questions of citizenship and belonging have more sought to be broadly diasporic. This analysis re-centers these debates in more localized spatial discourses. I argue that writers examined in my project revise literary forms such as the pastoral, cartographic tropes, garden writing and the peasant novel in order to deconstruct various national divisions of space and place that exclude women, ethnic minorities and rural citizens.

In my first chapter, “Secret Gardens: Young Women Cultivating Nation in Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Jamaica Kincaid’s *My Garden(Book)*,” I use Kincaid’s *My Garden (Book)* and Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* to analyze the

garden as a place where the interconnected nature of place and identity are best exemplified. Given the historical significance of archival research in colonial gardening, my chapter works to contextualize the extent to which public gardens have been constructed as unchanging and closed places, a formulation that predominates in contemporary Caribbean literary criticism. For Kincaid, the domestic space of the garden is constantly being reconfigured in relation to her own critical project of formulating personal and political history. In Mootoo's *Cereus* the garden figures as an overtly hybridized space that is at once domestic and public, providing a location for marginalized subjects to perform contested gender and sexual identities. My second chapter "Alter/Native Possibilities: Circular Migration and Citizenship in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*" examines Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* which shift the literary landscape to consider rural constructions of place and their connections to women's political struggles. In this chapter, I assert Danticat's appropriation of the rural landscape deconstructs masculinist nationalist narratives that represent rural areas as passive repositories for authentic national identity based on filial connections to the land. Danticat posits circulatory migrations as a pathway to imagining citizenship that contests power through the domestic sphere within the rural home space thereby challenging formerly idealized rural locations of Haiti.

My third chapter, "The Country and the City: Intra-National Migrations in Monica Arac De Nyeko's "Strange Fruit" and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*" builds on my argument that circular migration is an alter/native practice of citizenship within the nation. I analyze the pastoral mapping of the nation that appears in the works of

Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera and Ugandan writer Monica Arac de Nyeko to suggest that these narratives dismantle the boundaries between rural and urban places. Both narratives create physical spaces that complicate these boundaries and in so doing create spaces for gendered subjects to perform counter-hegemonic practices of citizenship. My final chapter, ““Just Colored Folks Stuff”: Greening Urban Landscapes in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz*” considers Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz* as anti-pastoral novels in which the South/North migration provides another context for imagining citizenship for African Americans in the United States. This chapter introduces an overtly urbanized eco-critical dimension to my project. I read the migration to Harlem as a movement that allowed blacks to occupy the physical spaces of streets, nightclubs and storefronts in such a way that allowed them to experience their selfhood in a manner quite different from that experienced in the South.

My project posits that contemporary African and African diaspora women’s literature constructs these places as open and evolving in a dialectical relationship with communities whose subject formation is intimately connected to their physical environments. By insisting on these distinctions, formerly rigid boundaries that separated the public from the private, the rural from the urban, the migrant from the rooted are challenged along with the implicit geography of power that scaffolds these separations. In an effort to enable alter/native practices and locations of citizenship, I argue that these writers rework these traditional literary forms as an occasion for recalibrating geometries of power.

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## Introduction

In one of his earliest communications to the Spanish King and Queen upon his discovery of the New World, Christopher Columbus describes his arrival as follows:

I found many islands inhabited by men without number, of all which I took possession for our most fortunate King, with proclaiming heralds and flying standards, no one objecting. To the first of these I gave the name of the blessed Saviour (San Salvador), on whose aid relying I had reached this as well as the other islands. But the Indians call it Guanahany. I also called each one of the others by a new name... There are besides in the said island Juana seven or eight kinds of palm trees, which far excel ours in height and beauty, just as all the other trees, herbs, and fruits do. There are also excellent pine trees, vast plains and meadows, a variety of birds, a variety of honey, and a variety of metals, excepting iron. In the one which was called Hispana (Hispañola), as we said above, there are great and beautiful mountains, vast fields, groves, fertile plains, very suitable for planting and cultivating, and for the building of houses. The convenience of the harbors in this island, and the remarkable number of rivers contributing to the healthfulness of man, exceed belief, unless one has seen them. The trees, pasturage, and fruits of this island differ greatly from those of Juana. This Hispana, moreover, abounds in different kinds of spices, in gold, and in metals. (Columbus 18-19)

The letter offers a glimpse of the initial meeting between colonizers and indigenous people and functions as a coded representation of the various power relations in play at this key moment. As the letter recounts, he performs several of the rituals associated with claiming a new territory: he plants the Spanish flag, he voices his claim on behalf of the King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and he renames the island San Salvador. In performing these actions, he attempts to discursively empty the island of the Tainos cultural markers of place and (re)place them with Spanish ones. The population is rendered invisible by presenting them en masse as “The Indians.” In renaming the island after the Christian deity, the native name Guananhany is erased. His ritualistic actions in claiming San Salvador for Spain challenges the Tainos’ cultural identity by attacking the

culturally produced “place” of the island as the Tainos defined it.<sup>1</sup> This imagining of the island makes it into a European place by re-marking it with European cultural symbols, specifically religious and political symbols.

This letter is a type of codification of the local landscape in terms of European value, exemplifying what Michel Foucault has referred to as “coded reports” that under the pretext of detailing “travelers’” tales of all sorts of marvels, incredible plants and monstrous animals” instead were “precise accounts of the military state of the countries traversed, their economic resources, markets, wealth and possible diplomatic relations” (181). This observation leads Foucault to attribute a key role to naturalists and geographers. Columbus assumes both these roles as he describes both the topographical features as well as details about plants, minerals and other potential resources. By emphasizing the variety of plant life on the island, he contextualizes them for the European imagination by comparing them to their European counterparts noting “the palm trees surpass those of Europe in variety, height and beauty.” The landscape is meant to serve as both justification for his sailing expedition and impetus to encourage colonization to the Spanish Crown.<sup>2</sup> The letter also provides an inventory of the island’s varied land formations: its fields, mountains, groves and plains as well as its other potentially useful products such as honey, birds and metals. These details create the idea of San Salvador as a location replete with natural wealth that can be harnessed and developed to enrich Spain’s wealth. Further, naturally occurring elements such as the

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<sup>1</sup> I understand “place” as Doreen Massey has described it – as a type of spatial identity. Places are constructed through physical interactions and discursive engagements. I shall have more to say about this in the next section.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term landscape here with Denis E. Cosgrove’s definition in mind that “Landscape is a way of seeing that has its own history, but a history that can be understood only as part of a wider history of economy and society; that has its own assumptions and consequences, but assumptions and consequences whose origins and implications extend well beyond the use and perception of land; that has its own

river and harbors make this location one that speaks to European aesthetic sensibilities while also satisfying the Empire's economic need for harbors for trade. He is careful both here and elsewhere in his communiqué, to construct an image of the island and its people as non-threatening. His references to the native population emphasize their nakedness, their lack of individual identity and their passive acceptance of his actions.

Indeed, I would argue that this letter to the monarchs of Spain codifies the local landscape by employing elements of pastoral discourse. In rendering the New World landscape he draws on Edenic and Arcadian tropes to proffer a landscape that is at once bountiful and beautiful by European standards as well as emptied of a bothersome native presence. By juxtaposing the island with its European counterpart, the letter sets up the relationship between the colony and the metropole that would characterize Empires from that moment. The distance from the developed center of Spain coupled with an emphasis on the restful and peaceful nature of San Salvador is an incipient pastoral form. Columbus himself functions as a metropolitan figure that moves from the developed metropolitan center to the pastoral location of the island. The letter therefore can be understood as an incipient version of the settler pastoral and shows that from the earliest stages of the colonial endeavor pastoral discourse played a key role in upholding colonial networks of power and creating a sense of place – a discussion that I return to in the first chapter.

My dissertation is primarily concerned with the question of place as it was implicated in various colonial missions given Foucault's assertion that naturalists and geographers were at the forefront of the colonial mission in that they were the ones who first catalogued territories as worthy of conquest. I explore the ways in which the pastoral

genre works in tandem with tropes of mapping that are invoked as discursive tools to first generate places, to establish relationships between places and then to define the types of geographical access that people can have to these places. I therefore read this letter as illustrative of an initial moment when the way in which a colonizer imagines a place – San Salvador – comes into direct conflict with the way indigenous populations imagine that same place – in this case Guanahani and the Tainos. For new world naturalists and geographers, pastoral tropes catalogue the space and scaffold the geopolitical relationship between San Salvador and Spain as colonial periphery to metropolitan center.

To further understand the factors underlying this clash between definitions of place, I draw on the following passage from Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*.

Said writes

To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on, about, or because of land. The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about. At the moment when a coincidence occurs between real control and power, the idea of what a given place was (could be, might become), and an actual place -- at that moment the struggle for empire is launched. This coincidence is the logic both for Westerners taking possession of land and, during decolonization, for resisting natives reclaiming it. Imperialism and the culture associated with it affirm both the primacy of geography and an ideology about control of territory. The geographical sense makes projections -- imaginative, cartographic, military, economic, historical, or in a general sense cultural. It also makes possible the construction of various kinds of knowledge, all of them in one way or another dependent upon the perceived character and destiny of a particular geography. (Said 78)

In the above passage, Edward Said foregrounds the geographic underpinnings of empire building, thereby identifying the quest to geographically acquire land as the fuel for *la mission civilatrice*. Said makes an important distinction between place – actual and

imagined – and land as commodity to be fought for and possessed. In many ways, the actions of colonizers and agents of imperialism depended on their definition of land as a geographical commodity that could be traded, obtained and owned. Colonizers simultaneously targeted the ways that colonized peoples such as the Tainos imagined their island.

Ostensibly, colonization was the act of taking land from one people and claiming it for one's own, but in order to annex these disparate territories, colonizers were forced to rely on not only military force, but also ideological force because the territories that they encountered already possessed a cultural identity. Besides deploying “real control and power” through the use of force, colonizers and imperialists also had to deploy an army of ideas that could attack and eradicate the cultural identity of places. Controlling a territory and taking possession of it meant taking possession of the pre-existing cultural identities of places and eradicating them in service of the colonizers' projections for that land.<sup>3</sup>

As such, when Columbus first arrived in the New World he claimed the islands of the Caribbean in the name of Spain. He therefore “took possession for our most fortunate king, with proclaiming heralds and flying standards” after finding no apparent objection from the natives. However, as Said's analysis illustrates, the question of culture is inextricably bound up with the relationship between geography and imperialism. Although colonizers and imperialists such as Columbus often overlooked or deliberately rejected pre-existing cultural identities for the places that they sought to annex, they were

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<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation I use the terms land and territory interchangeably in reference to a tangible and objective material object that possesses its own identity outside of human imagination.

nevertheless forced to grapple with “an actual place.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, even at the moment of renaming the island as San Salvador, Columbus is forced to recognize the pre-existing cultural identity of Guanahany even as he seeks to replace it with his own cultural projection.

Colonizers employ a number of ideological and military forces in service of their projections for a location based on the “perceived character and destiny” for the territory that they sought to absorb, colonizers developed “new kinds of knowledge.” These include new cartographies and histories that could reformulate the contested place as part of the colonial imaginary, new systems of classification that reconstructed the native cultural values of flora and fauna with a scientific system of value based on perceived economic value. Delimiting patterns of movement for colonized populations challenged preexisting cultural meanings of place by . In some instances this meant restricting native populations to particular areas of land. Whole populations were forced to relocate and even emigrate. At its most extreme, forced movement culminated in acts of genocide. Nevertheless, in every instance, an attack on the cultural definition of a place through new epistemologies was a necessary corollary to the process of geographical acquisition.

Said’s passage also points to this particular confluence of geographical and ideological force in combined struggle with a particular cultural definition of place as occurring at the moment of decolonization. The passage highlights that anti-colonial struggles and decolonization processes were analogous in that they both involved claiming land and challenging its colonially assigned cultural identity. Just as during colonization, the goal in decolonization struggles was that of creating a new body of

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<sup>4</sup> I use place to denote a culturally significant location that exists within boundaries, imagined or physical. In this dissertation I use the term space as an imaginary and abstract category that is narrativized

meaning that one could attach to place. The stories that new nations told about a particular place needed to reflect the cultural history and identity of the newly emerging national history and composition of the people. At the moment of decolonization, the very real force behind the new hegemonic power of the nation-state comes to bear upon the actual present of the place even as the nation-state begins to imagine the place of the configuration that has very real consequences for populations.

In this study, I trace the ways in which women writers use the pastoral mode as a means of constructing new models of place in a black Atlantic framework. Their works are an integral component of elaborating new cultural and political identities through place. While the term pastoral is largely understood as a mode contained within the national frame, I argue that women writers use the pastoral to re-imagine national belonging and national identity. For the rest of the introduction I would like to spend some time discussing the concepts of place and space that undergird this project before tracing the evolution of the pastoral as a related form that established both key spatial relations and geographies of power. I then spend some time outlining the black Atlantic as the geographical frame for the novels that I have chosen before offering descriptions of each chapter and the ways in which the texts in question articulate new spatial identities by revising the pastoral and by writing new cartographies.

### **Mapping “Place”**

Spatial relationships have emerged in literary studies as an important object of study. Cultural geography has enabled a certain literary reconceptualization of space. As geographer Edward Soja asks

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into place. Place is a physical location with recognizable boundaries.

Should not geographers be at the forefront of what many are now calling the spatial turn, an unprecedented contemporary resurgence of the critical spatial imagination? ... I believe that Geography as a discipline should be at the forefront of this spatial turn, expanding the scope of critical thinking about space, place, location, cities, regions, and the environment into areas where such thinking about space, place, location, cities, regions, and the environment into area where such thinking has heretofore been only weakly developed. (Soja, "Keeping Space Open," 350)

The field of cultural geography has provided literary studies with both a number of spatial metaphors as well as conceptual tools.<sup>5</sup> Recent appropriations of spatial metaphors deemphasize location while emphasizing movement.<sup>6</sup> These metaphors have been particularly useful in relation to transnational, global and postcolonial patterns of movement and migration.<sup>7</sup> Diaspora migrations that emphasize outward movement away from the nation as an authentic source of cultural identity have drawn on these metaphors as ways of imagining space as less static and therefore capable of representing these patterns of movement.

Conceptually, the work of Edward Soja and Doreen Massey has found purchase with literary scholars because it provides a useful context for rethinking social space as constructed and evolving. Soja distinguishes between "contextual space" which he defines as space in general and "created space" which he defines as space that is socially organized and produced. As Soja explains

Space itself may be primordially given, but the organization, use, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience. Socially produced space is a created structure comparable to other social constructions resulting from the transformation of given

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<sup>5</sup> Well-known examples of these include Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities," Gloria Anzaldua's borderlands and Felix Guattari's deterritorialization, Homi Bhabha's third space, Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone.

<sup>6</sup> These examples include Arjun Appadurai's five "landscapes", Paul Gilroy's slave-ship chrono-type and Deleuze and Guattari's nomadism

<sup>7</sup> See Patricia Yaeger for a discussion of the spatial metaphors in these movements. Yaeger also questions the connection between some of these spatial metaphors and "emptiness, vacuity, or amnesia" (9).

conditions inherent in life-on-earth, in much the same way that human history represents a social transformation of given conditions of time and temporality... The spatial organization of human society is an evolving product of human action, a form of social construction arising within the physical frame of ubiquitous, contextual space but clearly distinguishable from it (209-210).

This understanding of space emphasizes its connection to human elements that inhabit this location. Human activity and experience within a space transforms and organizes the space within human imagination. This also posits that created space can coexist with contextual space. Activities as translation, transformation and experience explain the effects of human activity on space. This model therefore encourages us to think of space as we think of time: as subject to change and evolution. It is this understanding of space as always undergoing a process of evolution in response to human activity that I draw on throughout this project.

I turn now to Doreen Massey for an understanding of space and place.<sup>8</sup> According to Massey, we may think of place as a type of spatial identity.<sup>9</sup> Massey sees space as socially constructed and products of various material and discursive engagements and interactions. Place is but one of the spatial concepts in which personal identity can take root and develop. Creating place is further linked to creating identity, both of which “are not rooted or static, but mutable ongoing productions” (5). An emphasis on identity as constituted both materially and discursively has certain repercussions for the way in which we understand spatial identities. Grounded identity ceases to be an easy possibility.

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<sup>8</sup> See Eric L. Ball’s essay “Literary Criticism for Places” for a discussion of the way that place has been appropriated by ecological and environmental discourse and falsely being represented as static, a topic that I return to in Chapter Four.

<sup>9</sup> Other examples of spatial identities besides place include the local, the global, regions and nations (Massey 5). Both Massey and Soja carefully nuance their discussion of place and space in order to avoid a simple definition that opposes these terms. Massey cautions against thinking of place as merely space to which meaning has been ascribed since such an approach would lead us to jettison an approach to place as

When the connection between identity and space is put into question, it becomes impossible to subscribe to the idea of a community as pre-existing in relation to a place (6). Instead, relational identities call for a complicated negotiation of place. Accordingly, my project reflects this by demonstrating an understanding of place that is predicated on a definition of place as always already related to other places and always in the process of becoming. That is, while examining a place at a particular moment may reveal its boundaries, I understand that place is always evolving because of human interaction and because of its interconnectivity with other locations.

The connection between identity and place manifests itself in the creation of landscapes. Charles Tilley explains “Personal and cultural identity is bound up with place...Geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence (Tilley 15). My project explores how cultural narratives of place, which are largely produced in support of cultural identities simultaneously imagine a particular landscape that is invested with similar qualities. I am particularly interested in platial narratives that draw on elements of the pastoral and cartography that do so.

Discussing landscape by paying attention to the critical discourses that have informed its production reveals significant insights into the relationship between the interconnected nature of identity and place. Significant relations of power underlie written and spoken discourse. For instance, hegemonic entities such as the nation state and social classes with cultural capital have access to more forms of discourse such as politics, media and science as an important symbolic power resource. Those with access to power in society constrain the ideological and physical activities of societal groups by

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evolving.

manipulating and controlling discourse. Landscape, precisely because it is a discursive entity, contains within it a number of representations of power relationships. Narrative and discourse connect human identity and topographical spatial identity. Landscape is one of the ways in which literature depicts this relationship.

Another important element of my understanding of place stems from R.J. Johnston's observation that places differ not just because of differences in physical environment but also because people bring about these changes. This explicitly contests the idea of a causal relationship between topographical features of a place and its specific identity. Johnston states "places are made by people, who create and recreate milieux which are potent forces for the transmission of local cultural variations" (138). He goes on to identify three primary features that make up every place: the physical environment, the built elements of the environment, and its society (139). This understanding of place emphasizes its constructed nature.

This understanding of place opens the door to understand the ways in which power can be exercised geographically. Through the act of defining one's place or milieu, communities can create communities and create borders to keep an indeterminate "Other" out. These walls might be erected in the name of security, or as part of adopting a group identity based on territoriality. This latter motivation for constructing an identity that is connected to perceived characteristics of place is closely connected to the project of nationalism. Establishing and maintaining a connection with territory functioned as a tool to bind previously disparate groups together. This identity is further cemented by opposing it to Other, now external identities.

In this project I look at the spatial aspects of colonial and postcolonial activity and the connection between the narratives told during these movements and the physical places that resulted. By investigating the role that discursive narratives play in creating “place” in the postcolonial territory I argue for an understanding of human identity as closely related to spatial identity. This concern is foregrounded in a number of postcolonial critics. My starting point for this argument is Edward Said’s understanding of imperialism as a type of geographical violence that gives rise to the creation of new “places.” Said’s emphasis on the geographic aspect of imperialism emphasizes the political dimension of place. This concern is also reflected in Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s assertion that there is a connection between the formation of subjectivity and postcolonial locations.<sup>10</sup> Mohanty connects the ways that places on maps are also always necessarily connected to specific political and historical moments. Location as defined by a colonial map that postcolonial subjects inherit is in conflict with the position that postcolonial subjects actively create in response to their political identity. Said emphasizes that imperialism boiled down to creating new places while Mohanty emphasizes the connection of these places to individual identity.

The writers discussed in this dissertation make ample use of spatial metaphors, particularly cartography. The term cartography refers to the intellectual study and practice of mapmaking. Cartography calls on mapmakers to combine scientific, technological and aesthetic knowledge in order to create a symbolic representation of reality. Although we may be inclined to think of maps as objective representations of reality that have been produced with the aid of rational scientific tools, maps nevertheless

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<sup>10</sup> See both “Introduction: Cartographers of Struggle: Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism” and “Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles.”

embody significant elements of fluidity and subjectivity. A careful parsing of the ways in which maps are produced and interpreted reveals the central role that they play in producing knowledge. Mapmakers produce knowledge by offering a particular perspective on the world that restricts the scale and quantity of information being communicated. Since maps must be interpreted, map readers ultimately determine the function and meaning of a map. As Denis Cosgrove expresses it, mapping implicitly claims to “represent spatial stability” but also acts as a tool to achieve it (5). This fluidity presents multiple opportunities for knowledge to be generated. Far from being fixed and objective, cartography is very much a rhetorical practice because maps act as a visual narrative about a particular area.

Implicit within cartography, then, is a series of power relations. Michel Foucault highlights this element in “Questions on Geography,” one of his few explicit engagements with the field of geography. In this interview Foucault acknowledges that although geography itself is not directly an object of inquiry, spatial metaphors populate his work. Furthermore, the interview points to the various power relationships that are inseparable of spatial metaphors given their provenance from the field of geography. What his interviewers identify as geographic elements in his work are instead spatial metaphors that are “equally geographic and strategic” (177). The term “strategic” highlights the proximity of the field of geography to “the shadow of the military” (177). Foucault goes on to explain how the concepts that he uses are first related to concepts of power:

Territory is no doubt a geographical notion, but it’s first of all a juridical-political one; the area controlled by a certain kind of power. Field is an economico-juridical notion. Displacement: what displaces itself is an army, a squadron, a population. Domain is a juridical-

political notion. Soil is a historico-geological notion. Region is a fiscal, administrative, military notion. Horizon is a pictorial, but also a strategic notion...A circulation of notions can be observed between geographical and strategic discourses. The region of the geographers is the military region (from *regere*, to command), a province is a conquered territory (from *vincere*). Field evokes the battlefield. (Foucault 176-177)

The above passage challenges our accepted use of terms like territories, fields and soil as innocent designations of objective topographical characteristics. It lays bare their connection to armies and military struggles all in the service of expanding and securing political, juridical and economic power. Even terms used to identify specific places such as region and province have their beginnings in labels that identify with military struggle.

Elsewhere in the interview, Foucault suggests that maps have undergone a broad pattern of evolution from being instruments of measurement in Greek societies to becoming instruments of inquiry in the Middle Ages to becoming today an instrument of examination. But Foucault further elaborates on the political uses of maps when he identifies them as a key tool for travellers and geographers in the service of intelligence-gathering. The act of collecting information and codifying it in the device of a map provided useful information to “colonial powers, strategists, traders and industrialists” alike (181). When maps are deployed as tools with which to gather information, they become tools of collecting and codifying power. Maps are used to homogenize difference as a means of controlling populations and spaces and reifying power. Foucault’s analysis of the relationship of geographical territorial concepts to questions of power can serve to make manifest the social and political role of space in literature, paving the way for an understanding of how literary works can re-calibrate the power relationships embedded in geographical and spatial concepts through their depiction of landscapes.

While maps as objects emphasize knowledge about a place, its rhetorical aspects are even more apparent in the act of mapmaking highlights the fact that this knowledge, rather than pre-existing is generated. Map makers actively make choices about what topographical information is worth including. This distinction creates a space for transgressive practices of cartography, especially through literature. Maps, like stories, are a means of charting space. De Certeau writes, “every story is a travel story -- a spatial practice” (115). Literary narratives can offer a corrective of sorts to maps that long ago divorced themselves from representing “the itineraries that were a condition of possibility” (120) and instead became a representation of “abstract places.” In contrast to the map that represents an order of place that can be a totalizing vision, stories challenge platial boundaries by authorizing “the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits” (123). Thus, literature remains one of the central fields upon which formalized boundaries of places can be challenged. In this dissertation I consider literary representations of maps that unfix existing configurations of place and space.

### **Pastoral Places**

Before discussing the more recent appearance of pastoral frames, I would like to spend some time tracing the historical evolutions of the pastoral and the way in which the term has evolved from referring to a particular literary form in a specific historical period into a more fluid term that connotes multiplicity and complexity. Terry Gifford’s *Pastoral* identifies three different uses of the term:

First, the pastoral is a historical form with a long tradition which began in poetry, developed into drama and more recently could be recognized in novels...For the reader or audience, the literary device involved some form of retreat and return, the fundamental pastoral

movement, either within the text, or in the sense that the pastoral retreat “returned” some insights relevant to the urban audience. But beyond the artifice of the specific literary form, there is a broader use of “pastoral” to refer to an area of content. In this sense pastoral refers to any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban...a pastoral is usually associated with a celebratory attitude towards what it describes, however superficially bleak it might appear to be...But that simple celebration of nature comes under scrutiny in the third use of “pastoral”...Here, what is “returned” by retreat is “insight” in the view of the user of the term “pastoral” as a pejorative. (1-2)

Gifford identifies these three categories of using the pastoral: the literary genre during the Renaissance, the broader adaptation of the pastoral to refer to works that celebrate Arcadian landscapes, and the pejorative usage of pastoral which identifies the literary mode as an ideologically compromised device. “Classical pastoral”, as Greg Garrard terms the earliest manifestation of the pastoral derives from early Greek and Roman works.<sup>11</sup>

While Theocritus and Virgil are largely regarded as the progenitors of the pastoral, it is during the Renaissance that the form undergoes its most extensive usage. Under the influence of Virgil’s *Eclogues*, Renaissance writers John Milton, Ben Johnson, Christopher Marlowe and Edmund Spenser exemplified the pastoral mode in their own work. Certain scholars see the pastoral as contained within this strict frame. Paul Alpers for instance argues in favor of a stronger definition of the term that fixes it as a fiction that depends on the shepherd and “the central fiction that shepherds’ lives represent human lives” (Alpers 459).<sup>12</sup> Frederic Garber’s “Pastoral Spaces” offers a reading of another underlying archetype of the pastoral where he argues that the pastoral embodies

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<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Theocritus’ pastoral poetry, see Greg Garrard’s Chapter 3 in *Ecocriticism* as well as Terry Gifford’s “Constructions of Arcadia” in *Pastoral*.

<sup>12</sup> Also see Paul Alpers’ book length study *What is Pastoral* in which Alpers works to define pastoral

an implication of return in fiction to where we were previously (455). Nevertheless, in spite of various attempts to fix the pastoral, the form exhibits a certain historical elasticity. Annabel Patterson argues, “it is not what pastoral is that should matter to us” but instead “how writers, artists, and intellectuals of all persuasions have used pastoral for a range of functions and intentions that the *Eclogues* first articulated” (7). Patterson’s interpretation, which encourages us to see the pastoral as a mode that survives into the present, is in congruence with Gifford’s description of the second meaning of the pastoral. This broader version of the pastoral understands the genre as more than a historical form. Instead it focuses on literature that contrasts the rural with the urban with a tendency to celebrate the former.

My use of the term pastoral registers its capacious nature as a signifier but relies most closely on pastoral’s tendency to establish a relationship between an urban and rural location. In this project, I understand pastoral literature as texts that contrast urban and rural or natural locations both explicitly and implicitly. I deviate from the classical definition of pastoral in that I extend the categorization of rural environments to include natural environments as important pastoral sites. I have chosen the pastoral because of its history as a discursive tool that has been employed in colonization and decolonization -- a claim that I develop further in the next section. The pastoral has been central to structuring the “geographical underpinnings” of empire. I further understand pastoral modes as historically contributing to cultural constructions of place that reflect geometries of power. Our current understanding of cities reflects the influences of diaspora and transnational movements of populations. Urban locations, particularly global cities, are home to immigrant and transnational populations and have offered

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landscape as “those of which the human centers are herdsmen or their equivalents” (Alpers 28).

limited privileges of citizenship and belonging for rural and transnational migrants. The urban sphere represents certain advantages to members of the diaspora (Cohen 168). Nevertheless, our understanding of urban locations also reflects an understanding that because it is a place associated with exile and alienation, it affords a complicated means of crafting belonging. Thus, although we imagine that the city will be a “theatre in which new forms of belonging are worked out,” urban locations remain locations of exile (Casteel 5). It is precisely because of this conflict in citizenship and belonging that urban spaces are important political arenas.

In contrast, ex-urban spaces such as rural and wilderness landscapes are invoked as locations that elaborate a cultural identity. As spaces where national ethos resides, rural locations are allowed a cultural identity. I also keep in mind Anthony D. Smith’s term “ethnoscape” as one type of landscape. He defines ethnoscapas as “the terrain invested with collective significance is felt to be integral to a particular historical culture community or *ethnie*, and the ethnic community is seen as an intrinsic part of the poetic landscape” (150). Rural landscapes reflect the cultural face of the nation, but they do not function as space for political action. They therefore lend stability to national cultural identity as an important counterpoint to urban locations that offer public spheres for political action.

My understanding intersects with Gifford’s who sees the pastoral as elaborating a relationship between the urban and the rural or the natural. The nation state uses the pastoral form to set up a spatial relationship that structures a separation between the urban and the exurban with the intention of delimiting the political agency of rural locations. Re-claiming the cultural meaning of land was a central concern in anti-colonial

and postcolonial societies. Rural locations became the crucible for the new cultural identity. Embedding national identities in rural areas meant emptying the area of its political agency in the national imaginary. Thus, understanding how the pastoral was put to use in the discursive spheres of postcolonial territories gives an understanding of how the land has been implicated in constructions of nationhood in relation to the project of independence.

Furthermore, I emphasize the critical potential of the pastoral. I include rural spaces, gardens, and villages. I also identify pastoral literature as literature that maps rural locations in cartographic relationship with urban spaces. Although traditionally, these paired locations are mapped within the nation, I also consider rural locations that are related by characters' transnational movements to metropolitan locations outside of the nation. I use the pastoral to foreground ex-urban spaces within the national imaginary as a means of uncovering contestatory narratives of national identity. Traditional forms of the pastoral valorize the rural location for its closeness to an Arcadian ideal, but in doing so, they empty pastoral locations as sites for political power. In these contemporary pastorals I continue to challenge the exclusion of minority populations from rural populations. These writers that I look at in this project foreground ex-urban locations as places from which and about which contestatory accounts of national history and models of gendered identity circulate.

### **Postcolonial and Anticolonial Pastorals**

Postcolonial studies views the pastoral critically in light of the way it enabled Empire building. The relationship of the rural to the urban found in the traditional

pastoral is transmuted into the relationship between the new world of the colonies and the old world of the metropole. In Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City*, he critiques the pastoral as an unviable ideological mode because it renders class relations and rural exploitation invisible. The pastoral in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries evolves into "an idealization of actual English country life and its social and economic relations" (26). Within the context of colonial conquest, Williams argues that the pastoral at home was made to produce the colonies as an Arcadian location. Within British colonies, Lawrence Buell identifies the settler pastoral as a useful ideological tool that enabled colonizers to transform the "perceived rusticity" of the colonies into a type of "cultural capital" by way of the "cultural nationalist pastoral." The new world setting, according to Buell, undergoes an arcadianization in the context of North America in particular. It is through the symbol of the natural that Americans construct an identity in response to European ideals. Lawrence Buell's understanding of the pastoral in the postcolonial setting highlights the ways in which the mode enables construction of a prototypical national identity.

Scholars such as J. M. Coetzee have argued that pastoral tropes are emblematic of a colonial inheritance. In *White Writing*, pastoral art in South Africa remains conservative because it continuously looks back nostalgically to earlier agricultural patterns and somewhat problematically "holds up the time of the forefathers as an exemplary age when the garden of myth became actualized in history" (4). The pastoral in a South African context is unequipped to contain a black South African presence because of its inadequacy when it comes to representing the experience of oppressed populations thus

highlighting the ways in which the mode upholds hegemonic versions of identity by excluding minority populations from hegemonically envisioned landscapes.

Notwithstanding these critiques, the pastoral still remains relevant in the work of postcolonial critics. Rob Nixon first used the term “postcolonial pastoral” in reference to his study on V.S. Naipaul’s *The Enigma of Arrival*. Prolific novelist V.S. Naipaul has grappled with the complicated inheritance of the pastoral in *The Enigma of Arrival*. The setting of the novel places the speaker firmly in a now aging and decrepit pastoral landscape in Britain. As the narrator spends time in a bungalow in the rural English countryside he begins to consider the landscapes of Trinidad and the changes wrought by slavery and the structure of the plantation there. In contrast to “the instinct to plant, to see crops grow” which seems eternal when in the pastoral landscape is eradicated completely by monocultural plantation agriculture for profit (Naipaul 283). Naipaul reflects on the postcolonial landscape, remembering

[S]traight lines of these vegetable plots, the human scale, the many different shades and textures of green, [that] gave us a new idea of agriculture and almost a new idea of landscape and natural beauty. ....English allotments in a tropical and colonial setting! Created by accident and not by design; created at the end of empire, out of the decay of the old sugar plantations (225-226)

Nixon understands Naipaul’s adaptation of the pastoral as a complicated maneuver that allows him to contest notions of Englishness as a colonial subject even from his position of isolation in the English countryside, an argument that Sarah Phillips Casteel develops in relation to both V.S. Naipaul’s *Enigma* and Derek Walcott’s *Tiepolo’s Hound*.<sup>13</sup>

Postcolonial pastorals emphasize postcolonial literature’s ability to subvert the pastoral

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 1 of Sarah Phillips Casteel *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas*.

mode by pushing the pastoral's capacity as a tool for decolonization shows the ways in which the pastoral can be used as a sharp tool of critique when it is made to reveal its omissions. The rural focus of New World writers is an example of such a project to "[introduce] minority presences into iconic landscapes, they contest a spatial vocabulary of the nation that would contain minorities within the city and bar them from the exurban spaces that represent and uncontaminated national essence" (Casteel 6). This example amply demonstrates how the pastoral can be a means of hybridizing national identity.

Additionally, the anti-pastoral has emerged as another critical form of the pastoral. The anti-pastoral has been used as a critical contrast to the pastoral. In traditional pastorals individuals suffused with the corruption of urban and political life journey to rural landscapes where they can be transformed and renewed. The pastoral offers a means of healing in what appears to be a conflict-free Arcadian landscape. In contrast to this, the anti-pastoral as I use the term here deploys or alludes to pastoral conventions in order to undermine or otherwise emphasize their falseness. Some prominent examples of works in the anti-pastoral tradition include Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), George Crabbe's *The Village* (1783) and Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Labour* (1736). These works are identifiable precisely because of the prominence that they give to highlighting the laboring populations that are written out of traditional pastorals and the idealistic smoothing away of political conflict. In anti-pastoral works, nature ceases to be a divinely ordered space in which one finds rest and renewal. The natural world becomes the backdrop of a battle for socio-political survival by challenging class-consciousness and male tradition (Garrard 122). As opposed to

earlier descriptions of the natural world as positive, the anti-pastoral offers a vision of nature as neutral or even hazardous.

The pastoral can succeed as an appropriate tool to critique the present moment in light of the fact that it is “a way of using language that constructs a different kind of world from that of realism” (Gifford 45). As a literary form that has evolved from the pastoral, the anti-pastoral also critiques the present geo-political moment; however, the anti-pastoral accomplishes this by deconstructing the rural as a privileged and mythologized location. The anti-pastoral, which is the frame that I turn to in my third and fourth chapters, allows writers to depict the very real dangers of rural locations while also allowing writers to challenge the typical unidirectional pattern of movement from the urban to the rural.

### **The Black Atlantic**

In this project I offer a critical reading of recent works by women writers in the Black Atlantic. My understanding of the Black Atlantic is based on Paul Gilroy’s definition of the space as definable by “a system of exchanges” ensuing from “the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas” (4). Gilroy’s conceptualization of the Black Atlantic leaves behind discrete national identities based on “an absolutist conception of cultural difference” in favor of the Atlantic as a single yet complex unit of cultural and historical analysis that scholars can then use “to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective” (15). Black Atlantic scholars are able to discern particularities that “have given a recognizable pattern and sense of community to the civilizations that developed and maintained continental interconnections” (50). My

project touches the shores of the Africa, the Caribbean and North America, a configuration that is reminiscent of the slave trade.

Since its publication in 1993, Paul Gilroy's text, *The Black Atlantic* in which he identifies an "intercultural and transnational" African diaspora community that is identifiable by its shared "structures of feeling, producing, communicating and remembering" (3) that result from shared links with the slave trade has received an overwhelming response. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy posits the ship as the primary symbol for this configuration in a move to consider geographical connections by way of routes and movement between territories. The ship situates this project in the intersecting space between "Europe, Africa, America and the Caribbean" (4). This is certainly one of the additions to the framework of African diaspora studies that the black Atlantic frame brings.

Gilroy's concepts of a shared community resonate with other significant articulations of African diaspora. David Scott identifies diaspora by way of a series of shared discursive practices. Although "disputes", they are nevertheless related through "contingent linkages." Scott like Gilroy values these connections. Stuart Hall further identifies "a sort of collective 'one true self,'" that supercedes definition by a system of logic. Hall emphasizes what we might think of as a latent connection to a shared culture and ancestry. Also similar to Gilroy's idea of the shared geographic location of the Black Atlantic based on the concept of a shared culture and history is Edouard Glissant's idea of the rhizome which keeps the idea of rootedness without "a totalitarian root." Glissant's concept allows for independent growths that maintain a connection to an overarching

whole identity. These thinkers reflect an understanding of black diaspora identity as both process and state.

Similarly, black Atlantic identities are always evolving. The movement of populations as well as economic and cultural artifacts brings about the constant exchanging of ideas and political reexamination. Approaches to the black Atlantic tend to share a particular cultural trajectory, focusing on cultural elements that have survived the Middle Passage.<sup>14</sup> This shared trajectory emerges from the experiences of coerced labor, forced displacement, colonization and racial violence that characterized the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>15</sup>

While this approach of the shared experience of slavery highlights cultural continuities, it also unfortunately tends to homogenize difference and exclusions.<sup>16</sup> Thus, other regions whose shores touch the Atlantic have been omitted from Gilroy's landmark study. The Caribbean and Africa are glaringly absent from *The Black Atlantic*. By emphasizing the shared experience of slavery as the primary way in which these cultures are connected, Gilroy's text omits Africa implicitly. The continent is reduced to a homogenous source. Accounts of women's participation in black Atlantic communities are also limited. The metaphor of the ship has in some ways limited the participation of women in this framework and highlights these omissions from Gilroy's black Atlantic. The ship is most closely associated with the experiences of traveling sailors. At best, it is

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<sup>14</sup> See Tiffany Patterson's and Robin Kelley's "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the making of the Modern World."

<sup>15</sup> See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's *The Many-Headed Hydra* for an account of the many Atlantic routes that Europeans took. See Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates Jr and Carl Peterson's *Black Imagination and The Middle Passage* in which they read the Middle Passage metonymically as a frame through which "a spatial continuum" is established between "Africa and the Americas, the ship's deck and the hold, the Great House and the slave quarters" (8). Diedrich et al posit a topography that connects the African interior and the North American interior by way of the Atlantic.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance Melville Herskovitz's *The Myth of the Negro Past* and Sterling Stuckey's *Slave*

a masculinist symbol that cannot contain the experiences of women who made similar trips across the Atlantic.

In this project, the phrase Black Atlantic is being used in the broadest possible sense. I include texts that offer narratives of multiple migrations across the Atlantic as well as those that offer trans-Atlantic flows of people, commodities, political ideologies and cultural formations. I further include literature that invokes multiple geographies of the Atlantic, exploring routes/roots between these areas. Early examples of black women's writing that fit within this framework include *The History of Mary Prince* and *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Mary Seacole*. Additional examples of black women writers who have take the Atlantic as their setting include Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Maryse Conde, Paule Marshall, Bessie Head and Ama Ata Aidoo. Together, these writers illustrate a shift in the particular concerns that affect women in the black Atlantic.

The narrative voice in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* offers a view of what ships mean to black women:

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men. Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.

The figure of Janie Starks in Hurston's novel lives this difference. For men ships symbolize dreams and possibility. These possibilities sometimes materialize and other times do not, but the hopes that they embody are the dreams of men. Women do not have

the same relationship with ships, memories and dreams. Hurston's protagonist Janie Starks, comes to be associated not with ships but land. Janie is tied to agricultural labor through much of the novel as Logan Killicks' wife and then as a worker in Florida with Tea Cake. The above passage further suggests specific gendered practices of memory, implying that traumatic memories stay with women and become part of their quotidian experience. *Eyes* connects women to a different way of knowing that is based "inland." The term inland points to the ways that women's roles are based on land as well as away from the sea. For women then, there is a different imaginary at work with respect to Gilroy's "structures of feeling, producing and remembering" that involves a landed existence and negotiates unruly remnants of difficult experience. My dissertation sketches an alternative through the analysis of women's relationship to tropes of cartography, pastoral landscapes, migration and movement in recent works by black women writers within the black Atlantic.

The Atlantic is indelibly marked by the cultural inheritance of the middle passage. As Verene Shepherd argues, it is the slave trade that transforms this unit geographical into such a dynamic one. In accordance with this, the particular literary tropes of the sea and the ship have emerged as the dominant markers that identify a Black Atlantic focus within a text. Jean-Philippe Mathy encourages us to think of the Atlantic metaphorically in which "the conspicuous figure of the ship and the recurrent theme of the middle passage...are examples of [Gilroy's] narrative process" whereby Gilroy's narrative in *The Black Atlantic* becomes "a diasporic compounding of cultures" (107). In his essay "Charting the Black Atlantic" Ian Baucom deliberately privileges what he terms as

“metaphors of liquidity” that can chart the Black Atlantic’s “submarine flows.” The field of Black Atlantic studies also requires a new type of cartography.

The writers I discuss here use the pastoral as the mode with which to accomplish this. Nationalist discourses of place and belonging have used the pastoral as a means of regulating citizenship with the very real consequence of delimiting the access of certain sections of the population to the rights and privileges of citizenship. Pastoral narratives fix urban and rural locations as separate. Rural locations cause a significant degree of anxiety to the nation state because they are seen as an uncontrollable site with the potential to foster rebellion. Rural sites represent important spaces for agriculture and the economic wealth of the nation. They are also important symbolic spaces where the ethos of the people resides. Historically, pastoral narratives ignore the contributions of working populations. More specifically, they erase rural women’s contributions and their historical experiences, especially those that contradict official historical narratives. Given the pastoral mode’s tendency to erase undesirable elements, it presents nation states with the opportunity to contain the rural, fixing it as a distant sphere in the national imagination. The pastoral therefore enables the discursive containment of rural communities and disguises the military force that is introduced into the rural sphere as a means of controlling it.

The women writers chosen here use the pastoral against the grain to chart a new cartography of the Black Atlantic. Although traditional pastoral sites such as gardens, villages, farms and homesteads exist in a relationship with urban locations in these novels, these writers recontextualize this relationship in significant ways. These texts disrupt the traditional patterns of mobility that keep the rural and the urban separate.

They also look at how the day to day activities connected to landscape become drawn into nationalist projects and agendas. These texts highlight the ways that the disruption of communal spaces and places erodes communal, familial and individual bodies. I have chosen the trope of scarred women's bodies to work with in this project. I identify the presence of physically and emotionally scarred women's bodies as a leitmotif that runs through these works. Their scarred bodies take up the preoccupation with cartography and expose national and patriarchal mappings of place, gender and identity. Through cultural memory, their bodies make visible the traumatic wounds of black Atlantic history.

My project reads the work of women writers here as preoccupied with re-charting the Black Atlantic through a renegotiation of the pastoral yet again in an effort to recalibrate the landscapes produced at colonial and neocolonial moments in Black Atlantic history. In this dissertation, I understand landscape as ideologically constructed and therefore distinct from land and territory. Nevertheless, ideological representations of landscape have significant repercussions for land. Recognizing that depictions of landscape in literature are more than a literal representation of a national territory and instead imbued with historical significance that they must be critically unpacked in terms of the cultural significance of the terrain that they represent, these writers challenge the absence of the rural citizen's experiences from the cultural history of the nation. They challenge traditional uses of the pastoral in a number of ways.

In this project, "(Re)Placing Nations: Postcolonial Women's Contestations of Spatial Discourses," I read representations of pastoral landscapes in recent works by women writers, specifically Jamaica Kincaid, Shani Mootoo, Edwidge Danticat, Yvonne

Vera, Monica Arac de Nyeko and Toni Morrison as a trope for rethinking the nation's internal and external boundaries, both imagined and physical. My project considers the dual yet dialectically related processes of creating and maintaining platial boundaries and gendered identity formation. Recent frames for engaging questions of citizenship and belonging have been broadly diasporic. This analysis re-centers these debates in more localized discourses that take places into account. I argue that the writers in my project as revising the literary forms of the pastoral, in order to disrupt various national configurations of space and place that prevent rural women from actively belonging to the national imaginary while still maintaining a close relationship to the local. These women write in response to official histories that de-politicize the rural sphere and omit the experience of rural women in relation to national struggle, the nation-state's discursive accounts of national belonging exclude rural women's experiences. These women offer models of national and transnational belonging that are based on their experiences and contributions.

In the first two chapters I read the work of Kincaid, Mootoo and Danticat as exemplifying the postcolonial pastoral. In my first chapter, "Secret Gardens: Young Women Cultivating Nation in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden(Book)*," I analyze the garden as a pastoral location where the interconnected nature of place and identity are best exemplified. Given the historical significance of gardens and botany in carrying out the colonizing mission, my chapter contextualizes the colonial and neocolonial discursive representations of public gardens as unchanging and enclosed places -- a formulation that predominates in contemporary Caribbean literary criticism. -- as representative of a settler pastoral. Pastoral gardens

survive, discursively preserved in official state discourse as outside of political configurations; however, I use the texts discussed here to argue that gardens as in fact micro locations that reflect the nation's larger political arrangements. In Kincaid's text, the domestic space of the garden is constantly being reconfigured in relation to her own critical project of formulating personal and political history based on a black Atlantic subjectivity. Her personal garden becomes a text in which to read the history of colonial oppression inherent in the pastoralized renditions of the Botanical Gardens.

*Cereus* critiques the neocolonial unquestioning appropriation of the Botanical Gardens as a symbol of national identity by showing the ways in which the discourses that produced the Gardens as a place were also at work mapping the space within the neocolonial nation into private and public spheres. In the new nation, gardens become a place about which to base a national identity based on heteronormative gender norms. In light of this frame I read the garden in *Cereus* as a transgressive location that is at once domestic and public, and provides a location for marginalized subjects to perform contested gender and sexual identities. Although *Cereus* is written by an author of Indian descent and treats a largely indo-Caribbean community, the experiences described in *Cereus* are integral to the black Atlantic experience. The interaction of the Ramchandin family with the surrounding non-Indian community reveals the ways in which racial fault lines developed within the nation over who could have access to land. I discuss the ways in which Mala's frail and abused body works as a parallel to the black woman's scarred body. Although the Indian experience of immigration to the Caribbean was ultimately different from the Atlantic crossing made by enslaved Africans, as current inhabitants of the geographical location of the Black Atlantic, their experience warrants inclusion.

In the second chapter I read Edwidge Danticat's use of the postcolonial pastoral as a tool to dislodge the association of the rural with the pastoral, a conflation that disguises the very real violence that Haitian women in the peasant class experience because they are so bound to the rural. My second chapter "Alter/Native Possibilities: Circular Migration and Citizenship in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*" examines these texts as an effort aimed at shifting the literary landscape to consider pastoral rural constructions of place and their connections to women's political struggles. I assert that Danticat's appropriation of the rural landscape deconstructs masculinist nationalist pastoral narratives that represent rural areas as passive repositories for authentic national identity based on imagined filial connections to the land and oppressive gender systems. I examine both the visible physical scars and the invisible emotional scars of Danticat's protagonists. Their scarred bodies offer a stark contrast to earlier representations of idyllic rural life in Haiti. Danticat's texts posit circulatory migrations from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and from Haiti to New York as pathways to imagining citizenship that contests power from within the rural domestic sphere thereby disrupting idealized representations of rural Haiti. By using the trope of the scarred female body, the texts physically insert narratives of forced migration and displacement into national accounts of rural locations.

My final two chapters examine fictional narratives through the lens of the anti-pastoral. In my third chapter, "The Country and the City: Intra-National Migrations in Monica Arac De Nyeko's "Strange Fruit" and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*" I explore circular migration as an alter/native practice of citizenship within the nation. I analyze the pastoral mapping of the nation that appears in the works of Zimbabwean

writer Yvonne Vera and Ugandan writer Monica Arac de Nyeko, arguing that these narratives dismantle the imagined boundaries between rural and urban places that are central to patriotic histories. Both narratives complicate these boundaries by representing female citizens who move freely between the urban and ex-urban. As in chapter two, we find that women who have been physically scarred move between these spheres and in doing so they create spaces for gendered subjects to perform counter-hegemonic practices of citizenship including offering alternative versions of national history. The scars on their body function as testaments to silent historical records. By directly working against pastoralizing traditions, these writers enable the anti-pastoral to posit new patterns of regional movement and affiliation, thereby addressing one of the critiques of Gilroy's frame to simultaneously subordinate Africa and to ignore many regional connections.

Chapter four, "Just Colored Folks Stuff: Greening Urban Landscapes in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz*", considers Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz* as anti-pastoral novels in which the South/North migration away from rural locations provides another context for imagining citizenship for African Americans in the United States. I have chosen to include Morrison in this selection of postcolonial texts and to deliberately read her work as postcolonial. Doing so enables me to draw out the shared experiences of black Americans with other inhabitants of the black Atlantic. Morrison's work lends itself to a postcolonial reading in many ways, especially by way of its connection to post-slavery American society.

I read Morrison's work as overtly claiming the anti-pastoral form in order to centralize urban spaces in the way that rural spaces are valorized in the pastoral. This chapter introduces an overtly urbanized eco-critical dimension to my project. The

migration to Harlem can be read as a movement that allowed blacks to occupy the physical spaces of streets, nightclubs and storefronts in such a way that allowed them to experience their political selfhood in a manner quite different from that experienced in the South. Iconic rural landscapes in America have consistently been locations of victimization for minority populations, particularly African American populations. The Dead family's experiences in Shalimar illustrate the way pastoral and wilderness environments are filled with danger for African American populations following slavery. In *Jazz*, the figures of Wild, Violet Trace and Alice Mann occupy new urban places that afford them new ways of belonging to the nation. As in the previous chapters, I argue that the physically scarred bodies of Wild, Violet and Alice function as cultural sites that encode national belonging even in an urban landscape. Their migration from the South to the North across the American landscape allows these women to challenge the unspoken boundaries associated with place.

My project posits that contemporary African and African diaspora women's literature reconstructs the urban and ex-urban as intimately linked. By insisting on these connections, formerly rigid boundaries that separated the public from the private, the rural from the urban, the migrant from the rooted are challenged along with the implicit geography of power that scaffolds these separations. In an effort to enable alter/native practices and locations of citizenship, I argue that these writers rework these traditional literary forms as an occasion for recalibrating geometries of hegemonic state power. In effect, they restore political agency to rural locations in the nation.

**Chapter One: Secret Gardens: Young Women Cultivating Nation in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden*(Book)**

In this chapter, I analyze the garden as a location that best exemplifies the interconnected nature of place and identity. Specifically, I argue that these texts politicize the location of the garden. Although largely represented as apolitical locations of aesthetic and scientific importance, gardens and botanical practices have nevertheless played a significant role in carrying out colonial and neocolonial agendas. I contextualize the colonial and neocolonial discursive representations of public gardens as unchanging and enclosed places -- a formulation that predominates in the contemporary Caribbean political imaginary -- as representative of a settler pastoral. Instead of apolitical zones within the colony or nation that were outside of debates about national belonging, the landscape of the garden emerged as an icon that represented first the well-ordered place of the colony and then the well-ordered place of the nation. As a symbolic location, the garden provided a material site to anchor preconceptions about the bounty and wildness of the New World. As with traditional versions of the pastoral landscape, the garden represented a location outside of the political sphere that was separate from urban locations and devoid of human agents. These characteristics made the garden suitable for self-reflection but placed it squarely outside the arena of political action. *Garden* and *Cereus* offer a counterpoint to the tendency to idealize and stabilize gardenscapes by hegemonic powers and instead to historicize the garden and re-introduce an element of the dynamic into the garden. As part of this project's my preoccupation with elaborating a black Atlantic pastoral, I begin by exploring the colonial deployment of the settler pastoral, specifically to create the Botanical Gardens before moving to the national appropriation of this location and its conversion to the National Botanical Gardens.

My reading of *Garden* and *Cereus* resituates the garden as a central location from which to elaborate a political identity that contested colonial and neocolonial representations of identity. In Kincaid's text, the domestic space of the garden is constantly being reconfigured in relation to her own critical project of formulating personal and political history based on a black Atlantic understanding of place.<sup>17</sup> The political nature of their models of identity stems from the works' contestations of hegemonic constructions of the garden-place as an Edenic location through narratives and discourse. *Garden* interrogates the colonial certainty underlying the colonial construction of Botanical Gardens by significantly reworking the tropes of garden writing the better to expose the dimension of subjectivity involved in gardening. The text also shows how meaning-making devices and aesthetic preferences *always* mediate the creation of place. Thus, the figure of Kincaid as gardener creates a garden that reflects her individual diasporic subjectivity.

My critical analysis of *Cereus* build on my reading of Kincaid by using the garden to explore how place can enable the subject's performance of non-normative gendered identity. In Mootoo's *Cereus* the garden figures as a counter hegemonic domestic location that is at once private and public, a direct challenge to the new nation's division of space into public and private spheres. Mala's garden provides a location for marginalized subjects to perform contested gender and sexual identities. For Mootoo's protagonists Mala, Nurse Tyler and Otoh, the garden becomes a place in which to execute non-normative gendered identities that fly in the face of neo-national gender prescriptions. Taken together these works offer literary representations which explore the

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<sup>17</sup> In my dissertation I use the capitalized form of *Garden* to refer to the Botanical Gardens and the common form to refer to gardens in general.

ways in which locations can be imagined and deployed in ways that unfix our assumptions of pastoral places such as gardens as apolitical and unchanging.

Elements of pastoral discourse emerged in colonial discourse thereby enabling colonizers to imagine an impetus and a justification for acquiring colonies and building empires. Lawrence Buell argues that this type of pastoral – what he calls the settler pastoral – in fact “[underwrote] a program of conquest” in overseas territories (54).<sup>18</sup> According to Buell, the pastoral has been used in the service of cultural self-definition by European colonizers (54). Buell argues that while traditional pastoral was only vaguely connected to a specific location, the settler pastoral “[invented] Europe’s new worlds under the sign of pastoral,” an act that sets into motion

the prospect that never-never lands of the pastoral might be located in actual somewhere; it helped energize quests, both selfish and unselfish, to map and understand those territories; and it thereby helped ensure a future interplay between projective fantasy and responsiveness to actual environments in which pastoral thinking both energized environmental perception and organized that energy into schemas. Settler pastoral thus offered both to filter the vision of those enchanted by it and to stimulate them to question metropolitan culture itself...” (54).<sup>19</sup>

Although colonies were physically distant from metropolitan centers of the mother country, in this case England, they maintained a place in the metropolitan’s imaginary by way of this pastoral connection. As I emphasized in my earlier discussion of Columbus’ letter to Spain, the colonies became a garden-like source of raw materials. I therefore argue for considering the Botanical Gardens through the pastoral lens because they

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<sup>18</sup> Critics such as Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt identify a certain Eurocentric bias inherent in naming this instance of the pastoral “settler” pastoral because it privileges the Eurocentric experience in the pastoral at the expense of the experience of native populations.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the role of idealistic pastoral and arcadian discourse in transforming the New World into a backdrop for settlers and their quests, see Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Raymond William’s *The Country and the City* and Stephen Greenblatt’s *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*.

represent the culmination of a pastorally inspired cartographic quest to map the blank space of the new colony. Gardening and botany offered settlers the opportunity to make sense of unfamiliar territory. Furthermore, new world colonies were often framed through Arcadian images. Botanists became new Adams who are charged with naming specimens in this setting. Settlers and scientists alike left the metropole behind to satisfy their quest for new spaces through the preservation of specimens of the natural world. The science of botany and controlled cultivation in the garden enabled the cataloguing and display of the natural world as a source of economic wealth. By exposing the presence of these discourses in relation to the garden, I argue that the garden remains an important sphere of political activity.

The exchange of commodities and missives between the colony and the metropole established a physical anchor for the pastoral in the colony. A number of economic and scientific discourses enabled the movement of goods and communications across the empire. I identify the Botanical Gardens in the colony as a critical site of analysis heavily shaped by the colonial pastoral ideology. Cultivating the Botanical Gardens literally inscribed colonial ideologies in the physical environment of the new territories. While the settler pastoral perpetuated a tradition of representing the region as a Garden of Eden to be tamed and developed, the Botanical Gardens became a site where colonizers deployed a number of complementary epistemological tools such as garden writing and botany to usurp the territory from native populations and to prevent migrant labor population from connecting. At the same time, the political agenda of the Botanical Gardens was masked beneath a number of cultural, economic and scientific discourses.

From the very beginning the institution combined agendas of conservation and the expansion of the interests of the British Empire including scientifically and economically based impulses to isolate, name, objectify and possess. These multiple colonial agendas were hidden beneath a discursive veneer that claimed the Gardens as a cultural institution with an objective and impartial mission in the service of conservation of important species. Underlying all of these discursive tools was the urge to fix the colony into a knowable and clearly defined space. In this respect the relationship between the master institution of the Kew Gardens and the colony mimicked the relationship between metropole and colony: all specimens had to be approved and sanctioned by Kew before they could be transplanted or relocated to a different colony. Subsequently, discourses about the Botanical Gardens eradicated the violence of colonization and slavery that took place within the colony, producing instead an image of the colony as well-ordered, familiar and domesticated. This image could then be sent back to the metropole for circulation.<sup>20</sup>

In recognition of the need to simultaneously establish a culture, colonial agents likened the process of establishing the Gardens to that of establishing a culture. In a Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information sent to Kew Gardens in 1898, Dr. Desmond Morris praises the efforts of Britain in circulating the botanical specimens from the various parts of the Empire. He also explicitly links the act of transplanting botanical specimens to the act of founding a culture. “For at least a hundred years past,” he writes, “no effort has been wanting on the part of the Home Government to supply the colonies with plants from all parts of the world for the foundation of new cultures.” Morris’

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<sup>20</sup> See Krista Thompson’s *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* for a discussion of “an aesthetics of concealment.”

missive to the master Gardens at Kew exemplifies the connection that European settlers imagined between horticulture and cultural identity. Charged with creating a place out of the formerly blank space on European maps, botanists and horticulturalists engaged with this project at the level of plant life. They sought to literally change the landscape of new territories so that every unit of place reflected the larger unit of the colony as it was imagined by colonization. In this manner, the Botanical Gardens came into being as a place that enacted the drama of colonization on a lesser scale. The Gardens became a microcosmic representation of the political organization of the colony.

*My Garden(Book)* interrogates the cultural meaning that Morris attributes to the Botanical Gardens as a culturally significant place exposing the colonial will-to-power implicit in its cultural identity. That is, the colonially constructed place of the garden reflected the identity of colonial society and the power dynamics inherent within it. In this work the garden functions like a text wherein place and identity are closely connected. The previous discussion explores the historical provenance of the Gardens. The *Garden(Book)* also exposes the ways botany was used to aid in carrying out the colonizing mission through discursive representations of public gardens as unchanging and enclosed places that represented a colonial pastoral. These Gardens came to be discursively represented in official state discourse as outside of political configurations; however, I read the Gardens as in fact micro locations that reflect the nation's larger political arrangements. Kincaid's personal garden is constantly being reconfigured in relation to her own critical project of formulating personal and political history based on a black Atlantic subjectivity. Her personal garden becomes a text that allows us to read both the history of colonial and neocolonial oppression as well as postcolonial resistance.

Gardens were subtle reminders to Kincaid during her childhood of the colonizing mission: “The botanical garden reinforced for [her] the botany of the world they owned” (120). The extent of the collection present in the Gardens was a physical reminder of the many different territories under British control. The ability to transport plants from all over the globe and to introduce them into the Botanical Gardens displayed the power of Britain to essentially appropriate the resources of other places in service of its own agenda.<sup>21</sup> The practice of creating the Gardens further demonstrated the Empire’s power to literally colonize the new territory by introducing new flora into the landscape, foreshadowing the empire’s eventual manipulation of human resources.

The text further explodes the myth of the Botanical Gardens as solely a cultural institution by suggesting a connection between the scientific tools used to name the plant specimens and the mindset that enabled slavery and indentureship. Kincaid identifies the desire on the part of the Europeans to “isolate, name, objectify, possess” plant specimens as well as similar desires to “isolate, name, objectify, [and] possess” native populations. In the early eighteenth century Carl Linne -- more commonly known as Linnaeus -- published *Systema Naturae*. In this text Linnaeus standardized the system of Latinate nomenclature with which he categorized living organisms into the system of Latinate nomenclature of genus then species. Mary Louise Pratt argues that Linnaeus’s system, unlike earlier systems, “launched a European knowledge-building enterprise of unprecedented scale and appeal” (Pratt 25). Linnaeus’s classificatory system emphasizes the role that it played in cementing the empirical and classificatory language that legitimized the classification of life. Linnaeus’ system enabled a widespread and democratic utilization. Indeed botany even infiltrated the leisure and domestic spheres,

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<sup>21</sup> See Mimi Sheller’s work for an account of how plants were moved across the British empire.

becoming a suitable pastime for educated women and spawned many garden writing works. In writing about the Botanical Gardens themselves, the botanist represented a new kind of Adam and thus this place becomes a location that melds together ideologies about Eden and Arcadia. The danger of Linnaeus's system lay in its very simplicity, which made it an appealing and democratic practice that even middle class populations in the metropole could participate in. There is, therefore, a link between attitudes that promoted botanical practices and attitudes that enslaved populations. The readiness to manipulate plants to generate revenue quickly became a readiness to brutally manipulate populations in the service of profits.

Kincaid looks at the ways in which the act of naming can erase and silence indigenous ways of knowing. Linked to the act of naming is the concept of power because the act of naming conveys possession. In the colonial reality, it erases the name and the history that have gone before it. As Kincaid argues, naming is "a spiritual padlock with the key thrown irretrievably away" (122). Essentially, this is the crime that Linnaeus committed by replacing the names that local populations had already given to the local flora. The very practice of botany, ostensibly scientific, instead reproduces a colonial relationship of power on the micro-level in the Botanical Gardens. The dominion over native bodies that colonial practice permits is comparable to the dominion over the natural world that Botany promotes.

Officials produced a number of images of the Gardens as testament to the rightness and entitlement to the places that colonizers inhabited. They therefore served an important mission of keeping the colony alive in the imagination of the metropole. Institutions such as Botanical Museums, which aided in the circulation of botanical

images from the colonies demonstrate this:

The specimens of fruit are shown at various stages of development, from blossom to their full ripeness, and then in various stages of decay and disease; the specimens of flowers, however, are shown without any blemish at all. These fruits and flowers, decaying or unblemished, are all beautiful, and as is the way of likenesses, seem more representative of the real than do the things that they are meant to resemble.... To see these things is to be reminded of how barefaced the notions of captivity and control used to be, because the very fabrication of these objects, in their perfection (no decay or blemish in nature is ever so appealing) and in the nature of the material from which they are made, attests to a will that must have felt itself impervious to submission. How permanent everything must feel when the world is going your way. (81-82).

While visiting the Harvard Botanical Museum Kincaid notes that the Museum contains over three thousand blown glass specimens of plant life. The collection was originally commissioned in 1886 and their creation spanned five decades. In spite of the late period of imperialism in which these specimens come into existence, the fixity of these specimens, made of a non-decaying material as they are, suggest a permanence that their real life counterparts did not share. Institutions like these Museums communicated a message about the endurance of Britain's power by suggesting its permanence. Perfect and beautiful specimens such as these, which contained no sign of blemish also serve as a physical reminder of the botanical wealth that could be found in the colony.

From the earliest advertisements published for the first Botanical Gardens to be established in the West Indies, there was a call for applications from those who "should cultivate a spot in the West Indies in which plants, useful in medicine and profitable articles of commerce might be propagated and where a nursery of the valuable products of Asia and the distant parts might be formed for the benefit of His Majesty" (*Kew Bulletin* 91). The governor of the colony furthered the colonizing missions by creating

economically profitable spaces. As Rita Pemberton argues, “the major local activity of the gardens became the distribution and sale of plants” (3). Varieties of sugar cane, coconuts and nutmeg were all introduced to the Gardens in St. Vincent and then Trinidad from different colonies because they were in particular demand (*Annual Report* 7).

The personal history of the author and gardener, her aesthetic and ethical sensibilities manifest themselves in the shaping of the garden. These attitudes reveal themselves most decidedly in response to garden writing. Kincaid comments that “the garden for me is so bound up with words about the garden, with words themselves” (7). There is a distinct difference between the way that Kincaid represents her garden as a diasporic subject and the way earlier garden writers understood this place. Given the democratic accessibility of Linnaeus’ system, garden writers incorporated these terms into their works with a profound certainty of the rightness of these labels. As a means of challenging the certainty of garden writing, *My Garden(Book)* undermines the tone of certainty that most often appears in these discursive representations and offers instead a model that is tenuous at times and undercuts its own assertions. As such, Kincaid’s gardening persona considers “any set idea of the garden, any set picture... a provocation...” (7). These set ideas are frequently located with a joint project of colonization. Examining the work of writers such as Oakes Ames, Kincaid (the gardener) identifies a “sense of possession” of the landscape around them, to one that allows them to dismiss entire populations in colonized territories. A botanist of European descent on the way to Cuba in the nineteenth-century, Ames writes to his wife that “we are surrounded by the usual uninteresting people one meets on a journey to Cuba and back; people who are well enough to watch but undesirable to meet” (Ames 80). She describes

the author of *Graham Stuart Thomas Rose Book* as “deliciously authoritative and overbearing in his opinions” (81). As Kincaid’s responses to these garden writers indicate, garden writing can be complicit with the act of colonization because of its will-to-power.

If garden writing aids in colonization, Kincaid’s *Garden(Book)* offers a contrasting model of writing that undermines these authoritative tendencies. Using a variety of narrative strategies she attempts to destabilize her own authority. Parenthetical comments frequently interrupt declarative sentences. An instance of this occurs in reference to the winter landscape which “for (Kincaid), to look at a landscape covered with [snow] is to look at despair, and I cannot find anything in history to make me feel that my view is merely personal (I grew up on an island in a climate that is tropical and therefore am prejudiced)” (60). The certainty of this firm aesthetic opinion and value judgment about the wintry landscape as despairing is immediately undermined by a parenthetical detail that locates the speaker as West Indian. The parenthetical interruption identifies the source of value judgment with the individual’s origins. By establishing this cause, Kincaid challenges the air of certainty that accompanies her assertion.

Accordingly, one’s location in the world shapes what one considers to be aesthetically pleasing. It is also an example of the way in which interrelations of local and diasporic identities come to bear on a space. Kincaid therefore ascribes her dislike of winter to her West Indian identity. But this connection can be much more malevolent, especially when one’s image of oneself is closely tied to the landscape that one inhabits. Thus, the use of parenthetical critiques soon emerges after this admission, thereby also acknowledging the problematic privileging based on identity that was a common

colonialist practice:

(This worthless feeling, this bestowing special qualities on yourself because of the place you are from, is hard to resist -- so hard that people who came from the ugliest place deny that it is ugly at all or simply go out and take someone else's beauty for themselves.) (119)

Kincaid admits to feelings of immediate love for landscape and flowers that also inspired feelings of gladness for being from the West Indies. Yet this same happiness based on identification with the landscape can be identified with a certain urge to control those around you. This “worthless feeling” invites us to rethink our connection with land.

These parenthetical interruptions are techniques that complement an overall understanding of the garden as a space that eludes human control. Kincaid writes:

How agitated I am when I am in the garden, and how happy I am to be so agitated...Nothing works just the way I thought it would, nothing looks just the way I had imagined it, and when sometimes it does look like what I had imagined (and this, thank God, is rare) I am startled that my imagination is so ordinary. (14)

Kincaid soon discovers that it is impossible to predict when a plant will bloom, or even what it will look like once it has bloomed. The very first set of seeds that go into the ground is never heard from again. They do not sprout. This representation of the garden challenges the notion of human supremacy over the environment. This atmosphere of uncertainty that suffuses the act of gardening is best documented in the chapter “Wisteria.” She plants two varieties of this plant. The blue wisteria blooms out of season while the white grows wildly but without blossom. This wisteria throw out “long twining stems” and succeed in “mixing itself up with the canes of *Rosa* ‘Alchymist,’ which is growing not too nearby, mixing itself up with a honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) and even going far away to twine itself around a red rose (*Rosa* ‘Henry Kelsy’)” (11). The question of “What to do?” in response to such unpredictable growth appears frequently. It becomes

clear that the garden is not controllable by human will alone. Embracing this uncertainty and adopting the stance that the reality of the end result is always superior to the quality of her imaginings, represents a rejection of the pastoral's call to shape the found landscape to reflect colonialist imaginings.

The text further exposes garden writing as a mode of recording the gardener's personal and cultural history. Consider the following passage in which the gardener Kincaid realizes the logic behind the shape of her garden:

In Dr. Woodsworth's house (the Brown Shingled House)...it dawned on me that the garden I was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it, I did not tell this to my gardeners who had asked me to explain the thing I was doing, or to explain what I was trying to do; I only marveled at the way the garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me (the conquest of Mexico and its surroundings) (7-8)

Here, the garden emerges as a reflection of the gardener's past as the shapes of the beds reflect the shapes of the islands in the Caribbean Sea and demonstrates that memory and personal history soon make themselves evident. Although, at first there is no apparent plan for laying out the beds, she begins with a square in the middle of her lawn that a number of people advise against. People also inquire about the shape of the beds and the aesthetics that frame them. Eventually the meaning emerges as the realization that, "... the garden I was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it..." What this selection of text illustrates is the way a gardener's subconscious memories and history unconsciously shape gardens. Kincaid's individual past as an Antiguan makes itself present in the gardenscape that she produces.

*My Garden(Book)* shows how the individual garden plot restores the history of forced labor and migration that made the Botanical Gardens a possibility and a necessity but was nevertheless omitted from accounts of the Gardens. By exposing the scientific and economic discourses that made the Botanical Gardens possible this text provides counter hegemonic narratives that challenge their assertions. The text refashions the garden as a sphere in which political consciousness can emerge by examining the discourses that have historically shaped this location

As Caribbean nations advanced to independence, the Botanical Gardens remained an important public location about which masculinist discourse and iconography circulated to produce a version of neocolonial cultural identity that outlawed non-normative gendered and sexual identities. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, as the twin-island nation advanced to independence, the Gardens and the publications circulating about them worked to more explicitly map onto the territory of the new nation the separation of the public and private sphere. Furthermore, zones within the nation such as the Gardens that were associated with the public sphere were identified as male spaces while private sphere locations became gendered as female spaces.<sup>22</sup>

*The President's House and Gardens* demonstrates how the Botanical Gardens remained an important political site that reinforced the power of the office of the President through masculinist models of national identity. The publication represents a

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<sup>22</sup> Critics identify this division as emerging in the post emancipation period in Caribbean society. During slavery, women labored equally in fields outside of the domestic space and alongside men. Gender was virtually non-existent as a force that determined labor relations (Bernard Moitt 172). In the nineteenth century political sphere, although women did not have the right to vote, they were still politically influential as male politicians sought out their support as an important part of the black community. The nature of this labor relationship changes after emancipation in response to a number of factors. One of the reasons for this shift as Swithin Wilmot discusses in the context of Jamaica, is the gender ideology put forth by British missionaries in the Caribbean. Former slaves were encouraged by missionaries to follow the pattern set by the English bourgeoisie, an order in which men left the home to work and earn money while

discourse on gender that emerged in the Anglophone Caribbean around the time of independence. This discourse disseminated iconographic images of masculinity as the cultural basis for the newly independent nation. By delimiting the types of access that male and female citizens had to public places, the very real consequences for practicing citizenship and taking political action in public spheres became much more evident.

In 1962, when Trinidad and Tobago gained independence, the Botanical Gardens were converted into a symbol of a new national identity that was both masculinist and neocolonial. The Gardens not only added a dimension of prestige to the official residence of the country's first President, Noor Hassanali, but they did so in a way that replicated the style of colonial models of a grand house with a garden attached. The President's House, as Governor James Robert Longden states was modeled after English houses in their design. He notes that when the first foundational stone was put down for the house, "the elevation [was] designed, or rather altered from the original design by one of the first architects of England." Although the architect remains unnamed, the connection of this house to its English predecessors is preserved through its physical structure. *House and Gardens* identifies the President's house and the Botanical Gardens as "an interesting example of Victorian colonial architecture" that was meant "to maintain links with the past" (1). Images of Hassanali as well as his predecessors, Governor Generals Sir Solomon Hochoy and Sir Ellis Clarke are strategically positioned so as to emphasize the seamless transition from colonial rule to self-rule. Their British army uniforms and medals exemplify what Belinda Edmondson identifies as the idea of Victorian gentlemanliness that shaped pre and post-independence agendas in the Anglophone

Caribbean. These images also emphasize an explicitly male genealogy of political leadership.

Literary production in the pre and post independent Anglophone Caribbean was largely masculinist as Curdella Forbes argues.<sup>23</sup> Forbes' critique argues that

Addressing large-scale (macrocosmic) concerns in a colonial society, the nationalist movement was marked in the public sphere by totalizing discourses, including those of gender. Public political discourse and its metaphors created the nation as an iconic masculinity – that is to say, in the image of a man. The image was reinforced by the literati: the fiction produced from the 1950s to the 1970s exhibited an almost exclusive concern with male protagonists, depicted in an exigent search for identity. (30)

The discourses produced in the public sphere were buttressed by fictional works dominated by male concerns. It also exposes the connection between iconic masculinity in the public political sphere and acceptable models of cultural identity in the nationalist movement.

As feminist postcolonial scholars work to recover the silenced archive of Caribbean women writers' contributions, they have turned to the location of the female body in the national imaginary and note the tendency to conscript the bodies of female citizens into the service of a masculine nationalism as tropes rather than participants. This constellation of meanings appears in the poem "The Inauguration" written in celebration of Hassanali's assumption of office by poet Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen and appearing in *House and Gardens*. The poem describes the President as he walks to his inauguration as upright and tall, the very picture of a Victorian gentleman. He walks to the ceremony

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<sup>23</sup> See for instance Donnette Francis' *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship*, Belinda Edmondson's *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* and Curdella Forbes' *From nation to diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the cultural performance of gender*. These scholars collectively characterize the works of writers foundational Caribbean writers such as George

through “a colonnade of soldiers” who line the pathway -- military symbolism that emphasizes his masculinity. It is not until the final verse of the poem that female figures make an appearance:

He embraced his wife -  
 Unfailing at his side,  
 And now  
 Hurting with pride,  
 The embrace caught  
 The nations wives  
 In tightness before a tear  
 The embrace of a President  
 For family, and Land (12)

The President’s wife appears as an auxiliary, relentless in her support of his political journey. The moment is an emotional one, as the family unit stands in for the nation. The President envisions himself as head of both his family as well as the national family. The only role allowed for female citizens is that of wives. Woman is placed within the home and auxiliary to men.

*House and Gardens* therefore demonstrates the particular gender system through which female citizens were allowed to participate in nationalism. Patricia Mohammed describes a gender system as “the rules governing the social, sexual, and reproductive behavior in any given society” (21). Bodies that do not subscribe to these prescriptions within the national space are not fully recognized as citizens. In fact, they are constructed as abject bodies. Subjects must in this national model acquire an appropriate sex and gender that is publicly recognized in order to be registered as citizens. As Judith Butler describes it, acquiring both sex and gender are processes and from childhood the bodies of women are called upon to enter the normative world of feminine gender with respect

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Lamming, Aime Cesaire and Derek Walcott that have been central to the political projects of the Caribbean imaginary as largely masculinist

to citationality and materialization. Bodies are “cited” into being when over a period of time they come to be referenced in relation to certain identifiable norms. Bodies also materialize physically since matter is neither site nor surface as we usually imagine. Instead bodies stabilize or “materialize” over time as they are repeatedly referred to in specific ways to “produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (9). The system of patriarchy is the gender system that works in tandem with this gendering and sexing of bodies. As Jacqui Alexander writes in relation to the Caribbean space, women defined as lesbians and prostitutes were constructed as outside of the law so that the state could then discipline and punish them (23). Should a young woman appear to reject the model of gender conformity that is placed before her, or should she invest in her own erotic autonomy as a source of power then she is seen as a threat to the nuclear heteropatriarchal family and labeled an outsider. This then gives the state and civil society power to treat her with social opprobrium and limit the protections that would be afforded to other citizens. Because of this restriction to private domestic spheres, the abuse of women was viewed as a cultural, private or individual issue and not a political matter that required state action (Pargass and Clarke 39).

Ileana Rodriguez shows that the garden comes to be a literary representation that stands in for the nation in the works of female Caribbean writers in *House, Garden, Nation. Space, Gender, and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Latin American Literatures by Women*. The garden can function as a zone between the private domestic sphere of the home and the public sphere where political action is usually located. Gardens in Caribbean literature also commonly appear in the front yard of houses. The in-betweenness of the yard comes from its location between the interior of the home and the

exterior commercial space that is traditionally male dominated. This is a favorable location for female activities which include the construction of alternative women-centered groups since women are excluded from traditional male-centered self-governance organizations.

### **Secret Gardens: *Cereus Blooms at Night***

I turn now to *Cereus Blooms at Night* and the ways in which the place of the garden evolves in a dialectical relationship with individual identity. While Kincaid's text explores how the garden was deployed in colonialist practices, Mootoo examines the garden at the moment when the nation is approaching independence. *Cereus* further develops the garden as a gendered location and a zone of political possibility. In *Cereus* the garden figures as counter hegemonic domestic location that is at once private and public, a direct challenge to the new nation's division of space into public and private spheres. Furthermore, by creating this intermediate zone of spatial identity that is neither wholly in the public gaze nor entirely contained within the domestic sphere, Mala's garden provides a location for marginalized subjects to perform contested gender and sexual identities. For Mootoo's protagonist Mala, Nurse Tyler and Otoh, the garden becomes a place in which to execute a non-normative gendered identities that fly in the face of neo-national gender prescriptions.

*Cereus* challenges the confinement of women to private spheres through the trope of the scarred female body. The effects of symbolic power wielded by the state are evident on the female human body. According to Guillermina de Ferrari, recent women's writing represents a shift "to the trope of the human body in their own attempt to

reconstruct and revalidate it as a site of memory.” De Ferrari posits that it is the trope of the vulnerable human body that must now be reconstructed and revalidated as a site of memory. In line with this project, my essay aims to build on De Ferrari’s understanding of the vulnerable body as a site of memory. The scarred female body bears the history of the violence that it has experienced into the private domestic sphere and becomes a visible archive of a publicly disavowed narrative. The use of the scarred female body therefore politicizes the private domestic service.

The novel challenges the post-independent discourse of public places and the public sphere as masculinized locations through Mala Ramchandin’s garden. As a location that occupies the zone between the private space of the home and the public space of the road, it lends Mala’s scarred body a certain visibility that would not otherwise be possible. The traumatized body of Mala Ramchandin itself becomes a physical location within the private domestic sphere that gives voice to the various physical and sexual abuses that she experiences at her father’s hands.

*Cereus* suggests that botanical discourses are connected to other colonial epistemologies which shape how we interpret the space of the garden. As Ambrose discovers in the Shivering Northern Wetlands,

at the heart of theology there is a premise—they will try to tell you otherwise, but if one listens carefully there is a premise that we humans are the primary sun around which the entire universe revolves. Unstated but certainly implied is the assumption that humans are by far superior to the rest of all nature, and that’s why we are the inheritors of the earth. Arrogant, isn’t it? What’s more, not all humans are part of this sun. Some of us are considered to be much lesser than others—especially if we are not Wetlandish or European or full-blooded white. (198).

Ambrose’s description of the theological universe reveals the hierarchy inherent in

theological study. Similar to the power economy embedded in actions such as naming botanical specimens and arranging Botanical Gardens, colonial powers order the universe and the people in it according to their own systems of values. Different bodies are ascribed varying levels of value as we see when Ambrose's final statement prioritizes the worth of different bodies. He prioritizes them as follows: Wetland bodies; European bodies; and then white bodies that may have been born elsewhere. In this formulation, all bodies are valued on the basis of their racial identity as well as their proximity to the Shivering Northern Wetlands.

Ambrose directly relates the discipline of entomology -- the studying insects -- to the ordering of bodies in the following passage:

I told them that I dearly wanted to map the importance of the insects and bugs mentioned in the Bible to the spiritual wellbeing of humankind and the earth on which we all, man and nature, co-exist. All of God's universe. . . . Yet every step of the way they intervened, insisting that I posit the insects and the bugs and all creatures not of the human species as *lesser*, as *dumb*, and to relegate them to being God's *tools*, servants, or as doom that He would send down upon mankind as punishment. (198–99)

If Wetlanders are the bodies most proximate to the sun then other bodies are valued in relation to this most precious measure of value. The scientific logic that structures this way of valuing entities while also relaying the way that this order is *divinely* influenced since according to the Bible insects were tools, servants or doom. This intertwined justification for this system of ordering bodies highlights the ways scientific and religious discourses reinforce each other.

These systems ordering of flora and fauna that took place in scientific and religious discourse quickly moved to ordering the native bodies of colonized populations.

The production of knowledge by natural history mapped directly on to human racial and sexual classifications. Alan Bewell argues convincingly that the work of early botanists such as Linnaeus led them to envision botanists to be Adamic figures whose acts of naming corresponded to the naming that took place in Eden. By representing colonizers as gardeners, violent and exploitative colonial activities can be transformed into more palatable images of gentle naturalists. As Jill Casid describes, colonial violence in the Caribbean was replaced by circulating the idea of the colonizer as gardener through various discursive practices. The colonial plantation economies became "the *antiempire* of the island garden" through discursive formulations (Casid 280, author's emphasis).

European narratives demonstrate the ways both African and Indian bodies were interchangeable in narratives that justified using both populations as slave labor.<sup>24</sup> Conflating both races meant an uninterrupted source of slave labor for Caribbean plantation economies. *Cereus* allows us to think through the ways that taxonomic classifications mediated the racial and gender classifications that emerged from the racial hierarchies of the Caribbean plantation both during slavery and again during indentureship. After abolishing the British slave trade in 1807 and then slavery by way of the Emancipation Act of 1834, a need for new sources of labor emerged. British planters turned to Indian workers as a means of securing new sources of labor, lowering wages by increasing competition and reestablishing control over former slaves.<sup>25</sup> The discursive justification for using Indian laborers that emerges at this time makes the establishment and deployment of a racialized hierarchy all the clearer.

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<sup>24</sup> See N Leask's *The complexion of race : categories of difference in eighteenth-century British culture*.

<sup>25</sup> These planters turned to India as labor suppliers for Trinidad. Records show that 149,939 East Indian indentured laborers were recruited between 1845 and 1917 (Reddock 28). This allowed Trinidad to remain productive in the sugar industry, which Sidney Mintz argues was the lynchpin of the entire British

Natural history worked to erase the violence of the slave economy, but colonialists used natural history in different ways to facilitate indentured labor. For one thing, the exploitative nature of the plantation labor system was legitimated by the fact that these workers were ostensibly "free." Accordingly, racialized discourses defined each group's ability to internalize the principles of hard work and to submit to labor discipline. As a consequence, natural history's categorizations of racial difference based on cultural and character traits acceded to primary significance. Linnaeus's four subcategories of humans emerged from his initial single category of homo sapiens, identifying people by phenotypical physical traits as well as cultural and political traits. Europeans emerged as "fair, sanguine, brawny" as well as "gentle, acute, inventive . . . governed by laws." Asiatic peoples were "sooty, melancholic, rigid" as well as "severe, haughty, covetous . . . governed by opinions." Africans were a "black, phlegmatic, relaxed" people who were also "crafty, indolent, and negligent . . . governed by caprice" (Linnaeus 9).

The documents of the British Empire in the era of indentureship made use of these racialized categories for a variety of purposes. Madhavi Kale documents the discourse around indentured workers in the six-year "apprenticeship" period after the abolition of British slavery in 1834. Claims about differences between black and Indian workers based on race "were reproduced and sanctified in the reports of parliamentary and royal commissions appointed to investigate the condition of the sugar colonies almost every decade into the twentieth century" (77). These reports noted that black workers were considered "lazy, unreliable, untruthful, and unable or unwilling to understand or honor a

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economy. Unlike other British Caribbean islands, Trinidad's sugar production quadrupled from 1828 to 1895, because of imported indentured laborers from India.

contract" while workers from India were "obsequious," "intelligent" yet marked by "insincerity" (Kale 77–78).<sup>26</sup>

These racial hierarchies had considerable impact on the family structure of Indo Caribbean families as depicted in *Cereus*. As Gayatri Gopinath argues, colonial labor practices were heavily invested in maintaining a patriarchal nuclear family structure among Indian indentured laborers. Furthermore, land laws stated that male indentured laborers controlled property as the heads of households while Indian women were systematically removed from public waged work to perform unpaid domestic work. Although Indian women's labor continued to contribute to plantation economies, it was channeled through the patriarchal nuclear family unit, a process that curtailed the laboring and sexual agency of Indian women and "harnessed their sexuality and labor power to the maintenance of the heterosexual, conjugal family unit" (Gopinath 181). Extracting profit from indentured laborers meant supporting the nuclear family structure since the differential incorporation of Indian indentured laborers and Afro-Caribbean slaves into notions of bourgeois domesticity reproduced the racial hierarchization that enabled labor exploitation.

I want to suggest that Mootoo's novel reveals the ways that the private and public spheres of the nation function as distinctly gendered locations. For example, one of the ways women are victimized is through the separation of recreational space into public

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<sup>26</sup> An examination of one such report produced during the height of indentureship, Daniel Hart's *Trinidad and the Other West India Islands and Colonies*, published in 1866, both confirms and complicates Kale's more general assessment. Hart's categories, which not only differentiated between black and Indian (referred to as "Coolies" in his text) but also categorized the Chinese, reveal their indebtedness to natural historical characterizations of racial difference. As in the Linnaean schema, Hart classifies races by physiology, clothing, and tendencies of character. In a discussion that echoes Linnaeus's observation that the African is "indolent, and negligent," for example, Hart describes "a new Negro" as "being so lazy and inactive that he would rather suffer hunger and enjoy his repose than procure himself his subsistence by industry" (1866, 108).

and private as is the case in El Dorado Park. The park fulfills a national imperative as a public protected space from which unruly bodies are barred. As a national park, we become aware of its importance in the community through Mala and Asha's experience of it. Under the watchful eyes of Lavinia and Sarah, they stop to play on the swings. El Dorado represents a very public space where certain codes of behavior are expected. Thus, Sarah cannot be seen driving the buggy until they are well past the village and deep in the canefields, out of sight of the villagers. After Sarah and Lavinia leave the children behind, Asha, Mala, and their childhood friend Boyie have another experience of the Park as a public space for disciplined social identities.

As a child in these spaces, Mala learns that she must fulfill gendered expectations that they be subservient and become wives and mothers and in this capacity uphold the patriarchy and the system of reasoning on which it rests. This playground is the scene where Mala intends to stage a bid for power, which is really an attempt to be included in the group of children. Today, she intends to be a leader among her childhood companions. She will decide their games. Her classmate Walter Bissey scorns her efforts. He tricks Mala into a game of blindman's buff, beating her with a stick while she is blindfolded. He also binds and gags Asha and ties her to a standpipe. Bissey and his school friends do this because Mala dares to overstep her boundaries by trying to be a group leader. Walter and his friends are quick to invoke Mala's mother's non-normative sexuality a part of Mala's identity. Another child jeers, "Ey, Pohpoh, is true what we hear about your mother? Where your mother, Pohpoh? You giving Boyie or you like girls?" (87). The children chase Pohpoh out of the park saying, "This park is we park. This park is only for good, decent people. Get away from here ...and don't ever come back" (87).

The determination of who is allowed to occupy the space is determined by a number of discourses that are framed by national politics which include discourses on respectability, gender and sexuality. By exiling Mala and Asha from this space, Walter and company engage in socio-ecological enforcement which in turn produces a cultural identity of respectability that is linked to this place.

This identity is confirmed later in the novel as Mootoo locates the Park as a site where lovers enjoy their status in public by going for a lover's stroll. Mavis insists to Otoh, "Is moonlight night. El Dorado Park is the place to go" (136). As a space designated for the respectable public, the park emerges as a space where citizens are expected to conform to certain patterns of behavior. As girls, they are expected to be followers and to present a heteronormative front by performing their identities in public spaces. Social and community gendered identity evolves in response to the public demands of this space.

The garden becomes a space of comfort and agency for Mala Ramchandin. Mala finds companionship with the garden's birds, insects, snails and reptiles. After Mala murders Chandin, the only communication that she has is with the garden and the life within it. She listens to the foliage, to the ant communities, to the worms. She does not tamper with their growth and they in turn leave her to her own devices. The ethics of care that Mala shows here is one of respectful participation. She communicates with the life in her garden, but she does not restrain it. She lets life run its course and only disposes of corpses. It is only after they have died that she engages in the entomological task of pinning them to the wall in the basement in a somewhat morbid reference to the scientific practice of preserving specimens for science. The garden and Mala mutually support each

other. Through the garden she is able to find emotional support and community that she cannot get at home or from the community which blames her for her sexual abuse and shuns her entirely.

Mala Ramchandin's garden challenges this separation of public and private because of its location. Women in the Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean women in particular, have felt the result of the divide between public and private domains sharply. To understand this division, and ultimately to move to a reading of agency in Mala's actions, I turn now to Brinda Mehta's understanding of Indo-Caribbean spaces. Mehta situates the Caribbean reality within the context of an inherited gendered spatial dichotomy in India where the domestic or *ghar* was the domain of women while the public or *bahir* was the domain of men. She writes, "the segregated distinctiveness of space has thus known a long cultural tradition in which the invisibility of women has been sanctioned by patriarchal discourses that have legitimized women's relegation to inner courtyards, kitchens and women's quarters" (132). Mehta complicates this position by considering it as a "paradox of positionality" (133).

Far from simply acceding to this position as a marginal space to be meekly occupied, Indian (Hindu) women have gone on to assert themselves by renegotiating this by feminizing and sexualizing it. According to Mehta, the yardspace in particular became a space that was politically important for rural Indo-Caribbean women. Through the yard, they could "draft a politics of relocation" which in turn allowed them to "circumvent cultural and gendered displacement through collective and creative agency" (133). Yards are also a space in which women can tell an alternative history. By transmitting this knowledge orally, women can respond to erasures and silences contained within official

accounts. The yard space becomes the space that fosters what Mehta terms as *aji culture*. Drawing on the Hindi word for grandmother, Mehta articulates their contribution as communal heroes as producing a culture that provides “inspirational models of affirmation for Indo-Caribbean societies that have been victimized by colonial and racist ideologies” (140).

Mala’s garden works as a place of refuge that offers a meeting place between the private domestic and the public street. Mala constructs a garden in which no living thing is willfully hurt. She cares for all creatures no matter how small, this includes snails, birds and plants alike. Even the cutting of a plant or a flower is more than she can bare. The cereus plant in her garden is the ultimate symbol of this ethic although it blooms only once for the year. The remainder of the time it is the most unattractive of plants, described as leafy and gangly. Yet Mala takes as much care of it as any other more utilitarian plant, caring for it in its homeliness and patiently awaiting its bloom. When it does bloom, its blossom is the most intoxicating of scents. Other villagers are able to share in her garden space and in its heady fragrance. Mala’s care for the plant in her garden effectively disrupts the binary of private and the public spaces.

Besides the cereus, assorted plants that are curatives, food and ornamentals populate the place (68). To the town’s other inhabitants appear to be chaotic and disorderly (176), but to Mala the garden represents her ability to resist patriarchal oppressions and to imagine alternative ways of surviving. In deliberate opposition to the model of dominion prescribed to Ambrose Mohanty in the Shivering Northern Wetlands, Mala cultivates an egalitarian place. Eventually, Mala’s own body begins to reflect her garden. Her body and the garden become intertwined in a type nonhierarchical

relationship. Tyler notes that her scent when she comes to the home is like decaying vegetable matter. Her body literally embodies the garden. Furthermore, her frail and unkempt appearance reflects the wild abandon with which the garden has grown. The garden becomes the location wherein Mala can actively preserve her memories of her sister and mother, traumatic though they may be. The garden thereby functions as a site of cultural memory.

In addition to being a site of refuge, Mala's garden in the town of Paradise represents a place of resistance. The cereus plant best represents the resistance to non-normative gendered and sexual identities. The novel's titular flower is an "unruly" plant (5), that blooms once yearly at night, "trembling . . . against the wall, a choreography of petal and sepal opening together, sending dizzying scent high and wide into the air" (134). Its scent is so potent that it spreads across the island, untrammelled by geography and unbound by boundaries of class, religion, and race that pervade every sphere of Lantanacamaran society. The flower's scent is arousing: it has "two edges—one a vanilla like sweetness, the other a curdling." It arouses desire in the transgendered Otoh and stimulates him to pursue his non-normative relationship with a woman.

The plant represents a subversion of the colonial botanical practices. The cereus is an exotic plant in Lantanacamara. As a non-native plant it is representative of forced botanical relocations as well as forced migration of labor forces. Nurse Tyler, who went to the Shivering Northern Wetlands for his nursing degree, remarks, "I recognized it immediately. I had seen one in bloom in the Exotic Items Collection of the SNW National Botanical Gardens: the rare night-blooming cereus" (130). Lavinia Thoroughly, a daughter of the missionary Thoroughly family, brings the plant to the Ramchandin

garden from the Wetlands. But the plant becomes transformed into a symbol of non-normative gender and sexual identities in contrast to specimens that were moved during colonization. The plant is finally transplanted later on to the Alms House for Mala's benefit, a move that reclaims it as a sturdy organism that can withstand exile and migration. In this way the plant works as a symbol of diaspora that represents the ability to survive and even thrive in the face of forced migration.

Far from being apolitical locations, gardens are important sites that reflect the cultural and historical realities of their creators. Gardens function as historical records as is the case in Kincaid's narrative. While for Mootoo the garden is deployed as a place that challenges neocolonial structuring of the nation according to cultural and sexual norms. Places are therefore not merely reflections. What both novels suggest therefore is that place is not merely a reflection or a location but that it can be evoked to perform important political critiques.

## Chapter Two: Alter/Native Possibilities: Circular Migration and Citizenship in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

This chapter builds on my earlier concerns about the way that places reflect cultural identities while also extending my argument about the politicizing of rural zones within the nation. I argue that Edwidge Danticat's texts work to do exactly this through their depictions of rural villages and rural populations which exposes the fragility of national boundaries so carefully protected by narratives of origin. The scarred bodies found in these narratives migrate between rural locations and transnational urban spaces in order to find their own political agency.

Haitian novels have demonstrated a consistent preoccupation with elaborating models of national identity by way of a cultural identity rooted in rural landscape. The literary figure of the male peasant is often the figure who espouses these models. Jacques Roumain's *Masters of the Dew* (1944) exemplifies this approach in its elaboration of a Haitian national identity that is closely connected to Haitian soil.<sup>27</sup> In a key passage, the novel's hero, Manuel, returns to his village after years abroad and exhorts the villagers to remember their identity as peasants as the key to saving their community from drought:

We're this country, and it wouldn't be a thing without us, nothing at all. Who does the planting? Who does the watering? Who does the harvesting? Coffee, cotton, rice, sugar cane, cacao, corn, bananas, vegetables, and all the fruits, who's going to grow them if we don't? Yet with all that, we're poor, that's true...We don't know yet what a force we are, what a single force - all the peasants, all the Negroes of the plain and hill, all united. Some day, when we get wise to that...Then we'll call a General Assembly of the Masters of the Dew, a great big coumbite of farmers and we'll clear out poverty and plant a new life (106).

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<sup>27</sup> *Gouverneurs de la Rosee* or *Masters of the Dew* was written by Haitian writer Jacques Roumain and first published in 1944. It was later translated by Langston Hughes. The novel is centered upon the peasant figure Manuel who returns to Haiti after a period of exile in Cuba to lead his village out of a period of feuding and drought.

According to Marcel, the people who farm the collective labor practice of the coumbite are the key to unlocking Haiti's potential for wealth gives a powerful autonomy to the Haitian peasant farmer.<sup>28</sup> The peasants *are* the nation, and as such they hold the future survival of Haiti as well as its potential to thrive directly in their hands. Manuel's words offer a model of national identity based on an identification with Haitian soil and by extension, the Haitian nation. In a literal way, the quotation identifies the need for subsistence farming to feed the nation. The narrative valorizes agricultural labor as an ennobling activity with the power to transform peasants into "Masters." It further identifies land as patrimony. Rural land is represented as the birthright of the Haitian population.

Manuel imagines a version of national identity that is explicitly connected to the idea of rootedness in a national territory. The appeal to generic societal unity proposed by Manuel is also gendered male as is his vision for Haiti's future development, all of which depends on the "Masters." The country is a masculinized entity in his vision, which illustrates as Anne McClintock has argued, that nations come into being through recognition of male identity (McClintock 353-4). The sons of the soil are cast in the role of national saviors because they farm the land which will sustain the country.<sup>29</sup> Haiti's rural places are imagined as fertile and capable of supporting the charge to "clear out poverty and plant a new life." I want to suggest that *Masters of the Dew* draws on rural

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<sup>28</sup> The coumbite of konbit is the practice of sharing labor. It is traditionally followed by a celebratory potluck feast. By referring to this practice here, Roumain emphasizes that the survival of the nation rests on the ability of the peasant class to unite.

<sup>29</sup> For a complete discussion of the ways in which a masculinized vision of nationalism emerges in *Masters of the Dew* see Sarah Casteel Phillips' discussion of Maryse Conde's *Mangrove* as a satirical response to Roumain's novel that also critiques the larger male-centered movements of Creolite in *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (135-140)

landscape as an ideological vehicle through which to create an authentic, unified and masculinized model of Haitian citizenship that is embodied in Haitian peasants.<sup>30</sup>

*Masters of the Dew* is one of the clearest uses of the pastoral as an anti-hegemonic strategy. Colonized populations used pastoral environments as a mode to elaborate a contestatory identity in much the same way that pastoral was used in colonialist practices to define colonizers as Adamic figures entitled to dominion over, and conquest of the New World. The pastoral theme of exile makes a return to the longed for homeland of his native Haiti possible. The image of the Haitian soil as fertile and uniting connects it to the Negritude movement, which Leopold Senghor described as “the communal warmth, the image-symbol and the cosmic rhythm which instead of dividing and sterilizing, unified and made fertile” (Buell p 60 note 30). As a form of black nationalism, Negritude “evokes a traditional, holistic, nonmetropolitan, nature-attuned, myth of Africanity in reaction to and critique of a more urbanized, ‘artificial’ European order” and more than that, “evokes it ... from the standpoint of one who has experienced exile and wishes to return” (Buell 64). Manuel’s pastoral imagery expresses an identity based on solidarity with a global community of people of African descent who directly contest colonial oppression. Their alternative political order bases itself in the pastorally valorized landscape. Thus indigenous pastoral is an attempt on the part of indigenes to make the pastoral serve their own counterhegemonic ends.

Nevertheless, Manuel’s version of the pastoral still reproduces many of the problematic constructions of the traditional pastoral. Although Manuel’s words reflect an

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<sup>30</sup> As I defined it in the introduction, I use the term landscape here with Denis E. Cosgrove’s definition in mind that “Landscape is a way of seeing that has its own history, but a history that can be understood only as part of a wider history of economy and society; that has its own assumptions and consequences, but assumptions and consequences whose origins and implications extend well beyond the use and perception

awareness of poverty, this is only passing. Instead, what is emphasized is the rural land's potential to feed the nation. The rural remains a location that is devoid of conflict. It is also emptied of a female presence. Manuel's words are addressed to his love interest, an Eve-like figure. But no women appear in the rural landscape themselves. Even though the indigenous pastorals had an overtly anti-colonialist agenda, they reproduced several of the power configurations that erased women's experience within the rural site.

Accordingly, reliance on rural landscape as a source of an authentic Haitian identity in Roumain's *Masters of the Dew* occurs in numerous Haitian literary works including Oswald Durand's "Choucounne" (1883) and Emeric Bergeaud's *Stella* (1887).<sup>31</sup> J. Michael Dash relates this feature to a larger preoccupation of landscape as a significant feature of early versions of nationalist Caribbean thought. Articulating these visions of the rural connects to the larger project of "mastery of the national terrain" since "the ground, as it were, legitimized power and speech. A national discourse could be inscribed on it" (48). Rural spaces are represented as feminized locations to be conquered much in the same way that female characters are deployed to elaborate a masculine Haitian identity. Literary representations that draw on natural imagery of rural landscape as bountiful do so explicitly to elaborate the ideas of an authentic and often masculinized identity and national ethos. These literary works represent a national identity that is rooted in the physical territory of the nation.

As part of the project of rewriting national historical narratives Danticat's novels ground territory in Haitian soil as a means of gathering written accounts of women's

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of land; that has its own techniques of expression, but techniques which it shares with other areas of cultural practice" (1).

<sup>31</sup> "Choucounne" refers to a lyrical poem by Oswald Durand written in 1883. The work praises a beautiful Haitian woman that he nicknames Choucounne. *Stella* was written by Emeric Bergeaud and is widely

experiences as citizens.<sup>32</sup> In both *Farming* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* the rural landscape is a central and highly contested location as the nexus of a number of transnational cultural and labor practices that particularly affect Haiti's rural citizens, especially women. Danticat's narratives succeed as corrective accounts that excavate these experiences by establishing an alternative migratory relationship to the physical space of the nation. My essay builds on this discussion by situating the scarred female body as a trope at this nexus of outward migratory flows and the rural landscape. Kezia Page identifies the scarred, tortured and tattooed body in Danticat's work as "emblematic of the torn national body impacted by migration traffic" (12). In contrast to theories that assign a positive valence to transnational movement, she asserts that the torn Haitian body represents "a brand of transnationality marked by the condition of being *across* place, torn in stasis at the border rather than comfortable acclimated" (51). This account of transnational movement as an uneasy negotiation of borders can be juxtaposed with Carol Boyce-Davies' "third space" that permits creative expression, Gloria Anzaldúa's border crossing as a trope for constructing hybrid identities, and Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone where open communication takes place. Their critiques represent a cautious approach to migration across national boundaries in recognition of the fact that such movement is frequently a difficult one that represents a great deal of compromise on the part of the individual. The body becomes a site of memory by way of the scars that function as physical signs of history on the female body. Wounds on women's bodies offer visual records of events that have been disarticulated in the historical narrative. In

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regarded as the first Haitian novel.

<sup>32</sup> As Elvira Pulitano rightly states, "Danticat grounds her narratives in Haitian soil" as part of a project of both writing and righting colonial and neocolonial discourses on islands (p 1). Pulitano's reading connects the task of gathering written accounts of women's experiences and the re-writing of national historical

this instance, the body attests to the ways that a masculinist vision of nationalism can be used to instigate violence that then shreds the fabric of the nation. The mangled bodies of women therefore become a physical marker and an alternative rural map that attest to the internal divisions in national identity that are manifested on their physical bodies.

In contrast to earlier works that draw on rural locations to elaborate national identity, as a crucible for rooted national identity in general and an authentic source for masculinized models of Haitian identities in particular, recent work by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat brings a femininely gendered perspective to the question of landscape representation and national identity that offers two major revisions that directly contrasts Roumain's masculinist vision. *The Farming of the Bones* elaborates versions of rural Haitian citizenship that are female, migratory and traumatized. Amabelle Desir's scarred body bears witness to the historical silences surrounding the Cote. At the same time, I read *Farming* as arguing for women's potential to subvert patriarchal power from rural domestic locations. *Breath, Eyes Memory* is a text that turns the critical gaze inward to look at the scarred female body in the rural landscapes of Haiti. *Breath* continues the project of excavating the silenced history of violence that rural women experience within the rural landscape that Danticat begins in *Farming*. *Breath* highlights the ways the state seeks to curtail the potential political power within rural domestic locations by transforming the landscape into a location of terror, undermining familial structures and assaulting female bodies to keep them in check. In both texts the body works as a site of cultural memory that links the individual to the rural location even after the body has left the area. Ultimately, I argue that in spite of the physical movement from one place to

another, the body remains connected to both the place of origin and the place of diaspora by memory.

*Farming's* chief challenges to the expected pattern of the pastoral in which a male protagonist leaves behind the city for the country for the gentlemanly activity of contemplation occurs through its attention to the alternative travel circuits that rural citizens take across the nation. The text contradicts the image of rural populations as rooted in rural locations by highlighting the ways in which these communities must travel in order to find work. Instead of being a site of plenty, the rural space is often a site of limited opportunity. Given their need to travel in search of the means of survival, rural populations are particularly susceptible to state violence. By maintaining their itinerant status, nation-states can maintain these communities as second-class citizens without rights. Given their limited access to rooted identity and their traveling existence, rural communities also expose the instability of national borders.

The primary act of migration leads Haiti's rural inhabitants to cross the border to the Dominican Republic as canefield workers. Amabelle Desir and Sebastien move across the border to work as domestics and cane cutters. This critique of the oppressive and militaristic vision of nationalism espoused by General Trujillo in the Dominican Republic exposes how much this vision relies on a discursive rootedness to the territory while also revealing the ways visiting communities of laborers are targeted for violence through this discourse. Under Trujillo's regime, citizenship is tied to the physical territory of the nation. In light of the Dominican Republic's interest in maintaining a certain cultural image of itself as ethnically and racially pure, the government deploys rhetoric and violence as tools to disavow the Haitian presence and to render the population of

Haitian workers invisible. In a direct effort to erase these historical connections from the national memory, political rhetoric effectively casts the Haitian labor force as illegal and alien to the Dominican Republic by creating a nationalist mythology that disavows Haitian contributions. In an address to the people of the Dominican Republic the political leader admonishes Dominicans saying:

You are independent, and yours is the responsibility for carrying out justice... Tradition shows as a fatal fact, that under the protection of river, the enemies of peace, who are also the enemies of work and prosperity, found an ambush in which they might do their work, keeping the nation in fear and menacing stability... The liberators of the nation did their part, and we could not ask more of them. The leaders of today must play their parts also. (97).

The crossing of migrant Haitian cane workers of the Massacre River is depicted by Trujillo as an act of invasion. Discursively constructing Haitian workers as a threat to the stability of the Dominican Republic blatantly disregards the often traumatic circumstances under which these workers labor to “farm bones.” While some were frequently kidnapped into this service others choose this life in an effort to escape extreme poverty and often arrived in a state of debt, owing the cost of their transport to their employers. However, Trujillo describes their journey through a language of war, which suggests that Haitians are not the responsibility of the Dominican Republic. This discourse transforms Haitians into a permanently external, unwanted and hostile community whose migration is an act of ambush and menace. Trujillo’s language empowers the Dominicans to attack Haitians, paving the way for the Corte.<sup>33</sup> By transforming their crossing into a threat to the political stability of the nation and to the

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<sup>33</sup> The Corte refers to a five day period in October of 1937 when Dominican President Rafael Trujillo ordered the executions of Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. It is estimated that twenty to thirty thousand Haitians were slaughtered. They were identified as Haitian on the basis of whether or not they could trill the “r” when pronouncing the Spanish word for parsley, *perejil* (*pesi* in Haitian Creole and *persil*

cultural identity. These workers are envisioned as enemies to the value systems of hardworking members of the Dominican Republic. Migrant workers become a group against which to establish a heroic narrative of national independence involving “liberators of the nation.”

The indirect references to the Dominican Republic’s past as a former Spanish colony conquered by Toussaint L’Ouverture in 1801 is intended to invoke fear. In a largely bloodless revolution, L’Ouverture extended his liberatory movement to what was then known as Santo Domingo, converting plantation slaves into hired laborers by forcing owners to pay wages to their laborers. Although L’Ouverture is never directly named by Trujillo, his references to the enemies of peace that ambushed the nation by crossing the river refer specifically to the Haitian revolution. The analogy is effective because he targets Haitian laborers who, like L’Ouverture’s forces, crossed into the Dominican Republic across the Massacre River, constructing these laborers as a force intent on conquest.

In a counter-discursive move, *Farming* establishes a more positive connection to past Haitian leaders. Amabelle remembers their political strength and pride as well as their protective attitudes to their people’s well being. Crossing the Massacre River is reconfigured through a different historical framework as details about this river are revealed which encourage us to unpack this location as a type of middle passage. Amabelle’s parents lose their lives in the Massacre River when they attempt to return to Haiti after a day trip to buy pots, and their spectral presence haunts the text. Their ghosts represent the untold numbers that lost their lives on slave ships and connects the Haitian workers to this past just as formerly enslaved populations who were brought to the New

World also to farm cane. Just as slaves were captured and sold, so too are Haitian workers who are frequently kidnapped by the Tonton Macoutes and sold to the Dominican Republic as laborers. Like Amabelle, these people become orphans in the sense that they no longer belong to a nation, and not even the Haitian leaders will protect them from Trujillo's Corte.

There are multiple instances of doubling in *The Farming of Bones* that underscore the historical connection between the territories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have emerged from a past history of slavery, but while Haiti was colonized by the French, the Dominican Republic was colonized by the Spanish. Yet, as two halves of the same island, these two nations have competed for resources and defined themselves culturally in opposition to each other. Haiti's historical identity as the location of the first successful slave revolt made it an immediate threat to the stability of the slave society in the Dominican Republic. Trujillo sought in the twentieth century to specifically define the Dominican Republic as a white society that was directly descended from Spain. Thus Haiti proved to be a double threat in terms of being a Black Republic and its radical break with Europe. At the same time, the Dominican Republic turned to members of the Haitian peasant class as a source of cheap labor for cane fields and sugar mills in the Dominican Republic.

The most powerful instance of doubling occurs during the birth of Valencia's and Pico's twins Rafael and Rosalinda, who share a mother and a womb, a connection that is highly suggestive of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as countries that share a both a physical land mass as well as a colonial past and history of slavery. Senora Valencia's womb links the female body metaphorically to the land and the disputed nations. The

disparity in physical size between Rosalinda and Rafael highlights the allegorical nature of the narrative through the metaphorical references to the uneven resource distribution that characterizes the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. As the larger of the two twins, Rosalinda lends herself to an interpretation as the Dominican Republic's appropriation of Haitian resources. The implication behind Rafael's death, mere days after his birth is that Rosalinda has been growing stronger in the womb at her brother's expense. This parasitic relationship is reproduced in the interpersonal relationships between Haitian workers and the land owners in the Dominican Republic. Likewise, the nation of the Dominican Republic has been growing "stronger" and "healthier" at the expense of its geographical sibling, Haiti by employing Haitians as semi-permanent cane-cutters in the Dominican Republic for generations while simultaneously denying them the rights and privileges of citizenship. *Farming* thus exposes this relationship as a deliberately exploitative one.

The political discourse exhorts the citizens of the Dominican Republic to defend their independent nation like their leaders before them by taking up arms against Haitian intruders. This understanding of the nation espouses an understanding of the nation as a discrete entity that is separate from Haiti. The narrative of *Farming* contradicts this account by showing that the two nations are interdependent and that the barriers between them are mutable. Massacre River is itself a permeable barrier by its very identity as a body of water because it can be crossed. The narrative further offers a version of the Dominican Republic nation as a place that changed geographically over time, gradually claiming more and more land from Haiti. Don Sabine's mill is built on what was previously Haitian land but reallocated as part of a larger geopolitical settlement between

the nations. This fluidity is recognized by Mercedes, a well-off Haitian living in the Dominican Republic. She states, “[Haitians] have no reason to live like pigs. This is their country” (105). A further indication of the instability of the separation between Dominican and Haitian national identity is that during the Corte some Spanish speaking Dominicans were also slain. Their dark skin makes them indistinguishable from the Haitian cane cutters in the eyes of the military. The fact that Dominicans also fall victim to this violence is a detail that suggests that this violence is as much about expelling other nationalities as it is about attacking all members of the lower class. These details make it clear not only that the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has never been firmly fixed, but also that the national identities on either side are equally unstable. They therefore expose Trujillo’s understanding of the Dominican Republic as a concrete place as fictive.

Political rhetoric further manifests itself in relation to the rights of the Haitian workers to citizenship. Although the Dominican Republic relies on Haitian laborers, the Haitian population is kept from establishing permanent ties to the Dominican Republic. They are never granted citizenship even after living there legally for generations. The cane mill owners who employ Haitian also deny them papers that would prove their legal status as well as the legal status of their children. Consider the conversation that takes place among Haitian laborers:

To them we are always foreigners, even if our granmemes’ granmemes were born in this country,” a man responded in Kreyol, which we most often spoke--instead of Spanish--among ourselves. “This makes it easier for them to push us out they want to.”...the Dominican-born woman with the Dominican-born son replied. “Me, I have no paper in my palms to say where I belong. My son, this one who was born here in this land, has no papers in his palms to say where he belongs. Those who work in the cane mills, the mill owners keep their papers, so they

have this as a rope around their necks. Papers are everything. You have no papers in your hands, they do with you what they want (*Farming* 69).

The migrant Haitian cane cutters are fully aware of themselves as a vulnerable community, permanently under threat of expulsion. In spite of the ability to trace one's family through generations of life in the Dominican Republic, the refusal of cane mill owners to provide their workers with papers attesting to their citizenship coupled with the government's complicity maintains their dispossession.

This act of dispossession directly benefits the government of the Dominican Republic because it enables cane mill owners and the government alike to exploit Haitians as a class of laborers, using them for the labor that they provide without affording them with the basic rights of citizens and expelling them at will. Workers are doubly uprooted, first when they are forced to leave their Haitian villages in search of the means of survival and second when they are prevented from legalizing their status in the Dominican Republic even after they have lived there for generations.

These *vwayaje* are further marked as outsiders by their language.<sup>34</sup> They are members of both a Spanish speaking and a Kreyol speaking community. Choosing not to speak Spanish means refusing to be complicit with their oppressors in the Dominican Republic, while retaining Haitian Kreyol gives them the means to speak freely among themselves. Amabelle's commentary on this exchange is instructive as she describes the speakers' language as "Alegrían Kreyol and Spanish," further identifying this language as a specific marker of the places they are from and those they currently inhabit (*Farming* 69). Their tangled language reflects the difficult ambiguity of their transnational lives, straddling as they do on both the territories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Isabel Hoving's statement that "one's identification of oneself as a speaking subject is highly dependent on one's sense of place" finds its literary manifestation here (29). Hoving's understanding of a sense of place as usually tied to concepts of displacement, of involuntary and ongoing exile, of placelessness, and continuous motion is extremely relevant here. Like the language that they speak, these workers are kept in a state of limbo in the town of Alegría. Amabelle describes it as "the tangled language of those who always stuttered as they spoke, caught as they were on the narrow ridge between two nearly native tongues" (Danticat 69). Although they inhabit the Dominican Republic, they are culturally outcast from this place. This linguistic marker of their inability to fully connect to place manifests in horrifying ways during the Corte. Since Haitians do not trill the r as Spanish speakers do, this sound becomes an identifying characteristic that sanctions the 1937 massacre. Those who are unable to trill the "r" in *perejil* are brutally attacked with machetes so that outsiders would believe that Haitians themselves who wield machetes were responsible for the killings. Approximately twenty thousand Haitians were killed in this massacre, their death sentence assigned on the basis of this linguistic and cultural difference.<sup>35</sup>

Danticat highlights the complicated ways language is connected to the idea of belonging. It is not Haitian Kreyol that marks this community as "outsider," but the particular language that has evolved in Alegría that marks them as the vulnerable class of cane-cutters which condemns them to death. Amabelle's experience further illustrates the ways in which official narratives are unable and unwilling to "hear" other voices and

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<sup>34</sup> *Vwayaje* is the Kreyol word for wayfarers.

<sup>35</sup> Through the epigraph of *Farming* which cites the passage in the book of *Judges* where Jephtah tested the Ephraimites with the word Shibboleth. The Ephraimites who could not pronounce the *sh* were slaughtered at Jordan. In the text those who could not trill the "r" in *perejil* as the Spanish would were

other languages. Trujillo's rhetoric and the official account of the Corte work to suppress the real reasons behind the genocide. The official account omits the experience of the victims of this attack and stories told in Kreyol are correspondingly silenced and denied. The role of voice as a means of establishing one's connection to a community is crucial to the ability to speak and record one's history. The disenfranchisement of Haitian workers is reinforced by their powerlessness to insert their experience into the official historical record of the nation. Amabelle witnesses this failure firsthand when she goes herself to tell her story at a church set up to receive accounts of the Corte, only to be turned away with hundreds of others. Danticat's text critiques the refusal to acknowledge alternative histories in official records through an unwillingness to recognize accounts in other languages. These details highlight afresh the way in which national narratives are deliberately constructed to preserve certain sanitized accounts while suppressing all others.

*Farming* takes direct aim at traditional pastoral's tendency to omit women in its depiction of rural locations and its relatively easy story of exile and return. In contrast, the text offers a female protagonist who gives voice to a series of complicated peregrinations. Amabelle Desir tells the novel through first person narrative. Indeed, the text leads us through Amabelle's life from her childhood, through her experiences of the Corte as a young adult and to her later years as a middle-aged woman. Although the narrative offers a historical account of the Corte, the text does not narrate the events of Amabelle's life in a linear fashion in order to recover the experience of those victimized during the Corte. Like her scarred body, Amabelle's scarred psyche contains within it symbolic markers that encode the trauma that she and the community of *vwayaje* have

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attacked and slaughtered.

experienced.

Amabelle's dreams interrupt the narrative periodically in order to disrupt the silences that threaten to erase Amabelle's experiences. Amy Novak reads the inaccuracy of Amabelle's memories as a type of "spectral memory" that disrupts the concept of a first person linear cultural historiography such as Trujillo's. Amabelle's memories occur separately from the remainder of the text. Her memories are confined to separate chapters and appear in a different font. Thus, in a literal fashion, they contradict the linear progression of Amabelle's account of the experiences of the Corte. The difference in the appearance of the text corresponds to Amabelle's own internal separation between the Amabelle that exists in the present and the Amabelle that exists in the past with loved ones that have died or disappeared. Her memories serve as an archive of the experiences of those who would otherwise be forgotten entirely.

Amabelle Désir, the narrator of this text exemplifies the ontological split that results in communities and characters who find themselves straddling two territories as a result of physically inhabiting one nation while being culturally tied to another. Like the community of cane-workers born in the Dominican Republic who are nevertheless marked as outsiders because of their speech, Amabelle has spent her entire life in the Dominican Republic but is cast as an outsider during the Corte. Amabelle's ontological split manifests itself throughout the text by way of her dreams through which she tries to access forgotten memories of her parents who were killed while crossing the Massacre River to return to Haiti after a trip to the Dominican Republic to buy pots. Even as an adult she is unable to set these memories aside. Amabelle's dreams are further embellished by her imagination as a means of complementing her memories. In one place

she refers to these dreams as being caught in a dust storm: I always imagine there are people walking ahead of me, people I cannot see, but whose forms I hope will emerge again once the air is cleared” (*Farming* 139). She remembers seeing them pulled under the water by the strength of the current. She also remembers a time when she is sick and she hallucinates about a doll that her mother makes for her. On an individual level, Amabelle’s longing relates to her larger Désire to belong to a nation and to know where she is from.

Through Amabelle’s scarred migratory body, a picture emerges of the traumas that women of the peasant class in particular sustain. The narrative relies on scarred female bodies as a physical representation of this split. Among these are the oldest cane-cutting women who are now too old or too crippled to work in the canefields or domestic settings. The severity of their injuries and age even prevent them from returning to Haiti. As Amabelle relates, “among the oldest women, one was missing an ear. Two had lost fingers. One had her right cheekbone cracked in half” (*Farming* 61). These injuries are an intimation of the lack of value placed on these women’s bodies. After the Corte, the inside of Amabelle’s mouth is bruised and swollen. Senora Valencia does not recognize Amabelle at first because of her grey hair and the scars on her body, in particular her hands. The physical state of these bodies is a manifestation of the internal scarring that takes place from the experience of maintaining lives as outsiders.

The traumatized body is evoked in order to expose brutality of political power which silences experiences of violence and erases them from historical accounts. The scarred female body exposes the limits of dictatorial political power. This notion of the nation as a fixed place with definitive boundaries rests upon a patriarchal ordering of

power. In order to protect this vision, Trujillo styles himself as a more modern version of a national liberator figure: Trujillo embodies a type of absolute political power and accordingly deploys a version of absolute power. After the twins' birth, their grandfather records their birth date as "the thirtieth of August, of the year 1937, the ninety-third year of independence, in the seventh year of the Era of Generalissimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, President of the Republic" (*Farming* 17). This title and manner of dating exemplifies the powerful hold that Trujillo commands over the national imaginary. He embodies absolute monarchic power in his person. It is this very hold that makes even victimized migrant Haitian workers fleeing the Corte pray for the Generalissimo's continued ability to lead them with a strong hand.

Trujillo's model of political power based on patriarchal authority reproduces itself via the militaristic model of power in Senor Pico. As an officer in the army and Senora Valencia's husband, Pico plays an active role in gathering the Haitian workers together before the Corte. Valencia remarks on Pico's ambition, stating that Pico maintains a portrait of Trujillo in his home in the hopes that Trujillo may one day see this portrait and gift the nation to him. When Amabelle returns to Valencia's house years after the Corte, she finds that in all of his pictures he is dressed in his military uniform. As he progresses in age, his medals increase, indicating the rise of his career. Thus, Pico represents the perpetuation of this model of power.

Senora Valencia and Man Rapadou expose the weaknesses of this patriarchal model of power by showing the ways that this system relies on the maintenance of gender norms to work. Normative gender roles play a crucial role in upholding the patriarchal model of nationalism that General Trujillo supports. Actions by women in the private

sphere of the home that work against these normative gender codes show that women's contributions are vital even as they are rendered invisible by their location in society. Women such as Senora Valencia and Man Rapadou can act from the home either to contest General Trujillo's dictatorship or to support it. Located at the nexus of the home and the nation, the public and the private, women are forced to occupy an ambiguous and complicated role. There is the choice to either reproduce the patriarchy by fostering this *Désire* in their children and families or to challenge its structures. Both Senora Valencia and Man Rapadou must negotiate the gender codes within which they are constrained in order to participate in nationalism in ways that allow them to remain faithful to their personally held beliefs.

Senora Valencia's choices demonstrate the ways that women's political loyalties split along gender and class lines. As a woman, Senora Valencia challenges an oppressive system, however as a member of a genteel class, she also finds herself perpetuating the power structure from which she benefits. As a woman born into a noble family directly descended from the Spanish conquistadors, understands her duties as revolving around the family sphere. She marries Senor Pico, a highborn man who belongs to the military and has ambitions of becoming the President of the nation. Valencia sees it as her duty to support this dream. She names her son Rafael after the Generalissimo, an act that makes her complicit with his policies and marks her as one who works to support and even reproduce the political order of things. Valencia's activities revolve around making a home for her father and Senor Pico. She busies herself with caring for her family.

In response to Valencia's decision, Nandini Dhar argues that in order for Valencia to maintain her marriage to Pico, she must insist on his identity as a good man, thereby

reinforcing authoritative structures. Valencia's marriage to Senor Pico is therefore the greatest marker of her willingness to support this regime. As such, Valencia states to Amabelle

If I denounce this country, I denounce myself. I would have had to leave this country if I'd forsaken my husband. Not that I ever asked questions. Not trusting him would have been like declaring that I was against him (*Farming* 299).

By excusing Pico's actions, Valencia becomes a participant. Her very identity, the way that she thinks of herself becomes so intertwined with him that to reject Pico and by extension Trujillo would ultimately mean a rejection of herself. Valencia makes the above comment to Amabelle in relation to her choice to overlook Pico's role in the Corte and to continue living with him. Valencia's position illustrates the complexity of woman's position at the nexus of nation, home and family. Valencia understands that to question Pico would mean to set herself apart from him and the country which he upholds. In doing so, she also reveals the threat of physical expulsion from a nation that women face who do not conform to class and gender expectations. Her silence is therefore an active choice that conveys her complicity and implicates her directly in the Corte.

Yet, I believe that the actions of Valencia must be further contextualized in a way that can account for a number of instances where her actions challenge Pico and the authoritative structure of which he is an extension. Her actions are an open rebellion against rigid race, class, color and gender boundaries that disrupt public and private binaries. Semia Harbawi rightly asserts therefore that the family and the private sphere are very powerful sites that have the ability to transform the nation and its ideologies. In these moments Valencia goes so far as to step outside of the system of gender and class

rules set for her. One such moment takes place in relation to her son's death. Departing from tradition, she insists that they will not hold a wake for him because he is too young. She also insists on decorating his coffin with brightly colored flowers. Even though Pico thinks that this is inappropriate for a funeral, Valencia insists that because he is a child, he needs something playful.

An even more controversial instance of her defiance occurs when she invites a group of cane cutters into her home for *cafecitos*. She uses the best china to serve them, and she and Kongo share their sorrow about their mutual experience of a parent losing a child. Upon learning that the cane cutters have used the best china, Pico shatters the set, one piece at a time by throwing each cup and saucer against a brick wall. He says nothing to Valencia; however, the deliberateness of each action conveys enough of his displeasure and simultaneously acts as a threat. This display of violence is intended to remind the entire household of the boundaries of class and power. It makes his role clear as an upholder of these race and class boundaries and aligns him with Trujillo's policies of expelling Haitian workers. However, the fact that he feels the need to display his power in such a way stems from the fact that Valencia's actions are a threat to his system of political ideologies within his own household.

Man Rapadou, Yves' mother, acts as Valencia's literary double in that she presents a similar model of a mother and wife who uses the domestic space to contest political policies in an effort to collapse the public and private binary. When Yves brings Amabelle home with him his mother makes Amabelle's personal recovery from her beating during the *Corte* into her own private concern. While caring for Amabelle one day, Man Rapadou shares the story of her husband's passing. He comes home after being

released from the Yanqui prison only to reveal to his wife that he plans to betray Haiti to the Yanquis.<sup>36</sup> To prevent this betrayal she feeds him food that has been poisoned with rat poison and ground up glass.

Man Rapadou's actions mark her as a supporter of her nation. She acts against the desires of her husband, directly contradicting him and the patriarchal political agenda that he represents. Instead of allowing her role as wife and her location within the private domestic sphere of her home to control the extent to which she participates in her political future. In fact, she uses her situation strategically in order to intervene politically. Man Rapadou therefore offers an alternative to Senora Valencia's actions towards her husband and suggests that domestic sphere can be a strategic position from which to assert oneself politically. It is difficult to idealize Man Rapadou's choice because the transparent language which reminds us that this choice comes at great personal cost. Effectively, her choice to murder her husband for the sake of her country leaves her to live a lifetime of guilt. She does not tell this story to anyone before Amabelle. Her husband's death means that she must spend the rest of her life a widow and raise her son Yves alone. The choice to be faithful to national imperatives or family imperatives is an impossible one that comes at great cost no matter which option is chosen. Thus, although domestic contestations of national configurations of political power are important, *Farming* still shows them to be limited.

Women convert the rural spheres into locations of political action. These contestations are limited by their containment in the domestic sphere. Amabelle offers an alternative model by way of her practice of circular migration. Her return to the Dominican Republic to speak to Senora Valencia allows Amabelle to confront the painful

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<sup>36</sup> The US occupation of Haiti began in 1915 and continued until 1934.

memories of her experience of the Corte as well as any remaining hopes that Sebastian might still be alive. *Farming* ends with Amabelle floating in the waters of the Massacre River, a movement that some have suggested cautiously represents the ways that transnational migration offer limited opportunities for coming to term with historical traumas. At this point in the narrative Amabelle has come full circle through her transmigrations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Indeed, the promise of wholeness and belonging that has eluded Amabelle until now seems to be within reach, albeit somewhat uneasily in this final image. This image of Amabelle, the *vwayaje*, invites us to rethink immigration as a unidirectional movement and to understand immigration as necessarily circular for the transnational migrant figure. Ultimately these texts suggest that a unidirectional transnational movement is not enough to recuperate lost histories and restore wholeness to individuals whose identities have been split. Instead, both texts cautiously posit circular patterns of migration that allow for continuity between the past and present that enables the uncovering and preservation of buried and otherwise silenced histories.

This closing image is also an example of the model of the scarred female body as one that is “torn in space” instead of “comfortably acclimated” (Page 51). The text suggests that although the domestic sphere is a location that can challenge political hegemony through the presence of the scarred female body, the type of power is severely constrained. Although *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is written five years before *Farming of Bones*, the novel extends the political critique raised in *Farming* by focusing on questions of mobility in a later period in Haitian history. *Farming* ends with Amabelle floating in the waters of the Massacre river, a movement that cautiously suggests that circular

patterns of migration can offer a temporary in-between place for coming to term with historical traumas. *Breath* adopts a more critical internal gaze and offers a new cartography of Haiti that rejects older romanticized versions in which the rural space is centralized as a point of return and rural populations are much more mobile, calling for an understanding of Haiti's peasant population as located within a network of transnational routes. In my discussion of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* that follows, I read this novel as a sustained critique of patriarchal and militaristic models of nationhood and the sexual violations against women that they deny and otherwise silence. The state works to control the domestic space, which in the last section I argued could be a source of political power. In this text, the Haitian government primarily controls the domestic space by controlling women's bodies. As in *Farming* the scarred female body becomes a physical record of these experiences; however, in this novel unlike *Farming* these wounds are also verbalized through oral history, an act that is more successfully able to heal historical traumas.

The Tonton Macoutes functions in a similar capacity to Trujillo as a brutal force that holds the Haitian peasant population in terror. Similar oppressions perpetrated during the Cote and under General Trujillo's regime in the Dominican Republic continue decades later under the leadership of Haitian President Francois Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude Duvalier through the Macoutes. This paramilitary force came into being in 1959 and initiated a reign of terror under the guise of maintaining political stability. Based on the mythological figure of the Bogey Man, the Macoutes would terrorize men and women with beatings and rapes, thereby keeping the population in a state of terror. As a force that reported directly to Papa Doc, gross misuses of power went unrecognized

and unpunished. As with *Farming*, *Breath's* depiction of Haiti's rural landscape functions as an allegory that depicts this new body of political concerns. While *Farming's* major preoccupation lies with the ways that class and race inform the political and geographical landscape, *Breath* goes further by infusing the rural landscape with elements of gender and sexuality. By using the trope of the violated female body through the Caco women, the narrative inserts a feminist critique into a largely masculinist discourse that has represented the rural landscape as a feminized crucible for an authentic Haitian identity.

The political situation in Haiti brings the conditions for a new wave of migration to the United States of America into urgent being. Thus, while *Breath, Eyes, Memory* shares the project identified in *Farming* of critiquing the way that rigid boundaries of class, race and gender can provoke an ontological split in Haitian women, it also turns the critical gaze inwards to the Haitian nation itself, critiquing the ways in which Duvaliers' regimes created the very conditions of exile within the nation. The narrative builds on the feminist perspective examined in the first half of this chapter by highlighting the complicated ways in which women can become complicit in maintaining and reproducing the very structures that victimize them. However, this narrative ultimately goes a step further in depicting the ways that a transnational dialogue among women as they travel back and forth between New York and the Haitian village of La Nouvelle Dame Marie can offer women a sense of ontological wholeness by enabling orally-based practices of cultural identity and agency.

The sisters Atie and Martine Caco give a clear delineation of the class and gender limitations within Haiti. *Breath* critiques romantic presentations of rural landscapes by showing the rural sphere as an oppressive space in which Haitian women are under the

constraints of stringent gender and class norms that effectively create the conditions of exile within the boundaries of the nation itself. Tante Atie's experiences are a constant reminder of the ways Haitian women are always doubly bound by their gender and their class. The narrative begins in the town of Croix-des-Rosets where Atie and Sophie have moved for Sophie to attend school. In spite of the fact that this move is motivated by a desire to give Sophie educational advantages that are not generally available to rural Haitians, geographic mobility does not translate into social mobility in Haiti. The Caco family retains its status as a peasant family with "dirt under [their] fingernails" (Danticat 20). Besides reinforcing the family's rural peasant identity, this literal connection of Haitian soil to the Caco women invites us to understand this family's destiny as centrally intertwined with the historical and cultural realities of race, class, and gender that face Haitian women. Tante Atie, the Caco sister who has never left Haiti, faces the severe restrictions that the state and the community places on social mobility for Haitian women.

As Atie's niece Sophie recalls:

According to Tante Atie, each finger had a purpose. It was the way she had been taught to prepare herself to become a woman. Mothering. Boiling. Loving. Baking. Nursing. Frying. Healing. Washing. Ironing. Scrubbing. It wasn't her fault, she said. Her ten fingers had been named for her even before she was born. Sometimes, she even wished she had six fingers on each hand so she could have two left for herself (151).

Seemingly, Haitian women's destinies are set for them within the social fabric before she is born. Her primary responsibilities are in the home and Haitian society expects her fulfill various domestic roles. A woman's sense of self is effaced in the quest to live up to these expectations. These gender restrictions inhibit Atie's and Martine's ability to realize their dreams of becoming educated women and the first doctors in their village.

Gender boundaries are accompanied by class restrictions. Notwithstanding this move away from the village of La Nouvelle Dame Marie, although peasants may move away from rural areas to urban centers, they continue to occupy a lower rung on the social hierarchy. As Tante Atie explains to Sophie:

We are a family with dirt under our fingernails... That means we've worked the land. We're not *educated*. My father would have never dreamt that we would live in the same kind of house that people like Monsieur and Madame Augustin live in. He, a school teacher, and we, daughters of the hills, old peasant stock, *pitit soyet*, ragamuffins (20).

In spite of a romantic attraction between Tante Atie and Monsieur Augustin, a relationship does not materialize for them because of their class differences. Tante Atie with her “patchwork handkerchief... pink dress and brown sandals, with the village dust settled on her toes” is the image of a peasant woman, out of place in an urban setting (36). She is a direct contrast to Monsieur Augustin’s beautiful wife whose long braid of black hair drapes across her back like a silken blanket.

The village at large connects to a larger mythology of women’s purity. Sophie’s grandmother shares a story with her about how a powerful man chose a virgin from their village specifically because of their supposed sexual purity. A man’s honor is closely tied to women’s ability to conform to these norms and this is reflected in a common rural proverb in La Nouvelle Dame Marie: “*The men in this area, they insist that their women are virgins and have ten fingers*” (151). The emphasis on preserving women’s sexual purity not only oppresses women, but also works to reinforce larger authoritarian structures. Through the act of “testing” to ensure their daughters’ purity, generations of rural women perpetuate these gender norms to the detriment of the well-being of their

daughters.<sup>37</sup> Testing reinforces the belief that a woman's value is based largely on her sexual purity.

The domestic arena reinforces and extends a larger political agenda that focuses on the control of women's bodies. Atie remarks that

They train you to find a husband...They poke at your panties in the middle of the night to see if you are still whole. They listen when you pee, to find out if you're peeing too loud. If you pee loud it means you've got big spaces between your legs. They make you burn your fingers learning to cook. Then still you have nothing. (136-137).

The obsession with women's purity does not translate into fulfillment for women as the language exposes the emptiness behind the mythology of women's purity and the perpetuation of "testing". This is a stark contrast to the images of women as redemptive Eve-like figures inhabiting an Eden-like landscape in earlier works. In many ways, Atie's sister Martine becomes the ultimate representative of the meaninglessness of this system. When a Macoute rapes Martine while she is a teenager, she internalizes the guilt associated with being despoiled and repeatedly tries to kill herself. Martine's move to the United States in an effort to escape constant reminders of her personal history of rape and poverty enabled by the class-stratification and abuse of women by those in powerful positions.

Martine's rape in one of the canefields neighboring their rural village home is indicative of more than just the rural landscape as a dangerous space for women. It

further conveys the contemporary and very real threat of the Tonton Macoutes. Sophie provides a description of these figures:

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<sup>37</sup> Testing refers to the practice of checking to ensure that a young girl's hymen remains unbroken by inserting the pinky finger into a girl's vagina.

Ordinary criminals walked naked in the night. They slicked their bodies with oil so they could slip through most fingers. But the *Macoutes*, they did not hide. When they entered a house, and forced her into her own bedroom. Then all you heard was screams until it was her daughter's turn. If a mother refused, they would make her sleep with her son and brother or even her own father (138).

As this passage indicates, the threat of the *Macoutes* is the threat of physical violation. Duvalier's agents often used rape as a political tool to subdue the rural population by traumatizing and shaming the female body. By incapacitating the traditional male heads of the household, the *Macoutes* attempt to subdue the male heads of household. Fathers, sons and brothers are unable to protect the female members of their family. Martine's post-traumatic stress disorder after her rape, arguing that The *Macoutes*, a militia force created by the Duvaliers, are an ever-present threat. They give the impression of being unstoppable and all-powerful in their ability to terrorize rural populations, creating the conditions of exile within the nation by making the home into a location of terror.

Given the great cultural significance placed on a woman's sexual purity coupled with what Donnette Francis has identified as a societal commitment to discipline and punishment, Martine's post traumatic stress must be understood as a double trauma related to both the pain of the rape as well as the shame that she begins to feel about her body after it. Sophie provides the details of this violation:

My father might have been a *Macoute*. He was a stranger who, when my mother was sixteen years old, grabbed her on her way back from school. He dragged her into the cane fields, and pinned her down on the ground. He had a black bandana over his face so she never saw anything but his hair, which was the color of eggplants. He kept pounding her until she was too stunned to make a sound. When he was done, he made her keep her face in the dirt, threatening to shoot her if she looked up (139)

It is the secluded nature of the rural space that allows this act to happen. Canefields

provide the Macoutes with the cover that they need to commit rape. The actions of the Macoute transform the earth, formerly a fertile symbol of future prosperity, into a weapon of terror. The anonymity and brutality of this attack transforms the rural arena into a landscape of terror for Martine. In direct contrast to a tradition of representing the rural landscape as peaceful and bountiful, the landscape takes on multiple traumatic associations.

There is a certain silence that surrounds this incident in the Caco family that corresponds to the historical silence that surrounds Martine's rape and the rape of others like her. Francis critiques this silence by exposing the naturalization of sexual violence as a cultural value. Thus, Martine feels shame and responsibility because she is no longer pure. After her rape, the inescapability of this terror follows her to the United States where she migrates in an effort to forge a new life for herself. Yet, she maintains her rigid silence, choosing not to tell her fiancé Marc and her daughter about her experiences. There, her second pregnancy revives memories of this traumatic time and she finally succeeds in taking her own life. For Martine, the decision to migrate to the United States represents an opportunity to escape a system of gender and class codification that not only devalues her body, but enables the Macoutes to rape and brutalize her. This systematic devaluation of women's bodies enables their brutalization as does the political structure's tendency to convert women's bodies into a site or location for enacting discipline through terror.

However, because her inability to break her silence about her experiences prevents her from healing. If Atie's body is a physical representation of the ways in which nationally designed class and gender norms traumatize a Haitian woman's body,

Martine's scarred physical appearance serves to underscore the trauma of rape that she has experienced. Sophie recalls her first view of her mother:

Her face was long and hollow. Her hair had a blunt cut and she had long spindly legs. She had dark circles under her eyes and, as she smiled, lines of wrinkles tightened her expression. Her fingers were scarred and sunburned. It was as though she had never stopped working in the cane fields after all. (64)

Martine's physical appearance is the physical manifestation of the internal mental split that she experiences as a result of her rape and the resulting migration. The dark circles under her eyes testify to sleepless nights during which Martine is kept awake by vivid nightmares in which she relives her rape. The slenderness of her body is a reflection of her general lack of appetite. As Sophie later discovers, her mother also begins to lighten her skin in response to pressures within the US. In this way Martine's body becomes a meter that registers the various sociopolitical pressures that she has faced in Haiti and continues to face in the US.

I want to invoke Jenny Sharpe's ideas on transnational migrations as a resignification of the middle passage by arguing for a reading of the middle passage in which the Caribbean Sea replaces the Atlantic Ocean. Such a reading complicates the idea of "a singular and originary moment of transatlantic black diaspora" by arguing instead for an understanding of the journey of Haitian refugees from Haiti to the United States as one of many dislocations.

This connection by way of Martine's scarred body invokes a history of forced dislocation and relocation, and asks us to question the transnational movement that emphasizes unidirectional flows. On the one hand this type of movement may lead to the loosening of certain authoritative structures; however, it may also reproduce components of these very structures. Sophie's experience of moving to the US provides a means of

accessing this critique. In some ways Martine's migration to the United States illustrates the ways in which transnational migration can destabilize class and gender boundaries. Her relationship with the lawyer Marc would be as impossible as Madame and Monsieur Augustin's in Haiti. Their marriage outrightly flouts class boundaries. Although she is never able to completely heal from and forget the rape, she manages to carve out a life for herself, earning enough so that she is able to send enough money home to support Atie and their mother Ife while also putting Sophie through school. Sophie obtains an education that would have been inaccessible otherwise as a daughter of peasants.

Nevertheless, certain gender restrictions remain unshaken. Martine retains a degree of complicity in reproducing oppressive gender structures enacting the ritual of "testing" on her daughter Sophie. This act of sexual violation under the guise of preserving a girl's purity prompts Sophie to rupture her own hymen by inserting a pestle into herself. The limitations of transnational migration are further shown by Martine's suicide after she becomes pregnant with Marc's baby. Similarly, Sophie is able to access alternative identity matrixes. She realizes that her identity is more than just Haitian. She is also connected to an African American community by way of being a member of the black diaspora. She further has access to a global community of women who have similarly experienced sexual trauma. Yet neither of these options is enough for Sophie to make sense of her past.

In an effort to understand the historical conditions that led to Martine's rape as well as the practice of testing, Sophie returns to the village of La Nouvelle Dame Marie where she is finally able to piece together the circumstances of her mother's rape, Returning to Haiti allows Sophie access to the oral archive of memory, which ultimately

provides her with the means to heal herself and forgive her mother. The image of Martine's body, dressed in red in the casket at her funeral is representative of this wholeness. Red is the color that Martine associates with Erzulie, the vodoun goddess who remains a virgin in spite of her many husbands. Like the Caco bird where the family name comes from, in death a rush of color has flushed her cheeks, giving her body a vitality and wholeness that it was denied during life. These stories further become a vehicle for coming to terms with histories of sexual violation and class oppression.

Landscape in *The Farming of Bones* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* works to provide an alternative cartographies of the nation and national identity. Ultimately these texts suggest that a unidirectional transnational movement is not enough to recuperate lost histories and restore wholeness to individuals whose identities have been split. Instead, both texts cautiously posit circular patterns of migration that allow for a continuity between the past and present by enabling the uncovering and preservation of buried and otherwise silenced histories.

### **Chapter Three: Intra-National Migrations in Monica Arac De Nyeko's "Strange Fruit" and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins***

Although Zimbabwe and Uganda share colonial histories the current states of unrest in both countries are attributed to very different sources. While earlier generations of Ugandan and Zimbabwean writers focused on the conflicts that arose from the meeting of African and European cultures and the disillusionment with post-independence leaders, increasingly "African writers are addressing new communities which are not homogenous anymore; they cross boundaries, cross languages, cross cultures" (Hunter 81). Recent fiction by writers in these countries has used landscape to focus explicitly on civil war, paying particular attention to the embodied experiences of women in rural communities as they relate to the places that they inhabit. These works of fiction act as supplements to official histories, imagining the contributions of these silenced voices. The narrative choice to represent landscape stems from an understanding of these conflicts as produced by underlying anxieties about territorial rights. The vehicle of the landscape offers a direct engagement with conflicts that have ranged across the national territory.

This chapter analyzes literary representations of rural and urban landscapes and the patterns of women's intra-national movement between these spheres during periods of war in contemporary fiction by Ugandan writer Monica Arac de Nyeko and Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera. In contrast to the earlier chapters that explored the pastoral as it related to transnational migration, I look here at how patterns of internal national migration between urban and ex-urban spaces function as a means of politicizing the rural sphere and challenging patriotic narratives of national history. I look at these texts as anti-pastoral – a frame that I extend into the final chapter as well.

I argue that de Nyeko's short story uses the anti-pastoral narrative as a means of exposing how a politics of space separates the urban and the rural and enables political violence while critically considering Vera's novel as also adopting the anti-pastoral form for the counterhegemonic purpose of challenging "patriotic histories" of Zimbabwe. Historically, accounts of state sponsored violence against rural inhabitants particularly against female citizens have been suppressed from nationalist accounts of independence. In deploying this revised form of the pastoral, De Nyeko and Vera refract elements of pastoral writing through the lens of civil war and nationalist violence. These texts trouble the pastoral's tendency to represent the pattern of movement between the rural and urban centers of the nation as simple as well as its urge to delimit the urban center as a political zone and the rural as apolitical. This lens allows me to critically unpack these texts as discursive engagements that imagine new possibilities for women's movement across the landscape of the nation as a direct corollary to women's access to the basic rights of a citizen in Uganda and Zimbabwe.

When examined under the lens of the anti-pastoral, De Nyeko's depictions of landscapes engage critically with questions of gender and citizenship. Pastoral discourse functions as an appropriate tool to critique the present moment in light of the fact that it is "a way of using language that constructs a different kind of world from that of realism" (Gifford 45). Pastoral literature can therefore envision a utopian alternative to current periods of strife. As a literary form that has evolved from the pastoral, the anti-pastoral also critiques the present geo-political moment; however, the anti-pastoral accomplishes this by deconstructing the rural as a privileged and mythologized location. Terry Gifford

has argued that the pastoral is not just a literary device but also a recurring body of discourse in which there is a recognizable pattern of movement – that of retreat and return. Disillusioned with the city, the shepherd-figure retreats to the landscape of the countryside where he finds inspiration in its aesthetic appearance and simple morals to return renewed to the urban landscape. The anti-pastoral rejects this simple pattern of movement between the urban and the rural as well as its tendency to celebrate the environmental elements of the countryside as an alternative to the city. Thus, in “Strange Fruit” De Nyeko chooses a female protagonist to travel from the urban to the rural and depicts her physical and sexual victimization at the hands of soldiers and militia forces alike. The anti-pastoral deconstructs the separation of the urban and the rural while also troubling a simple understanding of movement between the two spheres. In “Strange Fruit” the anti-pastoral suffuses rural locations with terror and political violence.

Arac de Nyeko’s story opens with a verse from Billie Holliday’s “Strange Fruit.” The story chronicles the experience of Lakidi Sofia as her family moves from an urban area of Uganda to the more rural region of Kitgum. In Kitgum, Lakidi falls in love with Mwaka and starts a family with him. As the story progresses Mwaka is conscripted into joining the rebel forces and leaving his family to survive without him. Eventually he returns but is beaten and then hung by national soldiers who then rape Lakidi as an example to others of what the state does to traitors. Choosing “Strange Fruit” as the story’s title foreshadows Mwaka’s dangling corpse. The title and epigraphs also immediately connect this historical and cultural moment in Ugandan history to the history of lynching in the Southern States of America during the first half of the twentieth century when brutal lynchings and mob violence were a constant threat to black

Americans in the Southern States.<sup>38</sup> The image of black male corpses swinging from trees is inseparable from this history.

Furthermore, Holliday's song because it is replete with anti-pastoral imagery is a fitting vehicle through which to critique the unnaturalness of lynching. The metaphor of the strange fruit leaves an ambiguous space in our interpretations because we are left to discern whether the "strange fruit" is indeed the body hanging from the tree or a set of historical and political circumstances that have made the blood on the leaves" so visible, while keeping the "blood at the root" hidden from plain view. By asserting that "southern trees bear a strange fruit" Holiday implicitly suggests that there is a deeper historical and political understanding underlying the image of this corpse. In this case, the "root" of this mob justice is intimately connected to state sanctioned violence against blacks in the South. Often, black men who were arrested or accused of alleged sexual offenses were either taken from jail, or in many instances, lynched in public squares in plain view of officers of the law. The history of violence in the South is well documented, and indeed has its "roots" in laws passed by state which permitted and sanctioned the terrorizing of Black Americans in the South. Moreover, if whites were ever brought to trial for these acts of terror, they were rarely, if ever, found guilty.

The metaphor, of "blood on the leaves" and "blood at the root" links the state and the nation to one another in giving birth to this uniquely American brand of mob justice, or the "strange fruit" from which the song takes its title. It is important to note here, that though the song singles out the poplar tree, it opens with a much broader generalization

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<sup>38</sup> The phenomenon of lynching in America has been treated in depth by well-known African American journalist Ida B Wells in *Crusade For Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. Negro American Biographies and Autobiographies Series. John Hope Franklin, Series Editor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

based in the political geography of the South. The specificity of this nature of violence is more fully realized in later stanzas of the song:

Pastoral scenes of the gallant stock.  
 The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth  
 Scent of magnolia, sweet and fresh.  
 And then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,  
 For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck  
 For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop.  
 Here is a strange and bitter crop.

The lyrics of the song are carefully constructed to implicate all of the elements of nature in the production of this “pastoral” scene; the sun, the rain, the wind, the crows are all witness/participants in this gruesome scene, much like the large crowds of people who often gathered to watch blacks being lynched. Moreover, our senses are being called upon in order to register the human element as an integral part of this history of violence. The “sudden smell of burning flesh” that falls so swiftly on the heels of the scent of “magnolia sweet and fresh” jars the senses and links these two sensations to a historical landscape that is so intimate and contradictory that they cannot be separated by the scents, or our understanding of the Southern landscape. The yoking together of the poplar tree, the magnolia, and the smell of burning flesh is aimed at drawing the listener’s attention to the indigenous landscape that is now bearing the poisoned social and judicial system (the bitter crop referred to in the song) that is the result of hundreds of years of sowing inequality and inhumanity.

Using the iconic landscape of the south marks the violence as endemic and tied to a longer history rooted in the inhumanity of slavery. The hanging bodies are further stripped of their humanity in these verses as the imagery reduces them to stock, flesh and

fruit. Lynching worked to strip African Americans of their humanity by denying them any recourse to legal channels and by dehumanizing them through violence and brutality. By using this song as an epigraph, de Nyeko not only intimates the major theme of dual social and judicial corruption in her story, but also connects the experiences of Ugandan communities to violence against African Americans in the United States during the 1930s and 40s. The narrative works to connect these two different historical moments in two different geo-political spaces that are nevertheless linked culturally by their shared past: both spaces witnessed the complicity between the nation-state and “guerilla” forces in terrorizing same civilian populations while nevertheless claiming to act on behalf of civilian interests.

Arac de Nyeko further emphasizes the specific corruption and violence of this particular historical moment in Uganda by contrasting it in the story with other moments of violence that achieved liberation. The rebel cries of this militia are different from the Mau Mau cries in Kenya who fought against British colonization. The violence of these rebel forces is much more organized and potent than previous militia forces have been. Thus, while Mwaka’s grandfather escaped cattle rustlers by hiding in the mango tree, these soldiers hang Mwaka from the tree. Mwaka’s lynching suggests the extent of the corruption of national military forces. Effectively, their actions constitute an attack on the very populations they have sworn to protect. “Strange Fruit” critiques the pastoral impulses that mythologize the rural and disguise authentic accounts of the Ugandan government’s ambiguous treatment of its rural citizens by combining pastoral conventions with realistic aims. Arac de Nyeko adopts the anti-pastoral to critique her current socio-political and cultural context.

By choosing a rural setting for “Strange Fruit” Arac de Nyeko’s story functions as a corrective to national histories that omit accounts of the double victimization of Uganda’s rural citizens by both the militia and the army. In an interview with Doreen Strauhs, Arac de Nyeko expresses her desire to create a literary record of the experiences of the inhabitants of the Kitgum region in northern Uganda, noting that “if you don’t write your stories, somebody else will come and write your stories for you” (155). The story therefore represents a need to create a text that would restore gaps left in official histories about the experiences of rural populations. “Strange Fruit” is an alternative historical account of Uganda’s civil strife that exposes the dual oppression of rural Ugandans in Kitgum by both militia forces and the national military.

The current civil war in Uganda results from an ongoing struggle between the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. Chris Dolan dates the beginning of this struggle in the 1980s. Dolan also uses the concept of “social torture” – a type of torture that is not limited to an individual but instead terrorizes entire communities of people. Social torture provides one frame for understanding the victimization of the civilian population in Uganda on two fronts by both the government and the resistance movement. Dolan asserts that national political discourse has worked to fragment any attention that the situation in Uganda has attracted by selectively externalizing certain elements of the political situation while keeping silent about other economic and social realities.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Initially the Lord’s Resistance Army defined its tenets as Christian-based and its motives as acting in the best interest of the Acholi. Nevertheless, the LRA’s policies of abducting children and attacking Acholi populations are in direct conflict with this ideological position. For a nuanced discussion of the current state of conflict and its relation to earlier conflicts as far back as the 19th century slave trade and colonial rule,

Lakidi's changing perceptions of Kitgum's rural landscape in "Strange Fruit" corresponds to her growing awareness of the conflicted political terrain of Uganda that Dolan discusses. At first before the war begins to change the landscape, Kitgum appears to be a peaceful location. Village life and community rituals take place uninterrupted. Lakidi dances the *orak* dance to welcome in the New Year. After her marriage to Mwaka, they are blessed with such a bountiful harvest that "every inch of [their] compound was spread with sunflower, groundnuts, and sorghum, all ready to be stored away in the granary." The mango tree in their front yard represents Mwaka's connection to his ancestors by way of his grandfather's spirit, which he believes resides in the tree. The tree is Mwaka's "guiding light." The family and the community gather around the nearby Aringa River to bathe and share stories. Initially, family and community togetherness are what mark the physical environment of Kitgum. People that live here do so harmoniously, and landscape in turn is bountiful and peaceful

After the rebels conscript Mwaka, Lakidi's perception of Kitgum's landscape changes as she begins to discern threats. The Aringa river in particular, takes on a new character. Lakidi now associates it with "man-eating crocodiles and grouchy hippos that sliced people in two." But even more disturbing is that it is home to leeches:

Sometimes, the water brought with it blood sucking leeches that stuck to the skin. They did not fall off until they had siphoned enough blood. Very often when people swam, the leeches found their way into their noses. They lived there unnoticed for weeks sucking blood painlessly out of their unsuspecting host. Once found, people conquered their thirst for blood by sticking sharp thorns into their slippery black bodies. Then they sent them back to the water as dead beings to be cast away by the tide (3).

The leeches go unnoticed for a long time, much as Lakidi and Mwaka ignored the rebel

forces for many years. They only notice them when they begin to act as parasites within the community. What was once a source of life and a meeting point for the community quickly takes on a very different character. Originally the rebel forces were men who fought on behalf of the community. However they begin to suck the life blood of the community by kidnapping its members.

This desolation finally manifests itself as Lakidi's dream, her dreamscape offers a deserted and ravaged landscape:

It's evening in my dream. The Kitgum sun has disappeared behind the hills. Dry leaves crash under my bare feet as I race among the *yaa* trees at the foot of Kidi Guu hills, looking for Mwaka. Burnt tree stumps and thorn bushes let me through their sheltered trunks with a few scratches and cuts. The looming night falls upon the lush and short shrubs inch by inch. I am alone and frightened. I need to find my husband. I need to sniff that familiar fruity scent in his breath. I need to touch his unblemished face.

Mwaka emerges from behind the anthill, standing amidst a thicket of overgrown spear grass. The enormous acacia trees on the breasts of the hills sway and crack like the hinges of a breaking door. Darkness shields his face. In his heavy footsteps is the same man who went with the liberation war two years ago and drifted like the August tide of Aringa River. His feet carry him with the poise of a mountain spirit. I stretch out my hands. I beckon him to come to me. Every step releases him like a blooming hibiscus. (1)

Lakidi imbues the dreamscape with the personal and emotional scarring and desolation that she feels. The trees and thorn bushes have been destroyed as though by the artillery of war. The sense of doom builds in Lakidi's dream as the sun sets. The encroaching darkness parallels Lakidi's own internal fears that Mwaka has died while fighting. Lakidi connects the Mwaka that she remembers to positive images of the natural world such as a blooming hibiscus and a spirit of the mountain. He appears in the middle of acacia trees,

heavy with growth. Nevertheless, this remembered image of her husband is at odds with the damaged landscape that resulted from rebel fighting.

This passage also feminizes the Ugandan landscape through the metaphor of the hills as breasts. This sexualized image coupled with images of destruction and scarring foreshadows Lakidi's rape and the destruction of her own body at the hands of the military. The soldiers rape Lakidi as a means of using women's bodies as part of a political strategy of terror. While Mwaka's murder might conflate political agendas with personal vendettas, Lakidi's rape exposes the soldiers as corrupt. Arac de Nyeko describes the scene with painstaking details that allow the reader to experience the torturous moments as they pass for the protagonist. She feels her rapist's movements eating away at her "like snake venom." Rape has long been understood as a weapon of war that can be used to instill terror. The effectiveness of rape as a political weapon deployed within a patriarchy with the aim of upholding its power lies in the ability of such a society to silence and subjugate rape victims.

Indeed, Lakidi's own rape also deprives her of the power of speech and symbolically her ability to act as a witness against her own victimization. In addition to a sexual and physical assault, rape is a psychological and emotional tool as well. Lakidi's changed perception of the landscape once again acts as an index for her traumatic experience. The mango tree transforms into an enormous stretch of overwhelming green. The sound of the soldier's laughter "mounts the great Kilimanjaro and withers its grandeur." Lakidi herself identifies with the weaker elements of nature: The earth smeared on her body appears red, like blood. She feels like an antelope caught in a snare. She compares her breasts to anthills, insignificant and vulnerable structures of nature.

The soldiers' actions cause further trauma because of the way in which they alter Lakidi's relationship to the territory of Uganda itself.

The army's abrupt appearance at the end of the story and the militia-style violence that they deploy bring the ambiguous nature of the government's actions into critical focus. Chris Dolan emphasizes in his analysis of the situation that there is a "considerable gap between the Government's stated intentions and its actual achievements in pursuing solutions in the north" (107). The army established "protected villages," areas where rural citizens would be protected from incursions by the LRA militia. Nevertheless, the policies of forced displacement that uprooted hundreds of thousands of Ugandans from their homes and relocated them in camps where they became fully dependent on aid for survival directly contradicts the government's stated objectives. As one camp leader stated, the objectives of the camp were "to avoid abduction; to save the properties of the innocent; to save the lives of the people; to cut communication between the masses and the rebels" (170). This forced displacement was also a necessary means of preventing citizens from joining the LRA, a possibility that the government was greatly anxious about but often masked beneath benevolent gestures.

"Strange Fruit" demonstrates the ambiguous role of the Ugandan government through the experiences of Lakidi and Mwaka. As the national force entrusted with the well being of the nation, Ugandan soldiers should place the safety of Ugandan citizens above all other concerns. Ostensibly, this is what motivates their pursuit of Mwaka. As a citizen who joined the rebel forces of the LRA, Mwaka has committed treason against the Ugandan government. Instead of hauling him away to be judged by higher authorities in courts and the legal system, the soldiers exact a more brutal form of justice and hang him

from the mango tree in the yard. Mwaka's brutal execution is more than loss of life; it is also a loss of connection to his ancestral past given the mango tree's significance as an important site that links Mwaka to his ancestors. The soldiers simultaneously attack the cultural significance that Mwaka and his family have invested in the land. The soldiers' actions transform the tree from representing an ancestor's spirit into a gallows.

Some critics such as Sofia Ahlberg have argued that Arac de Nyeko uses the romance form as a literary strategy to personalize the effects of this war. Her reading emphasizes the effect on Lakidi and by extension the reader upon learning that Mwaka has ingested human blood and now smells like a he-goat now that he has been inducted into the ranks of the militia. The anti-pastoral is a further lens through which we can understand this story. By chronicling Lakidi's dawning realization of the corruption that later appears to be inherent in the pastoral rural landscape, the anti-pastoral is implicated as a vehicle for conveying silenced Ugandan history. Arac de Nyeko draws on the anti-pastoral as a critique of various claims to belonging based on territoriality.

In Zimbabwe, public and international records of the Chimurengas have consistently suppressed accounts of government brutality against the population in the name of national security as well as women's roles in this struggle as both victims and soldiers. In *Becoming Zimbabwe*, Brian Raftopoulos and A.S. Miambo argue that what began as anticolonial nationalist struggles against colonial powers became a movement that increasingly deployed a discourse of "violently imposed 'unity'" against any political opposition (xxix). Mazarire argues that the repressive form of nationalism that emerged relied heavily on a public discourse that drew on a reservoir of language and symbol from earlier struggles. The language of heroes and sell-outs carried over from anticolonial

struggles in the 1960s and 1970s. Public rhetoric in the most recent period of violent struggle in the 2000s labeled as much as half the internal unarmed population of the nation as “traitors” to the nationalist cause. Furthermore, the “patriotic” version of Zimbabwean history that accompanied these accounts omitted the contributions made by many subsets of the population, including African women and black urban workers.

These accounts also rely on a specific cartography of national space that separates urban zones from rural zones. Urban locations become vibrant sites of political and nationalist activity while rural areas are seen as closed and stagnant. By distancing the urban zones of the nation from the rural areas in political narratives, the nation-state was able to develop a version of anti-colonial and national history that vilified a significant portion of the population. This polarization has also been critically noted by Edward Soja in geographical research on Africa who remarks that studies about the geography in rural areas have remained oddly impervious to themes of “spatial diffusion” (284).<sup>40</sup> In this article Soja goes on to question whether the result of this is that spatial diffusion will be seen as largely an urban phenomena and whether urban-rural patterns of interaction such as migration will be ignored. Official documents represent the nation as an entity to be protected, particularly its urban centers which are the location of political power. In chapter one I discussed the ways that women are restricted to domestic locations in nationalist accounts and do not have freedom of movement throughout the nation. Here, I look at Zimbabwe’s less privileged rural populations who are prevented by

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<sup>40</sup> In “Rural-Urban Interaction” Soja also calls for further studies that will attend to the impact of changing communication and transport practices and the impact on developmental and behavioral practices in rural areas. Soja sees the need to build on existing work as a means of understanding the nuanced ways in which external economic, political and global patterns of influence challenge understandings of rural

socioeconomic stratifications within the society from moving freely throughout the nation.

Vera's corpus of work treats the themes of rural women's resistance to patriarchal societies by challenging authoritative historical narratives that omit their contribution to anti-colonial struggles. *The Stone Virgins* offers accounts that have been omitted of Zimbabwean women's experiences of nationalist violence. The novel further models women's participation in anti-colonial struggles through their partnerships and solidarity in the hope that this will bring an end to civil conflict. By developing these themes along gendered questions of place and mobility, Vera remaps the rural and urban zones as interconnected by roads as well as individuals movements between them. The primary spatial concerns of this text revolve around resolving separation between the rural and the urban and the difficulties that rural women have in maneuvering between them both. *Stone Virgins* re-imagines the pastoral cartography that maps the urban and the rural as separate locations as well as the power geometry embedded in this separation. By first exposing the underlying neocolonial power geometry embedded in the layout of the city of Bulawayo before turning her focus to the rural enclave of Kezi in order to excavate the suppressed history of women's participation in anti-colonial struggle as well as their victimization during periods of anti-colonial nationalist struggles.

Scholars understand Vera's novels as a body of interconnected work that has focused on the themes of time, women, history and violence.<sup>41</sup> But her work also

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environments as isolated and closed. Soja's article also creates a space for discussing the ways that urban centers relate to previously existing notions of territorial identity.

<sup>41</sup> See for instance, Ranka Primorac's "Crossing into the Space-Time of Memory: Borderline Identities in Novels by Yvonne Vera" and Eva Hunter's "Women, Heroes and Violence in Yvonne Vera's Novels." Yvonne Vera herself endorses this paradigm as a lens for understanding her work. In an interview with Ranka Primorac, she articulates a series of concerns running through her works, particularly how men and women interact with the land in different ways and how women are breaking taboos while also confronting

implicates the landscape in providing an alternative historical archive that challenges patriotic national history. Eleni Coundourois argues that Vera continues the project of engaging directly with history that she began in *Butterfly Burning* where she offers up the landscape as this type of archive. Similarly, in *The Stone Virgins* the landscape becomes a lens through which to explore the historical problem of violent struggle in Zimbabwe by creating a geo-historical map of the Zimbabwean landscape as a means of contesting the underlying geometry of power that allows some patterns of movement while barring others.<sup>42</sup>

Vera's representation of the city of Bulawayo and the rural space of Kezi reflects what Doreen Massey has called "power geometry." In *Space, Place, and Gender* Massey asserts that "different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement" (149). The distribution of power is connected to movement across space by individuals and social groups and Massey reminds us that some groups with power have control over their movement across space while they exercise power to keep others immobile. In this matrix of geographical power, many people are imprisoned by their immobility and are denied freedom to move because of their social or ethnic identity.

Vera's prose works to reconfigure these very relationships of geometrical power beginning with the exposure of the neocolonial values that structure the city of Bulawayo and prevent Zimbabweans' from moving freely within it. The spatial pattern of

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the values of violence and war.

<sup>42</sup> Eleni Coundourois makes this argument in "Self-Inflicted Wounds in Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly*

Bulawayo reflects a number of inherited colonial power relations that prevented native Zimbabweans from moving freely across the city. The first section of the novel therefore takes the reader through the years of 1950 to 1980 through the streets of Zimbabwe. The narrator's sentences map out the various streets of the city for the reader:

Selborne Avenue in Bulawayo, cuts from Fort Street (at Charter House), across to Jameson Road (of the Jameson Raid), through to Main Street, to Grey Street, to Abercorn Street, to Fife Street, to Rhodes Street, to Borrow Street, out into the lush Centenary Gardens with their fusion of dahlias, petunias, asters, red salvia, and mauve petrea bushes, onward to the National Museum, on the left side (1)

With this opening sentence Vera offers a view of the city of Bulawayo as a modern space, orderly with its neat division into streets replete with foreign buildings and nationalistic spaces such as the Gardens and the Museum. Names of city streets and city landmarks are all of foreign origin. Names such as "Grey," "Abercorn," and "Fife," are all foreign to Zimbabwe. The town of Bulawayo exposes how neocolonial relationships of power have shaped the layout of the city and conditioned movement within it.

The narrative voice inserts parenthetical details that invoke past historical events and further convey a sense of Zimbabwe's colonial past and its continued anti-colonial struggles in the present. Intensely colored flowers that are also of foreign origin populate the city streets. Furthermore, the central location of the Centenary Gardens at the very heart of the city is reminiscent of the Botanical Gardens and the displays of political power discussed in chapter one.

The various patterns of movement that are allowed or restricted further emphasize the configuration of power at work within the city. The working population of Bulawayo, the laborers, are denied entrance into these buildings: "entry is forbidden to black men

and women.” In response, they congregate in transient space in search of *ekoneni*, a street corner where meetings can take place. Arguing that Vera’s work has a definable preoccupation with space, Samuelson reads the opening description of Bulawayo as appropriate because “it points to the geographical violence performed by the town planners. Cutting this grid-like street structure into the landscape and, through naming, creating place as a chronicle of colonial rule, they produce [alienated space]” (13). The city becomes a spatial archive of colonial power structures.

*Stone Virgins* chronicles the spatial changes taking place in the period following Zimbabwean soldiers’ return to Africa after World War II, a period that saw an initiation of anti-colonial violence. In 1948 in the township of Bulawayo, workers enacted a violent strike. At this time, Zimbabwe was a part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The 1970s witnessed the most violent leg of their struggle and a civil war that played out on national land. David Harold-Berry writes:

The seven years of intransigence were followed by seven years of armed struggle in an increasingly bitter war. The guerrillas gradually wore down the white minority, but the human cost was terrible. Approximately 60,000 people lost their lives in combat, in crossfire, or in massacres. Many more suffered in the breakdown of health services and schooling. When peace came at the end of 1979 there was relief, but there was also anxiety. Legal independence in 1980 was a moment of goodwill and hope. But it was born of blood and it could either lead to a real new beginning or else it would be a time of settling old scores (256).

From this account we get sense of the immensity of the struggle for independence.

Harold-Berry further contextualizes this moment as an ambiguous one when either a new beginning could begin in earnest or the violence and bloodshed could continue. Vera’s text links this very pregnant moment to struggles of land ownership.

The question of land ownership and its equitable distribution was one of the central issues driving the struggle. In 1980, after independence had been won, the people's connection to the land took on an even greater significance. State institutions understand land as a national commodity that can be "compulsorily acquired" and allocated in the best interest of the nation. As constructed in the constitution, land is an entity to be used as necessary for the public good, however that might be defined by the state. As Article 16 of the constitution defines this as, "Defense, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, town and country planning or the utilization of that or any other property for a purpose beneficial to the public generally or to any section of the public." Thus, if the land is needed for agriculture, relocating dispossessed populations, environmental reorganization or conservation then its acquisition is justified. The state understanding of land emphasizes its utilitarian aspect and the state ability to control it. This reflects an understanding of land as a commodity that can be manipulated in the interest of an indeterminate hegemonic national identity. The government's definition of land as a national resource set the stage for the continuation of exploitative patterns of land-use that began in colonization. It also fed into anxieties about controlling rural populations and the land that they lived on.

Given that conflicts between blacks and whites and between Shona and Ndebele as well as violent attempts at repression characterized this decade of the 1980s in Zimbabwe, Harold-Barry asserts that "1980 was not the end of an era...In an uncanny way, the new rulers proceeded just as their predecessors had done" (257). *Stone Virgins* depicts one of the ways in which this anxiety might manifest itself in politically motivated violence against rural populations. By attacking the Thandabantu store, a

location that epitomizes freedom of social movement in Kezi, political forces simultaneously demonstrate their power and subdue the local rural population. The store is always filled with people. Located as it is at the end of the route from Bulawayo, it is a key site where people meet to exchange news of their lives. It is also this location that Vera uses to make us aware that the rural space faces a different threat from that of the city, that of the war. The narrator describes the bustling scene within the store filled with buyers who speak loudly except for when they whisper about the hills of Gulati. For those who live in Kezi, “to be in the bush, is to be at the mercy of misfortune” (30). Living in the bush means living close to the fear and misfortune of war. The narrative of the rural village as a harmonious space is undercut by intimations of the village as vulnerable to neighboring fights.

Vera’s text critiques the patriotic version of nationalist history told by the government that covered up their own abuses during this struggle in the name of freedom through the figure of Sibaso. Sibaso, as both soldier and guerilla fighter, represents an implosion of the patriarchal violence unleashed after independence. As both a soldier and guerilla Sibaso destroys the homes and lands of the residents of the rural enclave of Kezi. Sibaso remembers during the war how he would hide with soldiers in the sacred caves of Gulati. The caves are so sacred that the villagers would never go there. Sibaso and some thirty soldiers hide there with ammunition and supplies. The caves in their impenetrable solitude remind Sibaso of his transient humanity. Vera portrays Sibaso’s own defilement by the war when he is forced to eat spiders to survive. He comes across landscapes littered with disembodied limbs and entrails. These details show that even the strongest agents within Zimbabwean society, those that perpetrate the violence, are

themselves victims of this violence. Sibaso returns home after the first war to find that his father is no longer there and the house is owned by a stranger. Ironically, even though he is an agent of the independence struggle, he is himself orphaned and dispossessed by the movement. Vera provides a commentary on the anti-nationalist nature of Sibaso's actions through her depiction of him as desecrating the sacred caves of Gulati. However, she complicates a narrative that would otherwise depict him as a monster in order to show how the violence of nationalist movements harms men as well.

The experience of this space as told from the point of view of Sibaso represents another competing narrative for the meaning of this space. As critic Annie Gagiano writes, Sibaso's desecration works on multiple levels. In destroying the cave, Sibaso also attacks the cultural representation of women's bodies. As Gagiano writes, African women's bodies were palimpsests. The carvings in the cave "recognize how the bodies of African women constitute a palimpsest – a layering that began in ancient times, when San maidens' live ritual burial (to "accompany" a dead male, probably a ruler) was recorded on cave walls (pp. 94–5), and which persists to the present (of the novel), when women are harmed or destroyed for male purposes or in mere wantonness." The presence of the virgins on the wall represent an age-old ritual of interring wives with the deceased King, a practice in which women's bodies are sacrificed as symbols of patriarchal power. These images of sacrificed women prefigures the sister's who will also be attacked by Sibaso. Thenjiwe and Nonceba's bodies become the physical manifestation of the desecration that Sibaso perpetrates in these caves.

The text suggests that the question of individual's well-being must be closely tied to any evaluation of appropriate land-use. As environmental scholar Emmanuel

Manzungu explains, in evaluating success in relation to issues of land ownership and post-independence, one must consider “the human dimension” (54). Manzungu elaborates:

...the human dimension is critical...it follows that an assessment of the environmental impact...should focus on the lives of ordinary people, and not just on economic indicators, political pronouncements, and statements about radical demographics...People should not be marginalized or seen as tools...they should be able to participate fully in community decisions as well as enjoy their human rights and basic freedoms...development must entail the conferment on people of the capacity to access income, employment opportunities, educational and health facilities, and enjoy a clean, safe physical environment” (54-55).

As this passage illustrates, the environment is a criteria by which we can measure the success of a territory in providing basics for its people. The land therefore takes on an even more significant identity at this moment of independence. This passage stresses a relationship with land and people engage in to achieve their full potential. The relationship posited above recognizes that a safe environment is necessary for human life. It opens a discursive space for a policy where protecting the land is understood as integral to protecting human life.

In contrast to the militaristic and patriarchal version of history that Sibaso represents, *Stone Virgins* posit’s a different model of nationalism based on female solidarity and an appreciation of the cultural identity of land. In contrast to Sibaso’s approach to land as an instrument to be used, owned or destroyed, for the women of Mataberland, the land is imbued with a great deal of personal and cultural significance. In an interview, Vera relates how she set out to show the specific way in which the women of Mataberland view the sacred caves. Accordingly, Vera describes her project:

I have set the novel which I'm currently writing, in the 'now'. Perhaps this [*The Stone Virgins*] is my most brave novel, I don't know. But it is set in the time of 1980 to '86. You have heard about the violence against the people of Mataberland? And there I had to... I wanted to talk about the Matopo [hills] – I don't know if you them – the women painted on the rocks, and all these things, but in a way that is surrounded by this war, and the man interprets this very sexually, this language of the rocks. And the woman – in violence. And I'm trying there to again explore the differences in how these groups – the men, the women – relate to the land (Primorac 162).

From the lens that Vera provides us with we can identify a few of her primary concerns in writing *The Stone Virgins*: relating the story of the violence committed against the people of Mataberland, describing Mataberland itself, and the respective relationships of men and women to this land. As this interview reveals, Vera's themes are at once postcolonial – history, violence, gender identity – and ecocritical. The ways in which these issues are addressed is through an engagement with the environment, and through an engagement with the physical contours of the land.

As critic Lily Mabura has argued, female authors use landscape to desilence women by permitting them to shape spaces of refuge out of the landscape. In the context of Zimbabwe, Mabura reads Vera's protagonists as challenging changes that the British Empire made to Zimbabwean landscape, establishing “gardens of refuge” and “gardens of domesticity” that “often alienated black women from their traditional liminal and rejuvenating spaces, like rivers, where they could position themselves to effectively resist or overcome what were often predominantly patriarchal and racist societies.” Mabura's argument holds true for neocolonial forces as well. The figure of Sibaso also attacks the sacred space of the caves of Gulati (51).

Although critics read Vera's entire corpus as concerned with adopting a womanist approach that centers “concerns about family and mutual cohesiveness” (35), the text

adopts many of the tenets of African womanism instead of western feminism.

Nevertheless, Vera's corpus of work depicts Zimbabwean women as revolutionaries and fighters who played key roles in the revolution and fought as guerrillas alongside men.

This positioning is reinforced by her choice to take Cephaas, a lover, home with her from Thandabantu store. This man has a seed in his pocket. This is a seed from the Mazhanje fruit that comes from Chimanimani. Thenjiwe sucks this seed and feels that she knows Chimanimani from the seed's flavor and texture without ever having been there. She fantasizes about conceiving a child that she would name Mazhanje, and it is with this seed rather than her lover that she loses herself: "...with one touch of her tongue tip she loses the rest of her senses...She has been hit by an illumination so profound...she wants to lie down...She wants to pause as cool as a valley...Solitude. She forgets his name" (*The Stone Virgins* 39). For the remainder of the time that they share together, Thenjiwe does not speak her lover's name. She becomes obsessed with the fruit's flavor. She quizzes her lover about the roots of the Mazhanje tree.

How do we make sense of Thenjiwe's reaction? Vera responds to this very question in an interview by stating that "...I'm linking her to a land that she has never even seen. That she doesn't know. But that she imagines. Therefore, then, the place of the woman for me is the place of the imagination" (162). What becomes apparent from these concerns of Thenjiwe is that nature becomes the vehicle through which women's innermost stories can be communicated to us. Thus, there is the importance that she places upon nature. Trees and roots are central to her understanding of the world, of geographical space. She remains in Kezi; however her experience with the Mazhanje fruit allows her to reach outside of herself in a way that she did not anticipate. Nature, the land

about her, therefore, structures Thenjiwe's understanding of the world. Her lover eventually leaves "this body of milk and dew and mazhanje seeds" because he tires of the way that "it already appears to be, as fulfilled, without his voice disturbing its silence" (*The Stone Virgins* 45-46).

With natural landscape and imagery as the vehicles, the novel depicts Thenjiwe's own fears and traumas that remain locked away from her lover. She fears the transient nature of their interaction and articulates this to herself saying "she loves him but wants to rid herself of a persisting vision of him, a passerby, a stranger sitting in Thandabantu Store" (46). In order to access and grasp permanence, Thenjiwe wishes to show him the roots of a marula tree which she believes will reveal to her lover a truth about the land that will tie him to her and to this village. She ponders "how can he, with truth and abandon, ever proclaim to linger, to love her as absolutely as she desires to be loved, as knowingly, with all of his mind intact, not wandering off to his own tree, to his own slope and incline, to his mountains in the eastern highlands, where that mazhanje grows and beckons him to return?" (46-47). Thenjiwe believes that if she can show him the roots of this tree, then he will cease to be a visitor, a temporary presence in Kezi. Because he does not understand this language of her imagination, he misinterprets her silence and returns to Bulawayo.

Thenjiwe's trauma is representative of the communal experience of other women in Kezi. Through the women's connection to and interaction with the terrain of Kezi, Vera is able to convey a sense of these women's experience of Zimbabwe's war of independence. Chapter four opens with an invocation of this identity:

The women want to take the day into their own arms and embrace it, but how? To embrace the land and earth, the

horizon, and triumph? To forget the hesitant moment, death, the years of deafness and struggle? The women want to take the time of resignation, of throbbing fears, and declare this to a vanished day, but how? And take the memory of departed sons, and bury it. But how? ...they have endured the most agonizing absence, and this feeling is the most understanding emotion, the most accepting, the least demanding, the clearest, the least desperate, the most merciful, born of terror, this pride, filled with glory and tenderness (51).

Vera has articulated that one of the major concerns of her writing is to illustrate female identity as an individual identity. Furthermore, this identity, she argues, has evolved from women's encounters with political and religious struggle. She states in an interview that:

If you write in a style that quickly tells the reader that you are situating your self as a woman writer and that your act of writing is structures around a particular idea of, I don't know, body or structures in the society of independence; that you are making an argument about female identity – immediately, that is seen as transporting foreign ideas ... but this is ridiculous, because this is simply a failure to accept continuing challenges, you know, which African women have had. (Primorac 158)

African feminism has largely been understood as a communitarian endeavor. Vera is in this novel asking us to recognize the ways in which African feminism has evolved in the face of historical specificities such as war and violence.

At first glance we might be tempted to read their communitarian representation of the woman of Kezi as a manifestation of this identity. These women are presented as a group, they rely upon each other; they form a community. Nevertheless, the text depicts individuals who are related to the land and to the men from Bulawayo. They have all presumably undergone similar experiences, but they do not interact with each other. Their survival is largely individual. Thus, while Nonceba's aunt cares for her immediately after her rape, Nonceba eventually returns to life on her own in the house that she and Thenjiwe shared. Nonceba's decision to move to the city is highly individualistic, and it

is presented as a response to the evolving concerns of Africa. These details relay a model of African feminism that is removed from community based models of African feminism.

Vera further depicts these women outside of a domestic sphere. She takes them entirely out of a family setting, implying that the traumas they have been through during the war for independence, the loss of men to soldiers, the loss of their land, and their own violation at the hands of the soldiers and war are what concern these women and propel them into lives outside family and community. There is also an absence of children, replaced by desire and sensuality. These women act on these desires, marking them as modern and different from versions of feminism that have preceded them. In conjunction with this, these women are presented as soldiers in their own right: an older generation of women have actually participated in the first Chimurenga while the younger generation preserve their legacy with their stoic and persistent survival in Kezi. Vera presents their struggle to put the past trials and fears behind them and to accept and embrace that a new day is before them. Vera's portrayal of women provides an alternative to a tradition of representing women that emphasize the concerns of the domestic sphere and community.

A counterargument to this occurs in an essay by Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, entitled "Ecological Postcolonialism in African Women's Literature," which generates a list of criteria for a postcolonial ecofeminist theory that pertains specifically to the African context. Agreeing somewhat with Ukhun, Nfah-Abbenyi writes that it is "women's lives [that] have tended to be the most affected by these local and global shifts" (708). Ecofeminism in Africa insomuch as it relates to the changes in land ownership and the provision of labor for the land also has the power to reshape ideas about femininity and gender roles. Gender ideologies shape land practices in complicated

ways. A relationship with a piece of land also means a relationship to a particular identity and one's home. Access to natural resources provided by land can also lead to breaking cycles of dependence and poverty which is itself a political move (712). Nfah-Abbenyi sees a relationship with land as a relationship that is grounded in culture yet gives a sense of identity and history.

Vera's engagement with the question of femininity reflects a version of feminism developed in response to trauma that manifests benefits from mobility instead of a historical connection to land. *Stone Virgins* also offers a new statement in relation to the topic of African women's writing. While Nfah-Abbenyi's ideas are not foreign to Vera's text, *The Stone Virgins* makes another statement entirely in relation to women and rural spaces. Nfah-Abbenyi's texts suggest that rural exodus has led to a worsening of conditions for women as they relocate in cities since they become prey for violence against them and their children. Vera's position is that this very violence has invaded the rural space, provoking the exodus that Nfah-Abbenyi points to as a concern in African women's writing. For Vera's character Nonceba, it is in the city where she may finally have some freedom of movement.

Through the trope of mapping Vera gives the village of Kezi a central place in her narrative as a means of accessing records of the contributions that women made to the war in the rural sphere. The novel takes us to the location of Kezi slowly. The bus connects from Bulawayo to Kezi, stopping at the Thandabantu store before making its way back to the city. In contrast to this space of brisk industry where "parasols mingle with disgruntled miners, bankers, and day-to-day merchants," there is Kezi, two hundred kilometers west of Selborne, past the Matopo Hills and the lands of Gulati. Vera takes

care to situate Kezi not just geographically, but also within the historical context as a space which has resisted certain colonial markers of modernity. The description of Kezi emphasizes the harmoniousness of the landscape. The huts, for instance, “form perfect circles of calm merged with the land” (17). Tall grass and rocks intermingle with huts. The roads and footpaths meander, as if to encourage foot travel. Trees are massive and possess expansive root systems that cling to rocks. They themselves are described “as hard as stone.” Kezi is a direct contrast to the city in terms of its winding layout and its openness to the villagers. There is a disused telephone booth in Kezi. Few cars pass this way. The places of business in Bulawayo are but workstations to the residents of Kezi. Many have worked there and returned. Kezi when juxtaposed with Bulawayo reveals itself to be a place that encourages freedom of movement. Kezi is a place that unlike the foreign named streets of Bulawayo is located by local and indigenous knowledge of the places it abuts such as the Gulati hills, and the Kwahke river. We must also pay attention to different ways in which time is measured. In the city, time can be measured on a daily basis by the differing sounds and smells. Analogously, in the rural space time can be thought of in terms of seasons of maturation and blossoming for plants and trees.

Vera re-maps the pastoral by remapping the relationship between the urban and the rural. Thus, Bulawayo and Kezi are connected by a road and a bridge, just as an umbilical cord connects a mother to her child. Men and women pass from rural enclave to city in search of work. Never are the two spaces separate. Elements of the rural space invade Bulawayo in the form of plant life such as jacarandas. Elements of the cityscape in the form of modern goods such as beds and apparel find their way into Kezi. The

characters that go back and forth are themselves hybrid, and embody the type of movement that characterizes cosmopolitanism and transnationalism.

Vera's prose accomplishes a re-mapping of the new nation of Zimbabwe as a fully integrated geo-historical space through a reworking of the trope of cartographic writing. Through the trope of mapping Vera gives the village of Kezi a central place in her narrative. This centrality reduces the marginalization of rural populations thereby valorizing the historical experiences of rural residents. Kezi is central in the narrative. When she moves to the latter period, 1980 to 1986, the spaces between city and rural became even more interwoven. The characters in this novel are never located in solely one place. This is in part achieved through Vera's depiction of traditionally separate spaces such as the rural and the city space as being connected in a visceral and undeniable way. For instance, the Western elements of dress that the women adopt mark them as mobile.

The spaces and characters that she presents are never pure. The rural space and the city space are never entirely separate; they are always hybrid and intermingled. The novel is characterized by movement, passages through time and passages through different geographical spaces. Nor does Vera rely solely on a nationalist framework; she opts instead for continental and regional identities in addition to nationalist ones to plead her case.

Vera centers the rural location of Kezi by elaborating its relationship to other spaces such as the city of Bulawayo and the hills of Gulati. All roads lead to Kezi. All other locations are mapped in relation to Kezi. The imagination of the sisters Thenjiwe and Nonceba that revolve around the specificities of the Kezi landscape, its soil and its

trees, further centralizes this village. It is at this site that Thenjiwe meets her lover Cephas Dube. By combining the activity of map making with the act of storytelling, Vera connects the act of making geography with the act of making history. The story begins with the sisters apart. Thenjiwe is still in Kezi while her sister Nonceba is away at school. Thenjiwe brings home a lover, an ex-soldier who chooses to return to his life in the town in Bulawayo when Thenjiwe exhibits more interest in the land around her than in him.

In spite of Thenjiwe's profound attachment to the land of Kezi in all of its particularity, Vera manages to maintain Kezi as an evolving space with permeable borders. This permeability is highlighted by the number of spatial routes that intersect in Kezi. The figure of Nonceba, for instance, travels from Kezi to boarding school and then from Kezi to Bulawayo. Cephas as well travels through Kezi on the way to Gulati and to Bulawayo. The Bulawayo that Nonceba relocates to is not the restricted and exclusive place that it was at the beginning of the story. Vera shows the way in which the places in the novel have changed as a result of their porous boundaries.

Vera's depiction of the land itself is interesting and further reflects the realities of the historical conditions. She does not give the land the title of nation, effectively recreating the ambiguity that its inhabitants would have felt under the weight of this new geographical title. In addition to this, the narrator frequently makes references to the region of Africa. What becomes clear from considering these references altogether is a position that understands nation always within a larger concept of region. In fact, in some ways nation is also secondary to more local communities that exist in such places as Kezi, Bulawayo, and the hills of Gulati. Vera here posits an alternative form of regional/local identification.

Through their interaction in these spaces, these characters are seeking an understanding of the meaning of values such as independence and freedom. The men are allowed into the city for work. The women that we see in the city space are there for a wedding party. People's abilities to move about freely in assorted spaces, or their inability to move about in such spaces, link the discourse of space and environment. Furthermore, these chapters present an alternative historical account. While history books record the violence that took place between tribes, Vera offers a quotidian view. She also offers an alternative way of understanding the territory of Zimbabwe. By using towns and villages as points of reference instead of a concept of the nation, Vera manages to speak for marginalized spaces and populations.

Thenjiwe's lover, Cephas represents a new model of masculinity. Kostelac reads Cephas as a figure of masculinity who refuses to possess. He recognizes and respects the autonomy of both Thenjiwe and Nonceba. Cephas returns after chancing upon Thenjiwe's name in a record of those that have fallen victim to the war. In part, he holds himself responsible for her death, believing that if he had stayed in Kezi he could have kept her safe. He offers to take Nonceba with him to Bulawayo. She accepts his offer and in Bulawayo begins to piece her life back together. The Bulawayo that Nonceba relocates to is not the restricted and exclusive place that it was at the beginning of the story. Vera shows the way in which the places in the novel have changed as a result of their porous boundaries. Nonceba moves freely through the city streets. The streets are crowded and magazines and newspapers are sold on every street corner. Nonceba is even able to find work in the city. Post-1982 Bulawayo is a city of openness and opportunity for Zimbabwean citizens.

Cephas also enables Thenjiwe to imagine a non-traditional type of motherhood. When Cephas first comes to Kezi he carries a seed in his pocket. This is a seed from the Mazhanje fruit that comes from Chimanimani. Thenjiwe sucks this seed and feels that she knows Chimanimani from the seed's flavor and texture without ever having been there. She fantasizes about conceiving a child that she would name Mazhanje, and it is with this seed rather than her lover that she loses herself: "...with one touch of her tongue tip she loses the rest of her senses...She has been hit by an illumination so profound...she wants to lie down...She wants to pause as cool as a valley...Solitude. She forgets his name" (*The Stone Virgins* 39). For the remainder of the time that they share together, Thenjiwe does not speak her lover's name. She becomes obsessed with the fruit's flavor. She quizzes Cephas about the roots of the Mazhanje tree.

Thenjiwe links her desire for Chimanimani with a desire for a child. This gives the natural world a great deal of importance, linking it to visions of the future and to the idea of birth. Her lover eventually leaves "this body of milk and dew and mazhanje seeds" because he tires of the way that "it already appears to be, as fulfilled, without his voice disturbing its silence" (*The Stone Virgins* 45-46). What Cephas interprets in Thenjiwe as an indifference to him can also be read as a deep connection to the land of Kezi that she inhabits. Both Cephas and Thenjiwe challenge gender roles in this example. Cephas offers a model of non-exploitative model of masculinity while Thenjiwe thinks of motherhood through the metaphor of the land. While this idea is not entirely new, significantly, Thenjiwe does not have a child.

Both "Strange Fruit" and *The Stone Virgins* explore what the repercussions are for rural places and the populations that inhabit them when both the nation state and the

liberators of the militia are corrupt. Both political entities terrorize rural populations by attacking the local places that they hold sacred and by silencing accounts of this violence that contest their power. *Stone Virgins* cautiously suggests that moving away from the rural sphere into an urban location offers women a type of protection by disrupting the imagination of the rural as an apolitical and silent zone. Moving to the urban allows Nonceba the ability to find her voice once more. Both texts reconfigure concepts of femininity, challenge traditional concepts of the rural as static and opposite to the urban space, all the while foregrounding the concerns of the land itself by advocating for a reciprocal non-exploitative relationship with the land.

#### **Chapter Four: “Just Colored Folks Stuff” -- Greening Urban Landscapes in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz*.**

In this chapter I read *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz* as texts that use the anti-pastoral form to depict urban locations as places where African Americans can practice a national identity and experience national belonging. Like “Strange Fruit” and *The Stone Virgins* these texts also use the anti-pastoral to elaborate internal patterns of movement between rural and urban zones. Similarly, Morrison’s texts contest national narratives of patriarchal history embedded in pastoral narratives. Iconic rural landscapes in America such as the South, frontier and wilderness landscapes, have consistently been locations of victimization for minority populations.

Both novels function as anti-pastoral narratives in terms of their depiction of rural areas as dangerous locations. The Dead family’s experiences in Shalimar in *Song of Solomon* illustrate the way in which pastoral and wilderness environments are filled with danger for African American populations following slavery. In *Jazz*, the figures of Wild, Violet Trace and Alice Mann demonstrate the ways in which urban places afford new ways of belonging to the nation. Women’s scarred bodies become sites that encoded alternative patterns of national belonging. Moving between Not Doctor Street and Shalimar affords Milkman the chance to learn his family history. In *Jazz*, the protagonists’ movement during the Great Migration to the North ironically allows them to use the urban setting to safely escape and to safely remember the racial violence of the South. Although scarred female bodies exist in the urban space as well, the traumas that gave rise to these scars are given voice and women are afforded the means to protect themselves.

Both novels also rework the typical journey between the rural and the urban that takes place in the pastoral narrative. Journeying presents an opportunity for those undertaking the journey to change their position as well as circumstances.<sup>43</sup> Primarily about possibility, journeys enable travelers to leave behind one set of cultural and political circumstances in order to access a different set. In the case of these protagonists, spatial and temporal movement between the urban and the rural enables both a transformation in physical circumstances as well as consciousness.

In spite of its ostensible claim to breadth, the field of ecocriticism in the northern United States has in practice coalesced somewhat parochially around representations of pastoral and wilderness environments. These landscapes are furthest removed from daily human occupation and are furthermore inaccessible in many ways to minority populations. William Cronon writes that wilderness is often represented as timeless and outside of history:

Seen as the original garden, it is a place outside of time, from which human beings had to be ejected before the fallen world of history could properly begin... Seen as the old landscape of frontier heroism, it is the place of youth and childhood, into which men escape by abandoning their pasts and entering a world of freedom where the constraints of civilization fade into memory ... no matter what the angle from which we regard it, wilderness offers us the illusion that we can escape the cares and troubles of the world in which our past has ensnared us.  
(81)

Cronon's words trace the evolution of the wilderness idea in Western consciousness and its transformation from fallen Eden to New World frontier and then to sanctuary from the worldly "cares and troubles." The mythology of the New World as a prelapsarian Garden of Eden space has also influence white American attitudes to the environment. As scholar

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<sup>43</sup> See Janice P. Stout's *The Journey Narrative in American Literature* for an account of the role that

R.W.B. Lewis describes it in *American Adam*, white America largely perceives its political self-image as “happily bereft of ancestry in the garden of the New World” (5). Wilderness and the wild have come to stand for a type of authenticity in American ecocriticism. This association draws on the connection between American identity and the frontier heroism of the New World. Yet, critics of this stance point to the ways in which isolating wilderness is both a misrepresentation and a displacement of human responsibility. Since the ideal of wilderness is unattainable in real life, everyday actions escape close attention and evaluation. Furthermore, wilderness and the wild are discursive representations of the environment that represent a narrow group of interests belonging to wealthy suburbanites instead of a more balanced view that acknowledges the wild as a location of class and gender struggle (Garrard 77). The iconography that they give rise to can often exclude minority populations.

The pastoral and wilderness have been read as largely inaccessible to African Americans in light of the historically fraught relationship with the environment and the tendency of both the wilderness and the pastoral to render issues of race, gender and class invisible. In contrast, for slaves in the rural South, pastoral landscapes would have invoked plantations, slave labor and lynching. As Eldridge Cleaver describes it:

From the very beginning, Afro-America has had a land hang-up. The slaves were kidnapped on their own soil, transported thousands of miles across the ocean and set down in a strange land. They found themselves in a totally hostile situation and America became a land from which black people wanted only to flee, to escape such evil soil and those vicious creatures who had usurped it.

During slavery itself, black people learned to hate the land. From sunup to sundown, the slaves worked the land: plowing, sowing, and reaping crops for somebody else, for profit they themselves would never see or taste. This is why, even today, one of the most provocative insults that can be tossed at a black is to call him a farm

boy, to infer that he is from a rural area or in any way attached to an agrarian situation. In terms of seeking status in America, blacks -- principally the black bourgeoisie -- have come to measure their own value according to the number of degrees they are away from the soil.

Security and terror, sublimity and alienation -- African American attitudes toward southern landscapes are packed with conflict (57-58).

Cleaver's words capture the relationship between African Americans and the environment as a question of citizenship and cultural history in the United States. This relationship has primarily been defined by traumatic experiences of slavery. As forced laborers, slaves were denied access to pastoral modes of existing in the landscape. As property, they could not own territory themselves. Furthermore, their labor was rendered invisible in representations of Southern pastorals. The plantation itself although represented as idyllic and even Edenic in some narratives was a geographical area that was spatially arranged in order to replicate the order of slavery. Slave quarters were far removed from the plantation house. Even after slavery ended, African American interaction with the landscape was often dictated by terror. Lynchings brought African American men in particular in close proximity with the natural world most often as they were hung from trees. Their bodies literally became the "strange fruit" memorialized by Billie Holliday.

Toni Morrison's novels engage with the pastoral form by drawing on anti-pastoral structures in order to reveal a substantial involvement between African Americans and the natural world. In a move to historicize the pastoral, both novels offer the African American body as a site within rural locations that embodies the conflicted relationship of African Americans to rural locations.<sup>44</sup> In this chapter I argue that Morrison uses the

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<sup>44</sup> To date, important critics have taken up the project of unpacking the significance of the relationship between African Americans and the environment in Toni Morrison's work. Key among these include Kathleen R Wallace's and Karla Armbruster's "The Novels of Toni Morrison: 'Wild Wilderness Where

pastoral form in *Song of Solomon* in order to reclaim the history of black Americans and their relationships to the land during and immediately after slavery. *Song* depicts the pattern of movement from the urban to the rural space that is typical of pastoral but reworks the trope by historicizing this journey. Although Milkman never returns to the urban setting, his journey to Shalimar restores a historical continuity with the present that is often omitted.

In *Jazz* I introduce a gendered critique, arguing that Morrison uses the anti-pastoral to draw our attention to black American women's relationships with the urban environment as a means of participating in the American national imaginary. I argue that Morrison's representations of these women in *Song of Solomon* problematize traditional notions of the pastoral by suggesting that for Black Americans in the rural South and black women in particular, the pastoral is not a viable form or historical relationship to the landscape of the United States. As *Song of Solomon* shows, black Americans' ability to connect emotionally to land is conditioned by a variety of historical oppressions. In contrast, *Jazz* suggests an alternative way for African Americans to imagine citizenship in the United States by occupying urban spaces in Harlem during the Great Migration. This migration away from the rural towards the urban constitutes a version of the anti-pastoral. I argue that Harlem allowed black Americans to occupy the physical spaces of streets, nightclubs and storefronts that offered a chance to connect to the idea of America by emotionally connecting to urban places. The scarred bodies of Black American

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There Was None," Barbara Christian's "Community and Nature: The Novels of Toni Morrison", Vera Norwood's "Writing Animal Presence: Nature in Euro-American, African American, and American Indian Fiction" and Jhan Hochman's "A Peculiar Arborary: *Beloved*." To the best of my knowledge, the only essay to approach the pastoral dimensions of Toni Morrison's work is Wes Berry's essay "Toni Morrison's Revisionary 'Nature Writing': *Song of Solomon* and the Blasted Pastoral" which appears in *South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture* (2002), a collection edited and introduced by Suzanne W. Jones and Sharon Monteith.

women in *Jazz* make their home in urban centers. The urban provides the comfort that one expects from rural settings. The rural survives in more ephemeral ways including music and memory.

Scholars have often read Milkman's journey as exemplary of the quest narrative; however, I situate the novel as framed within the pastoral.<sup>45</sup> *Song* broadly follows the pattern of the pastoral in that Morrison's protagonist Milkman begins in the city and returns to the rural place of his origins. Milkman never makes it back to the urban setting of his birth with the newfound knowledge of his history and identity but his leap at the end of the novel effectively reconnects him to his ancestral past. Unlike the usual journey found within the pastoral narrative in which the city dweller is spurred on to travel when he rejects the values of the urban landscape and is morally reinvigorated by means of a return to the rural, Milkman's journey to the South begins with a very mercenary desire to find bags of gold that he believes to be hidden in a cave. Along the way, however, the journey transforms itself into a quest to uncover the Dead family history, a shift that is best explained as a conversion of the pastoral into a tool for recovering forgotten histories.

The text begins in an urban setting, providing significant details that offer a concrete historical frame in a move designed to refute the widespread cultural amnesia

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<sup>45</sup> Catherine Carr Lee writes that although *Song* "reflects archetypal initiation patterns found throughout western literature as Milkman follows a quest first for gold, then for knowledge about his ancestors... the novel subverts the dominant model of initiation" that is found in both American and African American fiction (109). For additional discussions of the novel and the quest narrative, see Bonnie J. Barthold's *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States* (1981), Susan L. Blake's "Folklore and Community in *Song of Solomon* (1980), Peter Bruck's "Returning to One's Roots: The Motif of Searching and Flying in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*." (1982), Jane Campbell's *Mythic Black Fiction: The Transformation of History* (1986), Genevieve Fabre's "Genealogical Archaeology or the Quest for Legacy in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1988) and Leslie A Harris's "Myth as Structure in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1980) are major pieces of scholarship that have discussed the role that the quest plays in shaping the narrative of *Song of Solomon*. Theoretical discussions of initiation themes and the heroic quest

that spurs Milkman to ask his father, “Your father was a slave?” (53). The suicide note at the beginning of the novel sets the events in 1931, and substantial sections of the novel trace the Dead family history. The novel works to reverse what appears to be cultural amnesia of African American history by way of recognizable historical allusions. The novel makes references to segregated hospitals and cemeteries as well as institutions such as The Freedmen’s Bureau. Additional references to Jim Crow laws and the Ku Klux Klan inform the reader of the Deads’ historical circumstances. That is, although they may be economically prosperous, they nevertheless live in an atmosphere of racial violence.

In line with critic Dana Medoro who reads these as part of a series of “clever manoeuvres” designed to indicate “a vitality not captured in our reduced by official documentation and procedure” (3-4), I read the description of Not Doctor Street as exemplary of the struggle against cultural amnesia:

Town maps registered the street as Mains Avenue, but the only colored doctor in the city had lived and died on that street, and when he moved there in 1896 his patients took to calling the street, which none of them lived in or near, Doctor Street. Later, when other Negroes moved there, and when the postal service became a popular means of transferring messages among them, envelopes from Louisiana, Virginia, Alabama, and Georgia began to arrive addressed to people at house numbers on Doctor Street. Some of the city legislators...saw to it that “Doctor Street” was never used in any official capacity. And since they knew that only Southside residents kept it up, they had notices posted ... saying that the avenue ... had always been and would always be known as Mains Avenue and Not Doctor Street. It was a genuinely clarifying public notice because it gave Southside residents a way to keep their memories alive and please the city legislators as well. They called it Not Doctor Street... (4)

Medoro rightly reads this as a moment that speaks to African American manipulation of

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specifically appear in Mircea Eliade’s *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1965), Northrup Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), and Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968).

judicial policies that were often designed in such a way as to abuse African Americans.<sup>46</sup> The Southside inhabitants are able to subvert official channels by which places are named.

Building off of Medoro's analysis, I would like to develop a reading of the cartographic dimensions in the passage above. What is truly at stake with the naming of Not Doctor Street is the recognition of a community's cultural memory as it is linked to a culturally significant place. The informal name for this street, which gains such currency among the African American community, reflects their pride in the achievements of the colored doctor. The refusal to recognize this community-based name change to "Doctor Street" by the official legislators must also be read as an attempt at geographical preservation of place to the point of excluding African Americans. Ironically, as the narrative voice relates, the very attempt to exclude the memories of the Southside residents results in the titular phrase "Not Doctor Street." This apparent concession suggests that the cultural histories that minority communities hold of a particular place by way of their memories and internal communication do in fact have some ability to change official discourses of place. In this passage, Morrison offers an example of a transgress cartography.

The text further works to recapture lost African American platial histories by focusing on the dangers that the Deads themselves faced in pastoral settings. A number of historical inaccuracies were formalized in the aftermath of slavery when former slaves were required to register with the Freedmen's Bureau. The Dead family exemplifies this

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<sup>46</sup> See for instance Richard Bardolph's *The Civil Rights Record: Black Americans and the Law, 1849-1970*. Bardolph offers a historical account of abuses perpetrated by Jim Crow Laws, the Ku Klux Klan, the Black Codes and the unenforced Constitutional reforms that were designed to give African Americans equal rights as citizens.

when a drunken Northerner mistakenly records “Dead” as the family name. Singing Bird, Milkman’s paternal Native American grandmother, positively claims this name as representative of the end of past oppressions. Sing’s comment refers both to the past horrors of slavery as well as the genocide perpetrated against Native Americans. Despite Sing’s hopeful interpretation of the name Dead, the murder of Milkman’s paternal grandfather Macon Dead I at the hands of neighboring white farmers who resent his successes at the farm demonstrates the way that the injustices of slavery survive into the era of Reconstruction and manifest themselves in relation to issues of land ownership. The novel depicts the ways in which during this time “American law persistently shuts down black freedom [and] progressively subdivides legislation to sustain inequity and segregation” (Medoro 4).

Macon I’s death is a significant element in the struggle of black Americans to become citizens as opposed to slaves of ex-slaves. Pilate relates about Macon Dead I’s death, “They blew him five feet up into the air. He was sitting on his fence waiting for ‘em, and they snuck up from behind and blew him five feet up into the air” (*Song of Solomon* 40). Macon Dead II, Milkman’s father later explains that it was in fact a group of neighboring white farmers who tricked an illiterate Macon I into signing away his farm. The stealthy nature of their attack from behind thwarts Macon I’s attempts to protect his property. The white farmers’ actions represent a premeditated attempt to drive African Americans away from territory that they viewed largely as their birthright. This violence represents a different type of hardship in relating to land in addition to Cleaver’s assertion that black Americans have been working to get away from agriculture as a labor source.

After witnessing their father's murder, the pastoral mythology of the rural South becomes largely inaccessible for both Macon II and Pilate. Their relationship to the land of Montour County is forever changed. Before his father's murder Macon II remembers the idyllic elements of this tract of land in Montour County Pennsylvania that made the family participants in the American dream. Macon II relates that

It was a little place. About eighty of it was woods. must have been a fortune in oak and pine; maybe that's what they wanted--the lumber, the oak and the pine. We had a pond that was four acres. And a stream, full of fish. Right down in the heart of a valley. Prettiest mountain you ever saw, Montour Ridge. We lived in Montour County. Just north of the Susquehanna. We had a four-stall hog pen. The big barn was forty feet by a hundred and forty--hip-roofed too. And all around in the mountains was deer and wild turkey (*Song* 51).

At first glance, Macon II's memories of the farm share many of the characteristics of an Edenic landscape. Macon's words highlight the beauty of the place. His memory frames the farm around elements of wilderness: the streams, the mountains and the forest all lend the farm the appearance of being untouched and pristine. The passage sets Macon's farm as non-exploitative.

Some critics have read the Dead family farm as complicit with the Edenic discourse surrounding the plantation house during slavery. Stephanie Demetrakopoulis reads the farm as reproducing the plantation as a type of prelapsarian Eden: "a prelapsarian Garden of Eden, shaped out of the virgin American territory by a godlike Black man" (91). Along these lines, others have read the construction of the farm as an exercise in patriarchal will. Critic Murray therefore reads *Song* as intervening in an ongoing critique of the deleterious effects of relying too heavily upon a patriarchal focus as a source of emancipatory politics after Reconstruction (122). Murray reads the figures

of Dr. Foster, Macon Dead I and Macon Dead II as emblematic of a pattern of response to the disenfranchisement and segregationist policies of the United States by drawing on patriarchal systems of action that ultimately “[bolster] a conservative and pernicious agenda” (122).

In contrast to Murray, however, I read the model of coexistence with the land that Macon visualizes as far from solely and exploitatively rooted in patriarchal values. Instead, it is one of interdependence. Macon I only farms about fifty of the one hundred and fifty acres available. Macon II’s memories of the wild turkeys that his father caught and slow roasted for his children are tender moments. He further remembers the cherry trees that bore fruit that his sister Pilate made into pies. In other words, the Dead family offers a model of cohabitation with a wilderness landscape. The place of the farm offers an alternative to wilderness landscapes that are usually solitary spaces devoid of human elements. While the family lives off of the bounty of the land and converts part of the land into a dairy farm, by no means do they use the land as a means of profit. Instead, the family’s interaction on the land binds them together as a unit. The novel’s depiction of this familial activity resonates with the labor that African Americans contributed in the South in a way that fashioned the American wilderness into agricultural landscapes that contributed economically to the United States and also participated in the mythology of constructing American identity by taming the environment.<sup>47</sup> Morrison’s depiction of the family’s activities on the farm aligns their activities with the language used in settling the

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<sup>47</sup> Several monograph length studies dedicated to rectifying the omissions of economic, cultural and social contributions of black Americans to the South include Eugene D Genovese’s *Roll, Jordan, Roll. The World the Slaves Made*. (1974), Kenneth Stampp’s *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery and the Ante-Bellum South* (1989) and Eric Foner’s *A Short History of Reconstruction* (1990). For a gendered contextualization of these contributions, see Deborah Gray White’s *Aren’t I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1985).

American frontier. While cooped up in Circe's house after their father's murder, Macon II reflects that "he had been working on a farm since he was five or six years old" (167). Pilate who "was born wild" misses the direct access to the land itself. Unable to pick cherries from her own tree or to get milk from her own cow or tomatoes from her own vine, Pilate is devastated. The siblings are not content to remain trapped inside Circe's carpeted house where they can only sneak looks at the sky from behind curtains. Macon II's longing to return to his work of carving out the family farm from the untouched wilderness land corresponds directly to early myths of settlement where settlers to America accessed individual American identity by way of their acts of farming and controlling the land.

The text enacts a shift in the experiences of Macon II and Pilate after they leave Circe's house that corresponds to the shift in their relationship to the natural world after seeing Macon I blasted into the sky. At first they revel in Montour County. They eat fruit that grows wild. They walk barefoot through dewy grass. They bathe in the Susquehanna river. They find the touch of warm dirt to be soothing to their feet. Their intimate knowledge of the land of Montour County at first promises to assuage the immediate trauma of their father's murder and to continue to offer the support of a home. The wilderness appears to provide for their needs, to soothe their trouble spirit, and to still grant them access to the national imaginary.

However, on the third day the landscape takes on a new and terrifying significance for them as they begin to see the ghost of their father:

On the third day they woke to find a man that looked just like their father sitting on a stump not fifty yards away. He was not looking at them; he was just sitting there. They would have called out to him or run toward him except he was staring right

past them with such distance in his eyes, he frightened them. So they ran away. All day long at various intervals they saw him: staring down into duck ponds; framed by the Y of a sycamore tree; shading his eyes from the sun as he peered over a rock at the wide valley floor beneath them. Each time they saw him they backed off and went in the opposite direction.

Macon Sr.'s spectral presence represents the way in which his murder becomes inseparable from the American landscape. His act of looking at nothing in particular gives him an air of being everywhere at once and nowhere in particular. He becomes a haunting presence that follows them; yet, paradoxically he precedes them by always appearing in a particular place before them. The sycamore tree literally acts as a frame for him. His interest in the physical features of the landscape such as the duck pond, the valley and the sun to the point of excluding the human elements that inhabit it makes the newly orphaned children painfully aware of their vulnerability in the wilderness and reminds them constantly that they too might fall victim to the systematic violence that claimed their father.

The once familiar and soothing land of Montour County now takes on a sinister caste to the siblings, going from a peaceful Eden to a landscape of terror:

Now the land itself, the only one they knew and knew intimately, began to terrify them. The sun was blazing down, the air was sweet, but every leaf that the wind lifted, every rustle of a pheasant hen in a clump of ryegrass, sent needles of fear through their veins. The cardinals, gray squirrels, the garden snakes, the butterflies, the ground hogs and rabbits – all the affectionate things that had peopled their lives ever since they were born became ominous signs of a presence that was searching for them, following them. Even the river's babbling sounded like the call of a liquid throat waiting, just waiting for them. That was in the daylight. How much more terrible was the night. (168).

Elements that were once familiar and pleasant markers of childhood have now become fearful indicators of an impending doom. Their fear is that the landscape will consume

them. The river becomes “a liquid throat.” By stripping the Susquehanna River of its name in this passage Morrison conveys the way in which the siblings can no longer belong to the American landscape or claim it as their own. The passage also makes an important distinction between changes in the land itself and changes in the perceptions of Pilate and Macon II. The sun continues to blaze down as usual and the air continues to be as sweet. The change in the landscape is really a change in their perception.

The trauma that Pilate and Macon II experience is emblematic of the historical difficulties faced by ex-slaves in maintaining relationships to the land of America. The geographical connections that Macon makes, the Susquehanna River and Montour County situate the farm squarely in American geography, making it an American space. Thus, when Macon I is shot, his farm stolen and his children run off, the perpetrators are symbolically expelling an African American family from participating in the American nation. The Dead family’s experiences demonstrate the inaccessibility of the pastoral mythology of the rural American landscape particularly for black Americans.

The act of destroying the Dead farm represents a resurgence of the historical past of slavery. It is also in many ways an attack on individual identity that is manifested through the cultural connection to land. The violence itself is motivated by an understanding of land as an asset to be used or consumed. The violence experienced in the aftermath of slavery dictates the types of relationships that former slaves have with their surroundings. As Guitar tells Milkman, “The earth is soggy with black people’s blood. And before us Indian blood” (158). The experience of seeing their father shot and writhing on the ground as he dies fundamentally changes Macon II’s and Pilate’s relationship to the farm land that was once the center of their domestic scene. From this

moment, Macon II and Pilate become orphans. They are forced to wander the woods in an effort to evade pursuit by the murderers. Their father's murder curtails their access to a rooted life in Montour County.

As though trying to recapture this sense of belonging, Macon II becomes obsessed with acquiring wealth and property after his father's death. I further read this as a quest to own a part of the American dream. Macon II explains to his son that he is ready to buy up slivers of property that communities do not want other minorities to own. He tries to impart this wisdom and drive to earn thing on to his son. The end result of this drive is Macon's exile within the community. The community dislikes Macon II because of this very mercenary practice on which he has built his life. Their rejection of him is also a rejection of his attitude to land as a commodity to be owned. As in the case of Not Doctor Street, the community values land according to its cultural significance.

Milkman's return to the South is a means of healing these gaps in his personal family history. Although he goes first in search of missing gold, he soon finds himself on a quest to learn about his family history. The physical insertion of his body into the inhospitable pastoral landscape represents an insertion of African American history into the rural area. The more time Milkman spends in the South, the more "his interest in his own people, not just the ones he met, had been growing" (293). His longing to find out about his father, his grandfather and grandmother and their experiences here replace his search for gold. The rural becomes a crucial site to repair family history and for Milkman to construct his sense of self and alter his attitudes to his family.

Going back to Shalimar teaches Milkman the story of his family's connection to the myth of the flying African and restores the relationship to the territory of the United

States that is destroyed after Macon I's murder. Being forcibly evicted from Montour County further exacerbated the Dead family's historical continuity. Neither Pilate nor Macon II is able to remember their mother. Because they are forced to flee their home, they never learn their father's real name is Jake. They also lose their connection to the family farm, which is the last place that they experienced his love. Pilate's isolation and her inability to connect to another community after leaving this place becomes a manifestation of their separation from their cultural past. Pilate's lack of a navel, an abnormality that she lives with from birth, denies her access to religious communities, romantic relationships and normal friendships. When people learn of this difference, they leave her behind because they think that it must mean that she is abnormal. This community act of pushing Pilate away culminates in her outsider status in Southside. Pilate lives with her daughter Reba and granddaughter Hagar outside of town and away from her brother's family. When Milkman goes to Shalimar in search of the gold that he believes to be in Hunter's Cave, he notices many women that look like his Aunt Pilate, an observation that suggests that this is her ancestral home and rightful place.

Morrison uses the pastoral in *Song of Solomon* to enact a return to rural locations of the United States as a means of accessing a fragmented family history, of filling in a variety of personal historical gaps and of constructing an individual identity that is nevertheless connected to one's family as well as one's race. For Milkman Dead, this discovery of self comes with the cost of a negation of self. As Valerie Smith writes, Milkman is able to gather his "feelings of fragmentation into a new coherence" only after he has let go of both his narcissistic ego and his sense of self (726). Milkman's leap at the novel's end "at least [counters] the current of least resistance" that "carries [him] away

from a sense of collective and ultimately self-identity and into a swamp of racial bigotry and violence” depicted by the figure of Guitar (Buehrer 23). As Milkman leaps off of a cliff at the novel’s end to meet Guitar, he accesses his family history and the legend of the flying African that is his heritage. Although this leap may represent a final acceptance of and reinsertion of the Dead family into the place of Shalimar, Milkman must sacrifice himself to achieve this. This detail suggests that the coherence of the community comes at the expense of the individual and offers a version of historical continuity and personal sacrifice that is indelibly linked to the rural space.

*Song of Solomon* ultimately reworks the mode of the pastoral by offering a model of negotiating a place within the American nation at the expense of the individual self. *Jazz* offers up the City as an alternative location in which African American communities can access their traumatic past of slavery while also coming to terms with it by narrativizing the place of the City into being. The City has widely been read as Harlem in the early 1900s. The protagonists of this novel, Violet and Joe Trace come to Harlem during the Great Migration to the North. The location of the City represents the act of conquering space, of validating it by naming it. The Cityscape becomes a backdrop for a new web of relationships that the racial violence experienced in the rural. In *Jazz*, the figures of Wild, Violet Trace and Alice Mann demonstrate the ways in which urban places afford new ways of belonging to the nation. Women’s scarred bodies become sites that encode national belonging.

Moving to the north in *Jazz* literalizes reconnection with land as patrimony, the relationship that was destroyed in the Dead family’s experiences in Montour County. Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyries argues that the text dramatizes a “repossessed black

space...during the Harlem Renaissance, the City functions as the privileged site of a positive construction of blackness” (223). These constructions take place through family interactions, community organizations and even individual entrepreneurship. As opposed to the Southern landscape experiences of poverty and fragmented family life, the City allows Violet to do hair and for Joe to sell cosmetics. Although the City is expensive, there are far more opportunities to earn money. It is in the City that Violet can give in to the yearning to be a mother. As Joe Trace’s name implies, migrant populations leave traces of themselves by way of signs of their dispersion on the surface of the city as well as each other. The marks that these characters leave on the City serve to establish boundaries about the urban space, distilling it and corralling into a place that becomes an important location for black American culture and identity.

Much like *Song*, the text of *Jazz* depicts the inhospitability of the rural landscape for African American populations. Violet accompanies Joe to the North, in an effort to physically leave many of the hardships of the South behind. Violet’s early childhood is spent living in an abandoned shack off of food that neighbors are willing to share. Violet and her siblings live in the tiny village of Rome in Vesper County. Violet’s father leaves after becoming “fed up and stunned by the uselessness of his back and hands, tired of fried green tomatoes and grits, hungry beyond belief for the meat of some meat and not just its skin, furious at the price of coffee and the shape of his oldest girl’s legs” (138). These details give a clear picture of the hardships faced by the family in the rural spaces post-slavery. Unable to make enough to survive, the family is further made destitute when men come to claim the livestock, the furniture and the household amenities as payment. As per the contract signed, it is the right and duty of these men to claim these

materials “if the rain refused to rain, or if stones of ice fell from the sky instead and cut the crop down to its stalks” (138). The family farm, ravaged by drought and hail, does not produce. Presumably, as per the conditions of the family contract, these men take these goods as payment. Violet’s childhood experience illustrates the ways in which African American families could not make ends meet after slavery ended.

Joe Trace has managed to create a relationship with the rural landscape. In contrast to Violet’s experience, the wilderness offers Joe a way of accessing a model of manhood that stresses values of individuality and independence. Henry Lestory teaches Joe to hunt.. He also teaches him never to kill the young and the female out of respect for the vulnerable. At first, the woods offer Joe a place of belonging. Not only can he shoot enough to eat well and feed those in his care, but he also appreciates the world of the wilderness. Joe was a man who “butchered when needed, plowed, fished, sold skins and game” thereby accessing a type of independence. He appreciates “the music the world makes, familiar to fishermen and shepherds” that “woodsmen have also heard” (176). Like Macon I, Joe finds limited ways to express his manhood through his interaction with the wilderness landscape.

Although Joe’s connection to the woods allows him to deal with certain traumas like his mother’s abandonment, the rural landscape remains a landscape of personal trauma for Joe Trace. Joe Trace’s relationship to the landscape in Vesper County is heavily mediated by his mother’s rejection of him. Joe believes that his mother is Wild, a mad woman who appears unexpectedly in canefields, leaves traces of herself in the woods and lives in a cave. She does not speak. The only sound that she makes is a childish laugh. Once Joe thinks that he hears a scrap of song that he believes comes from

her throat. She appears without warning next to cane cutters. The community accepts Wild's outsider status, assuming that she has experienced some type of trauma that necessitates her flight from social order. As Hunter's Hunter states, "Crazy people got reasons" (175). Women leave her food on their doorsteps. She seems more at home in the woods where redwing birds follow her around. Her rejection of Joe and her refusal to acknowledge him is an extension of this outright rejection of social and cultural roles. Wild is the physical embodiment of the experience of slavery and its aftermath. Wild's own inability to communicate her experiences conveys a sense of the absence of complete and accurate records about slavery.

The twisted tree that marks Wild's lair come to stand in for Wild's own inner psychic torture:

The third time Joe had tried to find her (he was a married man by then) he had searched the hillside for the tree -- the one whose roots grew backward as though, having gone obediently into earth and found it barren, retreating to the trunk for what was needed. Defiant and against logic its roots climbed. Toward leaves, light, wind. Below that tree was the river whites called Treason where fish raced to the line, and swimming among them could be riotous or serene. But to get there you risked treachery by the very ground you walked on. The slopes and low hills that fell gently toward the river only appeared welcoming; underneath vines, carpet grass, wild grape, hibiscus and wood sorrel, the ground was porous as a sieve. A step could swallow your foot or your whole self. (182)

Like the tree, Wild herself defies logic by continuing to survive in the woods by herself outside of social constraints and communities. Like the threatening land itself which threatens to swallow Joe as he goes in search of her, Wild's rejection of Joe as her biological son is as much of an emotional threat to Joe.

While Vesper County provides an opportunity for Joe to access and perform a type of masculine identity, Violet's experiences in Vesper illustrate the ways that rural locations do not provide the same opportunities for women. Violet constantly labors as a field hand. She is stronger than many of the men that she works with out of necessity. The extreme nature of her labor results in three miscarriages, two of which happen while she is at work in the field. In order to steal time to see Joe Trace, Violet cuts extra wood for the family so that they won't need her at night. She carries the welts caused by whipping by "a two-tone peckerwood" when she returns to the field late the next morning after waiting for Joe Trace. The rural landscape is one of work and hardship for Violet in which she is denied the opportunity to be a mother and wife.

Violet's body functions as a site that encodes the cultural memory of the aftermath of slavery. Her physical inability to have children, the result of multiple miscarriages in the field, is a reminder of the ravages of extreme physical labor as a field laborer. Her muscular build is a testament to the ways in which this labor has changed her. Her body takes on androgynous characteristics as she is forced to subdue her feminine identity and sexuality in order to function most efficiently as a laborer.

While the vision of the pastoral as a means of accessing a national mythology and iconic landscape excludes African Americans, *Jazz* depicts the City as a place in which a connection to an American occurs. The City offers a backdrop for Violet to have free choice that was denied to her in the rural South. A key descriptive passage provided by the novel's narrator offers this very depiction of the City as a new and hopeful place on which one's individual identity can be imprinted:

Daylight slants like a razor cutting the buildings in half. In the top half I see looking faces and it's not easy to tell which are

people, which the work of stonemasons. Below is shade where any blasé thing takes place: clarinets and lovemaking, fists and the voices of sorrowful women. A city like this makes me dream tall and feel in on things. Hep. It's the bright steel rocking above the shade below that does it. When I look over strips of green grass lining the river, at church steeples and into the cream-and-copper halls of apartment buildings, I'm strong. Alone, yes, but top-notch and indestructible—like the City in 1926 when all the wars are over and there will never be another one. The people down there in the shadow are happy about that. At last, at last, everything's ahead.

The City is ultimately a hopeful place for new beginnings. As the narrator explains it, ““Nobody says it's pretty here; nobody says its easy either. What it is is decisive, and if you pay attention to the street plans, all laid out, the City can't hurt you” (8). In spite of this, memories of traumatic experiences in the South survive the journey and remain important issues to be worked out in the geography of the Northern City. The City takes on the hopefulness that is commonly invested in the rural landscape in pastoral works. The urban landscape inspires dreams and hope for the future in the speaker. The individuals themselves seem to interact with the architecture. The speaker further experiences the feeling of being indestructible in direct contrast to feelings of living in the South where violence can strike at any moment and anything can happen at any time. Just as Macon Dead's name is meant to signify leaving behind the past, the new cityscape also inspires the inhabitants to think that the past is behind them and the future is ahead.

The City therefore becomes a safe haven in which African American women can properly arm and defend themselves against both racial violence and African American men. To be sure, the City remains an expensive place to live, but now African Americans have the opportunity to earn money. It is not a pretty or an easy place to live but it is safe.

The architecture of the City creates wide avenues along which black Americans can walk safely without fearing for their safety. Alice Manfred reminisces that she only started to feel safe after moving to the City. Alice sees evidence of this newfound capacity for black women to take their own physical and emotional protection into their own hands in the newspapers with their multiple accounts of women who had fought back against their attackers. Further examples are the scars that many men bear of black women who had cut them to the teeth or stabbed them with sharpened instruments. *Jazz* connects Alice Manfred's own violent feelings to her past experiences living in rural places: "Seeded in childhood, watered every day since, fear had sprouted through her veins all her life. Thinking war thoughts it had gathered, blossomed into another thing." By using botanical imagery to describe Alice's fear and chronicle its transformation into anger, the text makes an explicit connection between the present state of anger and past experiences of trauma in the rural landscape.

The City allows for the freedom to be a part of a community in public places such as apartment buildings.

You would have thought everything had been forgiven the way they played. The clarinets had trouble because the brass was cut so fine, not lowdown the way they love to do it, but high and fine like a young girl singing by the side of a creek, passing the time, her ankles cold in the water. The young men with brass probably never saw such a girl, or such a creek, passing the time, her ankles cold in the water. The young men with brass probably never saw such a girl, or such a creek, but they made her up that day. On the rooftops. Some on 254 where there is no protective railing; another at 131, the one with the apple-green water-tank, and somebody right next to it, 133, where lard cans of tomato plants are kept, and a pallet for sleeping at night. To find coolness and a way to avoid mosquitoes unable to fly that high up or unwilling to leave the tender neck meat near the street lamps. So from Lenox to St. Nicholas and across 135<sup>th</sup> Street, Lexington, from Convent to Eight I could hear the men playing out their maple-sugar hearts, tapping it from four-hundred-year-old tree and letting it run

down the trunk, wasting it because they didn't want one either. They just wanted to let it run that day, slow if it wished, or fast, but a free run down trees bursting to give it up (171).

The passage above describes on the surface of things a scene of rooftop musicians. The melody that these musicians play reminds the listener of a peaceful scene that is physically located within the urban but emotionally rooted in the rural. The image of the girl that the music conjures up represents a type of vulnerability but also safety. The girl, like the music might be delicate, but she is pleasantly inserted in the rural landscape. Although the city dwellers never saw such a scene according to the narrator, she exists in their imagination. In this way the memory of the past in rural places stays alive within urban inhabitants but trampled into a manageable unit. The passage emphasizes the communal activity of the musicians. The passage carefully maps their presence up and down the street at 133, 254 and 131 and at Lenox, St. Nicholas, Lexington and Convent. But the rooftop also preserves memories of the rural in a much more practical way. The rooftops further invoke elements of the rural by way of physical details that remind readers of ex-urban spaces. The apple-green water tank and the cans of tomato plants suggest that the rooftop functions as a location that is reminiscent of the rural. In this quote the musicians themselves also become the tree, their inner musical ability likened to the sap of a maple tree. They have literally become the tree that represents a four hundred year old relationship between African Americans and the land. They therefore embody the historical connection to the past, bringing it with them into the urban space through their music.

As these texts demonstrate, it is entirely possible to cultivate a meaningful attitude to the environment from an urban location. Memories of rural spaces and rural locations

survive in the music of musicians and in the memories of ordinary people. Moving from the rural location to an urban location is therefore as much an exercise in memory as it is an exercise in economic and physical survival. Indeed, it is this move away from the rural location that paradoxically allows the characters discussed here to give voice to their experiences. The bodily scars that provide a cartographic orientation to the traumas experienced are finally vocalized.

### **Conclusion: On Learning How to Flow**

I began this project by looking at the defining moment of Christopher Columbus' arrival to the New World. I want to end this project by looking at a similar moment that occurs much later in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. William Boelhower draws our attention to this moment in his essay "'I'll teach you how to flow': On figuring out Atlantic studies." Act 2 of *The Tempest* begins when King Alonso, Gonzalo, Sebastian and Antonio arrive on Prospero's island after surviving their shipwreck. Sebastian states to Alonso, "I am standing water" to which Antonio replies, "I'll teach you how to flow." Boelhower identifies a self-interestedness and resourcefulness in Antonio's approach as well as underlying "geopolitical thoughts" that prompt Antonio to attempt to secure the crown for himself by encouraging Sebastian to conspire with him to overthrow the King. Equiano's and Columbus' movements about the globe can be identified as a pattern of traveling the Atlantic and an emerging set of markers of ships and maps as a type of semiotic vocabulary that delimited the Atlantic world. Thus, when we study the Atlantic world, "we come back to the question of learning how to flow, for studying the Atlantic world means above all attending to its uniquely extended heuristic space; which, in the beginning, unfolded as dialectic between ship and map and the new order these represented" (Boelhower 46).

In part, "(Re)Placing Nations" has been about suggesting a different way in which to map the black Atlantic world, that is, through the trope of the scarred female body. The experiences of women during these acts of exploration and colonization have been doubly silenced. Not only were they emptied by colonizers, they were also silenced and erased in neo-colonial configurations of political power. In *The Tempest*, Caliban

proclaims “this island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother.” Women have been subordinated first to colonizers and again to their male counterparts within the nation. This project envisions the connection of the black Atlantic world which opens up a space for them to recapture a meaningful relationship to territory by recuperating their various practices of national belonging.

In the narratives I have discussed here, the scarred female body functions as standing water that flows. Embedded in the scars of the female bodies represented in these works is the shared history of the Middle Passage experience and the shared victimization by the discourses that enabled it. By focusing on place, I have sought to uncover the ways these bodies engage in their own geohistorical enterprises. These bodies all engage in movements that force us to question imagined and real boundaries that we have brought into existence through the imagination of nations. Kincaid’s and Mootoo’s gardens reveal the way that place is always already a cultural construction in which political histories are embedded. By moving away from rural locations and into transnational urban centers, protagonists such as Amabelle Desir and Sophie Caco reveal the limitations of national belonging that the nation-state through violence against rural populations of women. Ultimately, these movements speak back to the geohistorical configuration of the rural, demonstrating that their “flows” provide them with unique opportunities to speak their experiences of black Atlantic subjectivity.

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