

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: (RE)MAPPING THE BLACK ATLANTIC:
VIOLENCE, AFFECT, AND SUBJECTIVITY
IN CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN
WOMEN'S MIGRATION LITERATURE

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Women's Studies

This dissertation is a project of literary reclamation, canonical revision, cultural analysis, and interdisciplinary remapping. Drawing on American studies, women's studies, postcolonial studies, and Caribbean studies, particularly performance theory and recent theoretical work on affectivity, it analyzes the negotiations of protagonists who move back and forth between and among cultures and nations, exploring complex possibilities for subjectivity, identity, and citizenship within worlds of domestic and neocolonial violence. Collectively, America's Dream, The Line of the Sun, Geographies of Home, Breath, Eyes, Memory, and The Unbelonging re-map Gilroy's influential theory of the Black Atlantic in three ways: by tracing the legacies of colonization in relation to interpersonal violence; by re-writing national narratives of the metropole from migrant Caribbean women's perspectives; and by including Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, as well as Jamaica, within its purview. While arguing for the complex personhood of

these migrant protagonists and elucidating their legacies of pain and healing, alongside their victimization and resistance, this dissertation also provides a materialist analysis of cultural production, examining how these books circulate as objects in the global/local economy of book selling and distribution. Through a small-scale ethnographic study of independent publishers, alongside a material and visual cultural analysis of the book covers, it analyzes the politics of publication and canonization of Caribbean women's literature. By centering the Caribbean and its diaspora in an American Studies project, this dissertation pushes the boundaries of the discipline beyond the examination of cultures in the United States or American imperialism in other nations. (Re)Mapping the Black Atlantic asks not only that the Caribbean be considered part of the Americas, but also that the relational aspects of migration between the Caribbean on the one hand, and the United States and Britain on the other, become part of the new cartographies of American Studies.

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SUBJECTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S MIGRATION
LITERATURE

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to two strong women who have passed on within the last five years. I was fortunate to know and love my grandmother, Alice Davis (Johnston) Houghton, for nearly thirty-five years of my life. Without her encouragement and support, this project would not have been what it is today. And although I never knew her personally, I am told that so much of what is in these pages represents Millicent Ophelia Grant's life. Peace.

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I would like to thank Dr. Sandra Courtman for inviting me to publish an earlier version of Chapter 4 in her edited collection, Beyond the Blood, the Beach, and the Banana: New Perspectives in Caribbean Studies (2004). That publication grew out of my participation in The Society for Caribbean Studies in 2000. I also want to acknowledge the thoughtful insights and suggestions I have received from members of numerous professional associations over the years. I am especially grateful for the intellectual rigor and abiding friendships that developed through the 2003 and 2004 Futures of American Studies Institutes at Dartmouth College. A special thanks to Drs. Donald Pease, Robyn Wiegman, and Elizabeth Dillon for facilitating an intensive and productive week that engaged scholars and graduate students' most current work. I am honored to have received valuable feedback from numerous gifted and generous people.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Mappings and Interventions

How subjects move or do not move tells us much about what counts as human, as culture and as knowledge.

- Caren Kaplan, "Transporting the Subject"

Migration pre-dates recorded history and characterizes our contemporary moment. According to the United Nations in 2002, 185 million people world-wide live outside their countries of birth, and this number is up from eighty million three decades ago (GCIR par.5). An estimated 65,365 people from the Caribbean, excluding Puerto Rico, migrated to the United States in 2000 (GCIR, International Migration Statistics). Whether forced or voluntary, migration uproots people from their homes and communities and places them in new, unknown locations. This dissertation examines five novels by Caribbean-U.S./American and Caribbean-British women that represent and explore the everyday gendered experiences of characters who migrate between cultures in the Black Atlantic: Esmeralda Santiago's America's Dream (Puerto Rico/mainland United States); Judith Ortiz Cofer's The Line of the Sun (Puerto Rico/mainland United States); Loida Maritza Pérez's Geographies of Home (Dominican Republic/United States); Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory (Haiti/United States); and Joan Riley's The Unbelonging (Jamaica/United Kingdom).¹ In many of the novels, the characters flee a place under the cover of night because of the atrocities that determine their daily existence. Upon arrival, they face new forms of violence as their

¹ A note on terminology: I use "U.S./American" throughout this dissertation as a matter of precision. "American" culture could (and should) refer to North, Central, and South America. Since the 1970s, "Black British" has fallen out of favor because of its vague political use by the (white) British Left. "Caribbean-U.S./American" and "Caribbean-British" flag the specificity *and* the "between-ness" that characterizes migrants' lives in New York and London.

bodies—indeed their identities—are for the first time racialized and profiled by institutions, individuals, and circulating discourses. The characters must negotiate hegemonic national cultures that demand knowledge of a new language, indeed, a new way of “being.”

Collectively, the novels I analyze substantially re-map Paul Gilroy’s influential theory of the Black Atlantic in three ways: (1) by tracing the legacies of colonization in relation to interpersonal violence (domestic abuse, rape, and incest) in the Caribbean, New York, and London; (2) by re-writing national narratives of the metropole, specifically an inclusive “American Dream” and an embracing “Motherland,” from migrant Caribbean women’s perspectives; and (3) by including Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, as well as Jamaica (geographically and culturally) within its purview.² I argue in the pages that follow that the cultural work of these novels is to give voice to lost Caribbean histories of violence and sexuality, inscribing Caribbean women’s subjectivity into (post)colonial discourse. This dissertation analyzes the complexity and subtlety of varying representations of migrant Caribbean women’s daily lives: their negotiations of suffering and healing, victimization and agency, and complicity and resistance within social systems of race, class, gender, and nation through the theoretical lenses afforded by recent work on affect.

The novels that I examine complicate understandings of immigration and emigration as (inter)national narratives of exile in the name of economic opportunity,

² My use of the term “metropole” throughout this dissertation draws on postcolonial theory to flag the colonial epicenters and urban spaces of the New York and London metropolitan areas that the Caribbean migrants in the novels travel to in search of a safe haven and opportunities. This deployment of “metropole” is differentiated from its earlier form developed in political economics in the 1960’s-1970’s (known as “The Dependency School”) in which the flow of capital fans out to colonies and former colonies and is controlled by governments in France, Britain, Spain, and eventually the United States (Frank, 1969; Beckford 1972; Stavenhagen 1975; Wallerstein, 1976).

repatriation, or assimilation. In these texts, people leave their home(lands) because they are violent places; yet the characters are not refugees or asylum seekers. They simply seek safe places in which to live and heal, though they also find harsh conditions in the United States and Great Britain. In the Line of the Sun, Breath Eyes, Memory, and The Unbelonging inscribe return migrations as a continuation of their search. The poignancy of this return passage is precisely what drops out of most sociological constructions of immigration.³ Therefore, I deliberately use the term “migration,” as opposed to “immigration,” throughout my dissertation for three reasons: (1) to flag what Édouard Glissant theorizes as *detour*, a web of migrations that have saturated layered meanings (Glissant, Caribbean, 16); (2) to repudiate how “immigration” positions people as “others” and “outsiders” in the “host” country, constituted by state-sanctioned laws designed to police national boundaries, especially along race, class and gender lines, and to maintain rigid borders among and between those people who “belong” and those people who “do not belong” (Lowe 1996); and (3) because the language of “immigration” strips out the affective side of people’s migration experiences. My use of the terms “migration” and “migrant” is a political choice, indeed a deliberate strategy, to center the affective lives of the characters in the novels as they negotiate the cultural landscapes of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Caribbean.

My research on late twentieth-century Caribbean women’s migration narratives adds to the rich and valuable transnational work that is taking shape within American Studies. First, by including relevant histories of Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica alongside textual interpretations of women’s sexuality, violence,

³ Plaza and Henry, ed. Return to the Source (2006) is a good starting point for exploring this phenomenon in the English-speaking Caribbean.

and affect in each chapter, this dissertation expands what I have designated “the archive of the Black Atlantic.” Second, by centering the Caribbean and its diaspora vis-à-vis migration within an American Studies dissertation, I join those scholars pushing the boundaries of the discipline beyond the either/or study of cultures within the United States or American imperialism in other nations.⁴ In the remaining pages here, I situate my project and name how it intervenes in the scholarly work on Caribbean (women’s) migration, the Black Atlantic and the production of feminist transnational space, performance, affect, and violence against women, and frameworks in American Studies and comparative methodologies. I conclude with a discussion of my methodology and the content of my chapters.

Caribbean Connections: (Women’s) Migration to the United States and Great Britain

In this section, I provide the contours of Caribbean women’s migration to New York and London. I begin with a discussion of Caribbean women’s migration itself, using primary data in order to contextualize the five novels I examine in this dissertation. Next, I identify and review the sociological, historical, and anthropological secondary literature produced in both the United States and Great Britain that analyzes women’s migration experiences post World War II. I conclude this section with a review of the scholarly texts that specifically analyze Caribbean women’s migration writing.

Migration is a defining feature of modern life in the Caribbean. To understand its contemporary impact on women, it is important to understand that twentieth-century

⁴ Selected examples of other scholars who push the boundaries of American Studies through Latino/a and border studies are Dávila (2001; 2004); Negron-Muntaner (2004); Rodríguez (2001); Flores (2000); Ruiz (1999); Aparicio (1998); Saldívar (1997); Gutiérrez, D. (1995); Sanchez (1995); Gutiérrez, R (1991); Saldívar-Hull (1991); and Anzaldúa (1987).

migrations *from* the Caribbean have direct links to earlier histories of migrations *to* the islands. As Lynn Bolles explains in “Women of the Caribbean,” “Caribbean women can trace their cultural heritage to the largest forced migration in modern history (arising from the enslavement of African peoples) and to the coerced relocation of nineteenth-century indentured East Indians” (Bolles, “Women,” 466). Colonialism (specifically British, French, Dutch, and Spanish), slavery, and twentieth-century U.S./American military and political interventions changed who constitutes Caribbean peoples (in terms of race, ethnicity, religion) and plunged the region into “the orbit of global capital accumulation” (Ho 34). Indigenous populations (Arawak, Taino, and Carib peoples) are all but “reduced to a faint memory inscribed in archeological sites, and evident in some cultural traits such as language, geographical names, home furnishings, and some food customs” because of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century projects of genocide (Bolles 466). With five centuries of (forced) population movements across four continents, this Atlantic archipelago is a crossroads of cultures born out of a tumultuous history of (forced) migration.

Keith Nurse, an international relations scholar at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, argues that within the last fifty years, “the Caribbean has shifted from being a net importer of labour to become a net exporter” (Nurse 3). Outbound migrations are often explained in materialist, functionalist, or socio-historical terms concentrating their focus on “push-pull” factors (Thomas-Hope, Caribbean, 2-5). While it is outside the scope of this dissertation to examine twentieth-century Caribbean economic policy and its impact on women, it is possible to name distinct socio-economic patterns in order to understand how scholars have framed late twentieth century

Caribbean migration.⁵ In short, when particular island nations gained their independence from European colonial (or “overseas”) departments and the United States, resources, jobs, and security (financial, as well as military and national) shifted.⁶ In some cases, Caribbean migration is a means of survival; in other instances, it involves seeking opportunities beyond what is available on small islands or heeding the call of military and civil duty in Great Britain. The United States, Europe (including Great Britain), and Canada are the top three destinations because of earlier colonial ties and their global economic and political status. Today, “the Caribbean exports more of its people than any other region in the world” (Ho 34). St. Kitts, Nevis, and Grenada’s annual labor migration accounts for as much as 12% of their population, and Cuba and the Dominican Republic estimate that 8% of their respective populations reside in the United States (Nurse 3). The top sending countries in the Caribbean are Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and Guyana (Table 1). The United States “is the number one destination by a significant margin, and is estimated to account for as much as 75% of the Caribbean-born and first generation diaspora” (Nurse 3).

Table 1: The Caribbean Diaspora by Country of Residence (1996)

Country of Residence	Countries of Emigration & Diasporic Affiliation*	Estimates of population (million)
USA	Cuban born & Cuban Americans	1.0
	Puerto Rican born & born in continental USA	1.5
	Dominican-born & born in the USA	0.8
	Haitian-born & born in the USA	0.8

⁵ Sources on late twentieth-century economic development and its impact on women include but are not limited to Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, eds. Women, Men and the International Division of Labor (1983); Deere *et al.*, eds. In the Shadows of the Sun (1990); Matthei, “Gender and International Labor Migration” (1996); Chang, Disposable Domesticity (2000); Glenn, Unequal Freedom (2002); and Wright, Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism (2006).

⁶ Haiti was the first island-nation to win its independence from France, officially granted on January 1, 1804 following a bloody revolution. The Dominican Republic received its independence from Haiti on February 27, 1844. In 1898, Cuba was no longer a Spanish colony, but the United States claimed it as theirs until May 20, 1902. Jamaica gained its independence from the United Kingdom on August 6, 1962, while Trinidad and Tobago became independent on August 31 that same year. Barbados received its independence from the United Kingdom on November 30, 1966 and the Bahamas on July 10, 1973.

	West Indian** born & born in the USA	0.6
	Sub-total	4.7
Canada	Haitian-born & born in Canada	0.1
	West Indian born & born in Canada	0.15
France	French Antilles-born & born in France	0.2
Netherlands	Netherlands Antilles born & born in Netherlands	0.05
	Surinamese born & born in Netherlands	0.2
	Sub-total	0.25
United Kingdom	West Indian born & born in the UK	0.6
	Total	6.0

Source: Segal (1996): 28-29.

Notes:

* Caribbean diaspora includes foreign-born and persons with one or both parents of Caribbean origin.

** West Indies includes Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas and the Eastern Caribbean islands.

Scholars generally trace two statistically significant waves of Caribbean migration to the United States in the late twentieth century: 1945-1960 and 1970-1990. An exception to this pattern occurred prior to World War II, when relatively large numbers of Jamaican and Puerto Rican residents (mostly men) migrated to New York City from 1900-1930 (Campos 1980; History Task Force 1982; Flores 1993; Korrol 1994; Foner 2001; Thomas 2004; Thomas-Hope 2002). If the post-war boom (1945-1960) brought unskilled and semi-skilled industrial workers (primarily men) to the United States to help rebuild the nation, the “global economic restructuring and economic social decline in Caribbean countries” beginning in the 1970s increased the rate of migration, especially for women (Nurse 4). U.S. government agencies adapted questions on survey and census material to accommodate these changes. From 1970-1990, the period of time that best contextualizes the five novels this dissertation examines, the top four sending countries to the United States were Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti (Table 2).

Table 2: Caribbean immigrants in the U.S. (1971-1998)

Countries	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1994	1995-1998	Total
Cuba	265	145	48	89	547
Dominican Rep.	148	252	180	120	700
Haiti	56	138	81	60	335

Jamaica	138	208	72	67	485
Others	134	129	56	49	368
Total	741	872	437	385	2435

Source: UNECLAC (2002) Globalization and Development. Santiago: United Nations

It is worth noting that in addition to changing economic structures, the migration statistics in the above table also reflect political upheavals in particular island-nations. For example, the case of the Cuban Mariel boatlift in 1980 and the Haitian “rafters’ crisis” and political exodus in 1994 account for some of the shifts.

Statistical data do not break down the numbers of men and women who migrate to the United States from particular sending countries. At best, surveys and census material provide general estimates of regional gendered migration. With specific reference to the Caribbean, women have slightly outnumbered men in migrating to the United States since 1982, with a slight drop from 1985-1989 (Table 3). While this information is helpful for understanding the general context of migration, it is limited because it only reflects legal permanent settlers or immigrants. The numbers do not account for migrant workers, undocumented migrants, and refugees. Researchers estimate that women and children constitute up to eighty percent (80%) of refugees coming from a number of developing countries to the United States and Western Europe (UNHCR 1993).

Table 3: Immigrants Admitted to the U.S. by Region of Birth and Sex (1982-1992)

Region of Birth	1982-1984	1985-1989	1990-1992
Male Immigrants (thousands)	835	1511	1024
Percentage born in Caribbean	12.1	16.2	11.9
Female Immigrants (thousands)	819	1518	1146
Percentage born in Caribbean	13.2	15.5	11.4
Total Female Proportion Caribbean	48.2	50.1	52.8
	50.4	48.9	51.9

Source: Zlotnik (1993) “The South-to-North Migration of Women”

In The Migration of Women (1996), researchers from the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) argue that the top five reasons for the significant gaps in gender information can be traced to (1) “gender-neutral” migration theories based on macro-economics, (2) underestimates of women’s economic activity and labor force participation, (3) the neglect of women within social science research in general, (4) the prevalence of male scholars in most research on migration, and (5) inadequacies in existing data on women’s migrations at both the macro and micro levels (INSTRAW 3-4). Yet, with increased globalization (specifically, the quest of global economies for cheap labor), “women play increasingly important roles in labour markets and therefore in the socio-economic development” in both their adopted homelands and countries of origin (2). By 2004, The United Nations estimated in their World Survey on the Role of Women in Development that ninety (90) million women reside outside their countries of origin, and found that women’s representation among all international migrants increased from forty-six percent in 1960 to forty-nine percent in 2000. The report recognizes what feminist scholars and researchers for women-centered Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have argued since the 1970s: gender is a core organizing principle of social relations in every society and an important analytical unit in international migration, necessitating new measurements so that more accurate information can be collected.⁷ According to Rochelle Jones of the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, the key statistics within the 2004 United Nations report reveal that (1) women are migrating on their own as principle wage earners for their families residing in the country of origin, (2) women may be empowered by leaving hardships but find themselves in their new homelands in

⁷ For a more recent article that addresses this concern, consult Pedraza, “Women and Migration” (1991).

traditional female occupations perpetuating a gendered division of labor, (3) gender inequality in the country of origin propels migration, (4) refugee women face problems in form of legal and physical protection as well as access to resources, and (5) there are still discriminatory laws facing voluntary migrant women (Jones par. 3).

Sociologists, historians, and anthropologists have conducted case studies using qualitative research methods to begin to address the specificity of women's migration. In one of the first edited collections that addressed women as international migrants, Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities (1993), Gina Buijs pointed out that contributors were concerned with the specific experiences of women, "whether they are forced out by political circumstances...or driven by the need to escape poverty and destitution." (Buijs 1) The authors in this text keep gender in sharp focus while offering sweeping histories of the internal migrations of women in Peru, international women's migration from Chile to California, and the experience of Palestinian female exiles living in West Berlin, of Asian and African women in Great Britain, and of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Sheba George trace the specific experiences of women from Mexico and India respectively in Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration (1994) and When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration (2005). Texts that specifically address Caribbean women's migration experiences are Delores Mortimer and Roy B. Laporte's Female Immigrants to the United States: Caribbean, Latin American and African Experiences (1981), Irma Watkins-Owens's "Early Twentieth-Century Caribbean Women: Migration and Social Networks in New York City in Islands

in the City (2001), and two chapters in Nancy Foner's In a New Land: A Comparative View of Immigration (2005).

Mortimer and Laporte's Female Immigrants to the United States is a little-known collection of published seminar papers from a joint meeting of the African Studies Association and the Latin American Studies Association (Houston, TX, 1977) and from the National Convention of the International Studies Association (Washington, DC, 1978). Papers that specifically examine Caribbean women's migration or its context are Bryce-Laporte's "The New Immigration: The *Female* Majority," Delores M. Mortimer's "Race, Ethnicity, and Sex in the Recent Immigration: Some Preliminary Comments," Paule Marshall's "Black Immigrant Women in 'Brown Girl, Brownstones'," Monica Gordon's "Caribbean Migration: A Perspective on Women," A. Lynn Bolles's "Goin' Abroad': Working Class Jamaican Women and Migration," Susan H. Buchanan's "Profile of a Haitian Migrant Woman," and Barbara Christian's "Black, *Female*, and Foreign-Born: A Statement." This set of interdisciplinary papers is the first intervention in immigration history that focuses on women and does not adopt an economic or assimilationist model as its approach. Rather, it inscribes this history from the point of view of migrant women.

Nancy Foner specifically addresses immigrant Caribbean women's labor participation in the United States in her "Immigrant Women and Work, Then and Now" in In a New Land: a Comparative View of Immigration. This chapter compares turn of the century Italian and Jewish women's immigration histories with contemporary women's narratives from the Dominican Republic and Jamaica (thus comparing the two largest immigrant groups of women across time). This comparative work moves beyond

culling information from census data and secondary sources, in that Foner conducts interviews with the latter group of women. What she concludes is that their increased role in the public sphere has meant that they not only contribute a larger share of the family income than earlier women migrants, but also “have more authority in the household and greater self esteem” (Foner 96).⁸ In her chapter titled “Gendered Transitions: Jamaican Women in New York and London” in this same volume, Foner compares “how gender has structured the pattern of their movements abroad as well as their work and family lives” (156). She draws on ethnographic research she collected in the 1970’s from London and the 1980’s in New York to flesh out the similarities and differences in what migration meant for West Indian (primarily Jamaican) women in both locations. She concludes by urging other scholars to engage in similar projects with second-generation women to continue comparative studies in immigration history.

Most of the scholarship on Caribbean migration to the United States examines “Caribbean” or “West Indian” people as a group.⁹ Notable examples include Ransford Palmer’s Pilgrims from the Sun: West Indian Migration to America (1995), Elizabeth Thomas-Hope’s Explanation in Caribbean Migration: Perception and Image (1992) and her more recent Caribbean Migration (2002), Mary Water’s Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities (1999), and Percy Hintzen’s West Indian in the West: Self-Representations in an Immigrant Community (2001). What is remarkable about the last two texts is that like Foner, Waters and Hintzen do not rely solely on

⁸ Olivia M Espín’s Women Crossing Boundaries (1999), a collection of forty-three adolescent and adult women’s ethnographies across cultures, is particularly useful for exploring women’s changing role in the family and sexual orientation following migration.

⁹ In Water’s Black Identities, her informants explain that their use of “West Indian” is situational-specific term: if people are in an internationally-mixed group of people, they refer to themselves as “West Indian” or “island people;” if West Indians are among other migrants from the Caribbean, they identify with their particular island (56). For exceptions to this general guideline and further information, see Waters (1999).

statistics and secondary sources but interview selected members of two Caribbean communities to produce migration histories. Hintzen and his team of researchers selected forty-five people (gender is not revealed) in the San Francisco Bay Area West Indian community. This community consists mostly of people who migrated to San Francisco from New York, so it represents dispersal within the diaspora. Importantly, “West Indian” is a term adopted from the 1991 U.S. Census to distinguish “Hispanic” or “non Hispanic” immigrants, and Hintzen does not interrogate its use. According to his introduction, the purpose of his study is to gather and record the respondents’ life histories with a specific focus on “social, cultural, economic, and other background factors that helped form individual social identities” (Hintzen 7). In conclusion he writes that “West Indians are forced to define themselves, both collectively and individually, in relation to the African American community to which they are racially bound” (188). According to Hintzen, U.S./American hegemonic constructions of race ascribe the same cultural identity to “African American” and “Caribbean” people despite their cultural and individual differences. His informants intervene into this discourse by self-identifying as successful and hard-working people who pursue education and opportunities. In fact, as Hintzen explains, West Indians who fall outside middle and professional classes are “marginalized, isolated, and excluded from the displays and performances of West Indian identity” (189).

While Hintzen focuses his efforts on the self-representations of West Indian identity, sociologist Mary Waters conducts an in-depth study of two generations of West Indian and West Indian Americans in Black Identities to argue that “the real solution to the problems of racial disadvantage in American life involves changing the racist

structures and behaviors that deny equal opportunities to people identified . . . as black” (Waters 8). From her interviews, she locates a shift in the way West Indian immigrants experience migration to the United States. First generation respondents report that when they arrived in the United States they believed they would find work to suit their education and training as well as better opportunities for their children. They did not anticipate discrimination or racial tension. Second generation West Indian informants revealed that they were not optimistic about the opportunities available to them in the United States because of the racial discrimination and social immobility that their parents faced. Ultimately, “the structural realities of American race relations” (that is low wages, poor working conditions, and racial discrimination in housing, education, and access to resources) undermine the expectations of both first and second generation West Indians. Mortimer’s edited collection, and the studies of Foner, Hintzen, and Waters form the cornerstones of the sociological and anthropological work on the cultural meanings of Caribbean migration.

If there is a dearth of information regarding Caribbean (women’s) migration to the United States, there is a virtual absence of it exploring their immigration to Great Britain. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles data on the economy, environment, health, labour market, population, society, and travel and tourism gathered from the census and the Annual Population Survey in Britain, Scotland, and Ireland. To date, 2001-2005 information is available in electronic form.¹⁰ The ONS provides estimates of international migration to the United Kingdom in their sections on “Population and Migration.” As of 2001, 250,000 Black Caribbean foreign-born people resided in the

¹⁰ Historical data (pre-2001) is available at the British library and selected university libraries in the United Kingdom in print form. According to the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), some local statistics exist in local libraries, but that information is not in one central place.

United Kingdom, roughly 1/10 the size of the white foreign-born population and the fourth largest ethnic community (Indians, Pakistanis, and Black Africans outnumber black Caribbeans) (NSO, “Foreign Born, par. 4).¹¹ Researchers at the National Statistics Office attribute these figures to the post World War II large-scale migrations of Caribbean peoples; the immigration rate among Black Caribbeans has declined since the 1970s and this group is, on average, older than other foreign-born immigrants and the UK-born population (NSO Foreign-born, par. 3-4). It is estimated that ninety-two percent (92%) of people born in the United Kingdom identify themselves as white, and nearly all of them identify as “British,” “English,” “Scottish” or “Welsh.” Eighty-six percent of Black Caribbeans self-identified as “British,” but in a separate survey, a substantial portion of foreign-born young people described themselves as “Black British” (NSO, “Ethnicity,” par. 1 & 3). I could not see the original survey, and it is not clear what the choices were for respondents. Did the black Caribbeans who responded check a particular box or self-identify as “British” and “Black British” respectively? This information is crucial before any discussion of these statistics can take place.

Great Britain, and more specifically London, experienced one large wave of migration from 1948-1960. As historian Peter Fryer recounts in Staying Power: the History of Black People in Britain, black people had lived in the United Kingdom for generations, but in small numbers. It was not until 1948 that large groups of (mostly) West Indian men from Barbados and Jamaica arrived in London on the *Empire Windrush*. Marcus Collins characterizes this watershed moment as “year zero for mass black immigration, and for the following decade, most of the Commonwealth immigrants

¹¹ Indian, Pakistani, Black African, and Black Caribbean are census categories and not necessarily how individuals may self-identify.

coming to Britain each year were West Indian” (Collins 391). Many of the individuals on *Windrush* had served in the British military during the war as Commonwealth citizens and were repatriated following the war. When the British government advertised employment opportunities to help rebuild a battle-worn nation, once again, West Indian citizens heeded the call of the Motherland and boarded *Windrush* (Harris 1993). In 1960, another surge of Commonwealth migrants entered England before the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill took effect, promising to limit the number of future immigrants to the United Kingdom (Gmelch 1992).¹² Estimates suggest that men outnumbered women roughly two to one during this time and today constitute roughly fifty-five percent of international migrants to the United Kingdom (Phillips 118).

Though, as Collins asserts, West Indian men historically have “boasted their own academics, produced their own social workers, sent their own governmental commissions, and produced some of the finest creative writers in Britain,” Caribbean-born women were forced to work as domestics and in service jobs even if they had professional degrees in teaching and nursing (Collins 392).¹³ With so little scholarly work done on Caribbean migration to Britain, it is especially revealing that three often-cited texts (two of which focus on women) are currently out of print: Ron Ramdin’s The Making of the Black Working Class (a deliberate echo of to E.P. Thompson’s classic The Making of the English Working Class), Beverly Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe’s edited collection The Heart of the Race: Black Women’s Lives in Britain, and Elyse Dodgson’s Motherland: West Indian Women to Britain in the 1950s. This leaves

¹² For a history of Barbadian migration to Britain and the United States, see Gmelch, Double Passage (1992).

¹³ For more information on black women’s employment in Britain, see Lewis, “Black Women’s Employment in the British Economy” (1993).

Ben Bousquet and Colin Douglas' West Indian Women at War: British Racism in World War II as a companion text to Collins' "Pride and Prejudice: West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain" and Fryer's Staying Power.¹⁴

Caribbean women's literature of migration to the United States and the United Kingdom fills a gap in the historical record. Johnella Butler describes black women's international writing as a search for the "true, true," or a set of narratives that realistically describe black women's experiences. Writer and teacher Beryl Gilroy characterized her own novels as "truth fiction." Caribbean women's migration literature brings historical, sociological, and anthropological studies to life by asking readers to know and understand women's migration experiences. It is a form of knowledge production.

Caribbean women's literary criticism frames this growing body of literature in three ways: as acts of recovery, as narratives of survival, resistance, and cultural identity, and as reflections of memory, exile, nostalgia, and home. The earliest work in Caribbean women's literary studies intervened in masculinist discourses of what counts as "Caribbean literature." In 1966, George Coulthard edited a slim British volume titled Caribbean Literature: an Anthology which contained no women writers or any mention of them.¹⁵ It was not until Mineke Schipper's Unheard Words: Women and Literature in Africa, the Arab World, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America (1984) that scholars turned their attention to Caribbean women. Given its large-scale scope of "third world women," this text skims over each of these locations and its respective literary

¹⁴ James's and Harris, ed. Inside Babylon (1993) discusses the Caribbean diaspora in Britain, including an essay by James on migration, racism and identity formation.

¹⁵ Notable scholarly texts that examine Caribbean literature, novels, and/or fiction more generally are: Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Homecoming (1973); Smorkaloff, ed. If I Could Write This in Fire (1994); Juneja, Caribbean Transactions (1996); Birbalsingh, Frontiers of Caribbean Literature (1996); Torres-Saillant, Caribbean Poetics (1997); Chamberlain, Narratives of Exile and Return (1997); Danticat, The Butterfly's Way (2001); and Shemak, Textual Trespassing (2003).

production, but its intervention is an important one precisely because it makes visible transnational literature by women of color. In the chapter dedicated to Caribbean women, Ineke Phaf turns her attention to “whether there is a ‘typical Caribbean’ image of women in the literature of the region . . . and whether women writers respond to this image with a ‘Caribbean’ view of their own” (Schipper 168). Schipper’s collection paved the way for Charting the Journey: Writings by Black and Third World Women edited by Grewal *et al.* and Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins’ edited collection Watchers and Seekers: Creative Writing by Black Women in Britain (1987). These three early anthologies were produced in London. The latter one published significant creative work (poetry, short stories, autobiographical essays, and illustrations) by South Asian and African-Caribbean writers.¹⁶

The watershed moment for Caribbean women’s literary criticism in the United States was 1990. That year two anthologies appeared on bookshelves, Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature, edited by Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, and Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference, edited by Selwyn R. Cudjoe. Both these collections effectively argue that “the Caribbean woman (writer) . . . has been historically silenced in the various ‘master discourses’ (Davies, Out, 1). In each collection, voicelessness takes on layered sets of cultural meanings. It simultaneously refers to the absence of women writers from the canon; the absence of women’s perspectives on major issues such as slavery, colonization, development and on contemporary social and cultural issues; silences of

¹⁶ Within the last twenty-five years, scholars have published numerous anthologies dedicated to women’s creative work of and from the Caribbean, including but not limited to, Markham, ed. Hinterland (1989); Esteves and Paravisini-Gebert, ed. Green Cane and Juicy Flotsam (1991); Donnell and Welsh, ed. The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature (1996); Campbell and Frickey, ed. The Whistling Bird (1998); and Nunez and Sparrow, ed. Stories from Blue Latitudes (2006).

women within textual constructions; and, in more materialist terms, lack of access to resources, such as the media and other institutional structures of power, and exclusion from critical dialogues both in the academy and outside of it (1). Both anthologies are acts of recovery in the Spanish-, French-, Dutch-, and English-speaking Caribbean. María Cristina Rodríguez in Caribbean Women Writers notes that the Caribbean (with specific reference to Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico) and the scholars that attend to it are “experiencing a cultural awakening and an awareness of women’s voices that have a distinct style and a very particular narrative discourse” (Cudjoe 344). Family, kinship, child-rearing, women’s fulfillment, and their social and political involvement are all themes that circulate through Spanish-speaking Caribbean women’s writing. In Framing the Word: Gender and Genre in Caribbean Women’s Writing (1996), Merle Collins argues that “Caribbean women’s writing tends to be concerned with all that has gone into the shaping of societies...There is a concern with formation—formation of the society, formation of the individual—and with reclaiming and revoicing” (Anim-Addo 8). These early works make important interventions not only in male-centered and Eurocentric discourses, but also in emerging U.S.-centered African-American feminist literary criticism and feminist postcolonial theory.¹⁷ As Collins makes clear, Caribbean women’s writing attends to local and national experiences because “the Word that they are framing is of them, whatever they might consider to be an individual or collective experience and reflects no-one else” (10).

¹⁷ Without question African-American feminist cultural criticism facilitated the emergence of Caribbean feminist criticism in the United States. I would be remiss not to underscore these groundbreaking texts in this body of work: Christian, Black Women Novelists (1980); Washington, ed. Black-Eyed Susans (1975), Midnight Birds (1980), and Invented Lives (1987); Smith, “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism” (1982); Tate, ed. Black Women Writers at Work (1983); Carby, Reconstructing Womanhood (1987); Wall, ed. Changing Our Own Words (1989); Henderson, “Speaking in Tongues” (1990); and McDowell, The Changing Same (1995). Wilentz’s Binding Cultures (1992) pays particular attention to the connections between African and African-American women writers.

Caribbean women's literary history and criticism has burgeoned since the 1990s, with scholars moving their work beyond acts of recovery and toward in-depth analyses of women's resistance and survival, cultural identity, and cultural meanings of memory, exile, migration, nation, and "home."¹⁸ With specific reference to Caribbean women's migration literature, Carole Boyce Davies' Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject (1994) is a foundational text. She begins by telling "migration horror stories" (14). She recounts narratives of women who are homeless—caught somewhere in-between the Caribbean and in the United States—and argues that these migrating subjects live in a constant state of flux, negotiation, and contestation. In the literature she examines how "mystified notions of home and family are removed from their romantic, idealized moorings, to speak of pain, movement, difficulty, learning and love in complex ways" (21). One is never comfortably "Caribbean" or "American," and it is from this dangerous geographic, cultural, and psychic space that Caribbean women tell their stories. Davies's work is an engaged account of how literary representation complicates migration by inscribing women's lives. Since Davies's publication, other scholarly texts that examine Caribbean women's migration literature include MacDonald-Smythe, Making Homes in the West Indies: Constructions of Subjectivity in the Writings of Michelle Cliff and Jamaica Kincaid (2001); Hoving, In Praise of New Travelers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Women Writers (2001); John's chapter "Colonial Legacies,

¹⁸ Selected examples of scholarly work that focuses on Caribbean women writers are O'Callaghan, Woman Version (1992); Cobham, "Revisioning Our Kumblas" (1993); Berrian, "Claiming an Identity" (1994); Juneja, "Intersecting Culture and Gender" (1996); Chancy, Framing Silence (1997); Newson *et al.*, ed. Winds of Change (1998); Pyne-Timothy, ed. The Woman, the Writer and Caribbean Society (1998); Condé and Lonsdale, ed. Caribbean Women Writers (1999); Morris, "Jamaica Kincaid's Voracious Bodies" (2002); and Shemak, "Re-Membering Hispaniola" (2002). Writers who have received substantial treatment in academic journals such as Callaloo, Anthurium, Caribbean Studies, and Thamyris include but are not limited to Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, Paule Marshall, Michelle Cliff, Maryse Condé, Simone Schwartz-Bart, Merle Hodge, and Edwidge Danticat.

Gender Identity, and Black Female Writing in the Diaspora” in Clear Word and Third Sight: Folk Groundings and Diasporic Consciousness in African Caribbean Writing (2003); Rodríguez, What Women Lose: Exile and the Construction of Imaginary Homelands in Novels by Caribbean Women (2005); and most recently Gadsby, Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration, and Survival (2006) and Suárez, The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory (2006).

Most, though not all, of these texts focus their attention on English-speaking Caribbean women’s experiences. Literature that attends to representations of women who migrate from Spanish-speaking Caribbean locales (Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic) constitutes and is categorized under “Latina” feminist literary criticism and history. Texts such as Horno-Delgado *et al.*’s Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings (1989), Castillo’s Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism (1992), and Quintana’s edited collection, Reading U.S. Latina Writers: Remapping American Literature (2003) anthologize Mexican, Chicana, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican women writers and criticism in single volumes. Similar to the earliest work done on the English-speaking Caribbean, these publications are acts of recovery and serve as springboards for future research. The only scholarly text that specifically addresses Puerto Rican women’s migration literature is Kissing the Mango Tree: Puerto Rican Women Rewriting American Literature (2002).¹⁹ Aside from Suarez’s The Tears of Hispaniola (which discusses Loida Maritza Perez’s Geographies of Home and Julia Alvarez’s How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents), scholarly texts on

¹⁹ For a literary history of the Puerto Rican diaspora, including one chapter on women’s writing, see Sanchez-Gonzalez, Boricua Literature (2001). Santiago’s When I was Puerto Rican is a semi-autobiographical work of fiction that explores Puerto Rican migration to New York. Three texts that discuss Cuban women writers in Cuba include Davies, A Place in the Sun? (1997), and Mandi, Guarding Cultural Memory (2006).

Dominican women's migration literature analyze Julia Alvarez's body of work.²⁰ Indeed, Alvarez's popularity, both critical and general, has made her work a kind of token for literatures of "the islands."

The Archive of the Black Atlantic and the Production of (Feminist) Transnational Space

Caribbean women's migration literature and the scholarly literature that attends to it constitute part of what I am calling the archive of the Black Atlantic.²¹ By archive, I do not mean a national, regional or local historical repository housed in a government or private building. Rather, my reference to "archive" is more akin to, and draws on, Foucault's notion that the "archive animates all knowledge formations and is the structure that makes meaning manifest" (Arondekar 10). I deliberately invoke Foucault's notion of the "archive" here because it best elucidates the processes at work in expanding and reshaping the intellectual landscape, the various and ongoing constructions and uses of "the Black Atlantic," since Gilroy first coined the term in his influential text, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (1993).

According to Foucault's The Archeology of Knowledge, the archive is a collection of systems that determines "truths" or rules within a given context (and to use

²⁰ Selected examples include but are not limited to Luis, "A Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (2000), Sirias, Julia Alvarez (2001), Suárez, "Julia Alvarez and the Anxiety of Latina Representation" (2004), and Johnson, Julia Alvarez (2005).

²¹ It is important to note that "Black Atlantic studies" as developed by Gilroy and others is part of a larger archive of "Atlantic Studies." Key sources in Atlantic Studies include but are not limited to Hamshere, The British in the Caribbean (1972); McAlister, Spain and Portugal in the New World (1984); Berlin and Morgan, ed. The Slave's Economy (1991) and Cultivation and Culture (1993); Roach, Cities of the Dead (1996); Berlin, Many Thousands Gone (1998); Curtin, The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex (1998); Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800 (1998); Walker, African Roots/American Cultures (2001); Armitage and Braddick, eds. The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800 (2002); Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World (2006); Shannon, Atlantic Lives (2004); Bailyn, Atlantic History (2005); and Smith, Slavery Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic (2006).

Foucault's example, within history). Importantly, these "truths" are not known facts carved from an immutable system. In fact, Foucault argues that we "deal with a complex volume [of statements], in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superimposed" (Foucault, Archeology, 128). In short, "we" (whether "we" refers to a family, a community, a nation, and/or a globalized world) exist within powerful discursive practices that determine what version of history prevails. This theoretical turn away from the archive as a fixed collection of statements and stories that constructs a nation—or something as specific as women's history—allows the archive to encompass the diversity of thought within a given context, and an exploration of how diverse sets of knowledge emerge, survive, disappear, and co-exist. Foucault's archive remains in flux, without a fixed endpoint, and best accounts for the processes of making meaning as well as allowing for cultural, social, political, economic, historical, and intellectual change. As Gilroy writes in his preface to The Black Atlantic, "Black Atlantic culture is so massive and its history so little known that I have done scarcely more than put down some preliminary markers . . . My concerns are heuristic and my conclusions are strictly provisional" (Gilroy, Black, xi).

Gilroy's text simultaneously critiques "absolutist" ideologies that stabilize analytical categories of "race" and "nation" and demonstrates how philosophies of "blackness" are embedded in modernism. As such, contemporary constructions of race in African-American studies and cultural studies "have their origins in a well-developed sense of the complicity of racialised reason and white supremacist terror" (Gilroy, Black, x). In order to overcome the essentialism inherent in this literary, historical, and cultural

legacy, Gilroy turns his attention to the intercultural connections between Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States to offer a new interdisciplinary unit of analysis: “The Black Atlantic.” By his own account, his intellectual framework is a “rhizomorphic, fractal structure of a transcultural, international formation that exists as a counterculture of modernity” (4).

Gilroy sets out to accomplish two things with the Black Atlantic: unhinge race from its imperial roots and detail how cultural products (whether music or intellectual thought) develop through transnational cultural interactions. Gilroy’s work is situated firmly within black British cultural studies frameworks, particularly indebted to Stuart Hall’s work, while Hall was a member of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. He draws on Hall’s theorizing of the diaspora, to “explore how diasporic identities are constituted, reconstituted, and produced” in the midst of racial oppression (Lemelle 7). This school of thought works against modernist notions of identity in which the “self” is coherent, unified, and knowable through a process of rational, scientific study. Binary opposites constitute the foundation of modernism and privilege the first term at the expense of the second: men/women, white/black, colonizer/colonized, rational/irrational, straight/queer, active/passive, subject/object, known/unknown. Traditionally, humanistic philosophies (e.g. liberal feminist thought, Marxist thought, and multiculturalism) draw on these binaries in order to argue against oppression and injustice. What Gilroy does in his work is interrogate, and ultimately reject, the binaries. Why draw on disempowered notions of “blackness” in order to argue for cultural transformation?

Gilroy's construction of the Black Atlantic is neither modern nor postmodern, neither colonial nor postcolonial. It falls somewhere in the middle. In his words, "[t]his is not a counter-discourse but a counterculture that defiantly reconstructs its own critical, intellectual, and moral genealogy in a partially hidden public sphere of its own. The politics of transfiguration therefore reveal the hidden internal fissures in the concept of modernity" (Gilroy, Black, 38). While he refuses simplistic dyads inherent in modernist frameworks, he is ultimately interested in granting a complex subjectivity to black people who move through diasporic space. In his introduction, he makes clear that the Black Atlantic world is both "rooted in" the materiality of racism and "routed through" stagnant conceptions of cultural identity (3). Here, Gilroy draws upon Spivak's "strategic essentialism" to maintain the political and material boundaries of race. The political stakes for such theoretical maneuvers are great. For example, if "black," "African-American," and "black British" are not cast in absolute racial or national terms, indeed if they are "unhooked" from stable social locations, will the social gains made in the last thirty years disappear? In a later interview, Gilroy states this argument succinctly, "crudely" in his own words, with reference to racialization in the United States:

The political configuration of race in America right now means that to take a deconstructive approach that is both radical and principled to the forms of certainty that people feel about the racialization of their lives and their victimage, is something that for some good historical reasons is very much associated with positions on the Right rather than the Left in America. It's hard to recover the liberatory moment in the process of

freeing ourselves from the bonds of raciology and compulsory raciality.
(qtd. in Bell, 1999; 34)

The risks involved with de-stabilizing “race” but not racism (the materialist consequences) are considerable because as Gilroy suggests (in a celebratory mode), these deconstructive measures strip stable, essentialized groups of their naming power (of their “victimage” in his words). As such, he is prepared, and inspired, to use new textual reconfigurations to better explore the “continually crisscrossed...movements of black people” (Gilroy, Black, 16). In his words, it is the “restless spirit” that produces a living, “vital,” diasporic culture in the Atlantic world (16).

It is important to note that Paul Gilroy’s reframing of the African diaspora would not be possible if not for the diasporic scholars that came before him, yet this point largely goes unacknowledged in his text (Pierre 2002). While he states that diaspora is “still indispensable in focusing on the political and ethical dynamics of the unfinished history of blacks in the modern world,” he deploys it as:

[A] heuristic means to focus on the relationship and identity and non-identity in black political culture. It can also be employed to project the plural richness of black cultures in different parts of the world in counterpoint to their common sensibilities—both those residually inherited from Africa and those generated from the special bitterness of new world racial slavery (Gilroy, Black, 81)

He acknowledges the political, and particularly the academic, stakes involved in elucidating how post-slave cultures trace their roots to the cultural dynamics of Africa. Yet he queries direct connections with Africa when arguing that previous diaspora work

is bound by “intense feelings that go beyond dispassionate scholastic contemplation” (81). He concedes that theorizing diaspora is “not an easy matter” because “the fragile psychological, emotional, and cultural correspondences which connect diaspora populations in spite of their differences are often apprehended only fleetingly” and often within academic orthodox practices (81). In other words, scholars who manufacture unifying structures of diaspora do so to galvanize black communities, but it “supplies a poor basis for the writing of cultural history” (188).

Rather, Gilroy argues that diaspora—and therefore black cultural identity—is best understood as a process of “creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity.” He admits such terms are “unsatisfactory ways of naming the processes of cultural mutation,” but categories heretofore used, he insists, only reify nationalist paradigms and stagnant constructions of race (4).²² Traditional theories of African diaspora embrace a more linear movement of people dispersed around the world from an African origin and the “use of diaspora emerges directly out of the growing scholarly interest in the Pan-African movement in particular” (Edwards, Uses, 46). In such models, cultural continuity with Africa and with new world colonial systems gives reason for black international unification to make a stand on policy. For example, as Jemima Pierre argues in her dissertation, Race Across the Atlantic: Mapping Racialization in Africa and the African Diaspora, the main concern with African diaspora studies is the “‘Africanness’ of African-descended populations around the world” (Pierre 250). By locating the diaspora somewhere “between the local and global,” Gilroy disrupts diasporic time and space (4). The Black Atlantic has no immediate local presence, nor is it unhinged from cultural

²² It is worth noting here that “creolization” has been central to the formation of the Caribbean since its early colonial history. As Bolles suggests, cultural blending of African, European, and/or Amerindian people have taken place for centuries and is not a contemporary phenomenon (Bolles 2005).

history. It is constantly in flux, so that points of origin (sending country) and moments of arrival (in the host country) are less meaningful than the journey itself. When diaspora studies, and here we must include Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic, take as their theoretical departure point new world experiences and hybridity, Africa and the Caribbean drop out of view.

Despite Gilroy's disclaimer that his formulation is provisional, African Studies, Caribbean, and feminist studies scholars take issue with Gilroy's work precisely because "Africa," "the Caribbean," and "gender" are erased from its theoretical frame. In The Black Atlantic, Gilroy only makes passing references to Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Africa, and the Caribbean inasmuch as they illuminate the creation of black American and black British cultures. By marginalizing both Africa's and the Caribbean's presence in on-going transatlantic exchange, he ironically reinscribes exactly what he critiques—a modernist version of culture that privileges the West (particularly African American thought and black British cultural studies) (Piot 2001). Gilroy's mentor, Stuart Hall, similarly elides Africa in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" by suggesting that it is a ghostly presence in the lives of black Caribbean people. Cultural anthropologist Charles Piot takes Gilroy (as well as Hall, Henry Louis Gates, Kobena Mercer, and Joseph Roach) to task on this point in his article "Atlantic Aporias: Africa and Gilroy's Black Atlantic":

Africa bears little more than a passing reference . . . This omission not only silences a major entity in the black Atlantic world, but also leaves unchallenged the notion that Africa is somehow different . . . The ellipsis suggests, of course, that Africa has played little role in the development of

Black Atlantic cultural production, other than as a provider of raw materials—bodies and cultural templates/origins—that were then processed or elaborated upon by the improvisational cultures of the Americas. (Piot 156)

In this critique, Piot turns to the work of African cultural anthropologists to illustrate his objections to Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*. Since modernity begins with slavery, Piot interjects the history of the Kabre people of northern Togo into the analysis of the slave trade to argue that colonization ruptured the lives of the people of Africa in irreparable ways—similar to how New World plantations terrorized slaves in the United States and Britain—because it pitted African against African as well as colonizer against the colonized. Such work is vital exactly because it provides a concrete example of the intercultural connections that Gilroy asserts, but does not do, in theorizing the Black Atlantic. It is also important to note that in his conclusion, Piot suggests that anthropology has much to learn from Gilroy, too. “It should also be clear that I aim as well to prod Africanists into taking the work of Gilroy more seriously... [because] it provokes us to think more expansively about the units of analysis we employ...providing fertile ground for reimagining area studies” (169). If the Black Atlantic is to be a new, rigorous paradigm for analyzing continuity and discontinuity, then it must not rest solely on the knowledge that is produced in African-American Studies and arguably in the metropolises of the United States and Europe.

Since the release of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, many feminist scholars have wrestled with its faultlines in theorizing women's transoceanic experiences. Gilroy's celebration of transnational movement ignores how the realities of global capitalism—

indeed the intersections of class and gender—have kept black women immobile and tethered to the nation as well as silenced within the nation. Elizabeth DeLoughrey succinctly states what is at stake in her article “Gendering the Oceanic Voyage: Trespassing the (Black) Atlantic and Caribbean”:

Such paradigms of transoceanic migration are...based on male privilege in the public realm. While the discursive dismantling of the nation has begun, the inherent gender assumptions associated with the masculinist nation are often carried over, unacknowledged, into varying forms of transoceanic regionalisms. (DeLoughrey 209)

Whether one turns to sociological and anthropological data or Caribbean women’s migration literature, the Black Atlantic prematurely celebrates the end to the material effects of the nation based on African-American, heterosexual, male norms (Wright 2004).²³ As Brent Hayes Edwards points out in The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism, “there is little attempt to consider not just the way black women travel, but more important, the ways the ideological uses and abuses of gender always undergird any articulation of diaspora...” (Edwards 133). The reality is that black women are constrained in the Black Atlantic in ways that Gilroy’s subjects (black music, DuBois, Wright, and Delaney) are not, because racism, sexism, and violence bind their lives differently.

Although not articulated as such, there is an assertion embedded in these critiques of Gilroy that both “space” and “place” (as well as gender and a more complex rendering of race) matter in the production of the Black Atlantic. “Transoceanic journeys,”

²³ For other feminist critiques of Gilroy’s work, see Brown, “Black Liverpool, Black America and the Gendering of Diasporic Space” (1998); Khan, “Journey to the Center of the Earth” (2001); and Gunning, “Nancy Prince and the Politics of Mobility, Home and Diasporic (Mis)Identification” (2001).

“transnationalism,” “(re)mappings,” “crossing boundaries/crossing borders,” and “borderlands”—all terms used within the context of this dissertation as well as a substantive number of scholarly texts—are suggestive of the importance of spatiality in understanding Caribbean women’s migration. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s theories in The Production of Space (1974), space is produced and reproduced by human intentions. It takes into account the landscape and built environment, as well as how economies produce and reproduce local and global space. It is not a synonym for nature nor should it be defined as a milieu, but as a unit of analysis that tells us how human beings make, fight over, ascribe power to, and remake the world around them. Feminist cultural geographers, such as Linda McDowell, Doreen Massey, Gillian Rose, and Joanne Sharpe collectively argue that scale matters in theorizing gendered spatial relationships. To pay attention to the rapid pace of large-scale capital and human flows, space-time compression, and space-distanciation through gender-neutral metaphors and postmodern lenses elides the importance of gender, race, class, sexuality, and place.²⁴ As Linda McDowell suggests in “Spatializing Feminism: Geographic Perspectives:”

[I]t is important that we do not forget permanence, solidity, meaning and symbolism, what we might refer to as an attachment to place. For space is not just a set of flows . . . but also a set of places, from a home to national territories, with associations and meanings for individuals and groups. Here the distinction between space as relational and place as a location, as a fixture, the geographer’s “sense of place” or “genius loci,” what the

²⁴ For critique of gender-neutral analyses of space, particularly the work of Harvey (1989), Giddens (1990), Castells (1989), Soja (1989), Jameson (1991), and Laclau (1990), consult Massey, “Politics of Time/Space” (1992) and Space, Place, and Gender (1994), as well as McDowell, “Spatializing Feminism: Geographic Perspectives” (1996) and Gender, Identity, and Place (1999).

literary and social critic Raymond Williams terms a “structure of feeling” centred on a specific territory is a useful one. (McDowell 32)

As I deploy it in this dissertation, the Black Atlantic is closely aligned with what McDowell coins “global localism.” Cultural geography is interested in “looking at the links between processes and people at a range of spatial scales from the local to the global, and the ways these scales are . . . interconnected” (31). To pay attention only to intercultural connections at the expense of analyzing the nation-state erases the power embedded in place. “[T]he nation-state continues to define, discipline, control and regulate all kinds of populations, whether in movement or residence” (Ong 15). In the novels this dissertation examines, Caribbean women who cross national borders are transnational migrants and constrained within the nation and the home. The specificity of the settings they left and the cultural landscapes they enter play a key role in understanding why the characters are neither fully Caribbean (Puerto Rican, Haitian, Dominican, or Jamaican) or fully American, but live in Gloria Anzaldúa’s “third country”—the borderlands.

Feminist scholar and Chicana activist Gloria Anzaldúa deserves much of the credit for theorizing borders and borderlands. Her germinal text, Borderlands/La Frontera (1987) marks a moment in the history of women’s studies when its practitioners became conscious of how their own community created borders among and between themselves. Today, her work plays an integral role in theorizing liminality and borderland cultures. According to Anzaldúa, the borderlands are dangerous because they are physical and emotional spaces where “the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.” She continues by describing the “double consciousness” one must embrace in

order to survive border culture, and from this combined “first world/third world” location, “a third country,” a new social location is created:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here. (Anzaldúa, Borderlands, 3, original emphasis)

As this passage makes clear, the borderlands are a cultural, linguistic, sexual, emotional, and difficultly habitable place where “the transgressors and aliens” must live—dislocated from either here (United States) or there (Caribbean). The borderlands are not places that link one person or community to another; rather, they are cultural sites where “differing communal spaces of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ take shape” (Friedman 3). They are places of survival and travel with third world migrant people, highlighting precisely why terms such as “hybridity” and “creolization” do not adequately characterize identity formation: they mask the role of power and place. Individual identities may be more fluid than rooted, but nation-states create borders—a dominant culture—that hinges on specific constructions of us and them. The production of feminist transnational space must account for these material and affective intercultural relations.

Interventions

In this section, I briefly locate my work in relation to the growing body of recent literature that attends to cultural theories of affect and that links such theories to performance studies. Scholars researching affect in philosophy, women’s studies,

sociology, and literature are carving out a space between the theoretical contours of modernism (rooted identities and subjectivities) and postmodernism (the “death of the subject”) to restore a sense of the human psyche and understandings of interiority to a once anti-humanist world in cultural criticism.²⁵ This intervention moves scholars away from psychoanalytic approaches that claim working knowledge of the unconscious and toward social and cultural theories of emotion that emphasize the intangible hauntings of complex personhood (Gordon) and the politics of public feelings (Ahmed, Cvetkovich, and Eng *et al.*, Berlant).²⁶ In each of the texts I discuss, affect is not universalized but theorized as contextual and nuanced. I have coined and use the term “differentiated affect” throughout this dissertation to make this distinction clear.

Avery Gordon begins her important book, Ghostly Matters: Hauntings and the Sociological Imagination (1997), with a clear statement that guides her work: “life is complicated.” She borrows this theoretical construct from Patricia Williams (The Alchemy of Race and Rights) and adds depth to its seemingly simple pronouncement. First, she asserts that power relations are never as clear as the names we give them:

Power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. It can be obvious . . . it can speak the language of your thoughts and desires . . . It is dense and superficial, it can cause bodily injury, and it can harm you without seeming ever to touch you. (Gordon 3)

²⁵ I want to make clear that philosophical and scholarly work on emotion is not a new endeavor. Terada begins her genealogy of feelings, affect, and emotion in Feeling in Theory (2001) with Descartes. In the field of American Studies, Stearns and Stearns authored Anger (1986); Stearns, Jealousy (1989); and Stearns and Lewis, An Emotional History of the United States (1998). However, it is the more recent work on affect that influences my work.

²⁶ Other texts that address affect include but are not limited to Hoffmann and Hornung, ed. Emotion in Postmodernism (1997); Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling” (2000); Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought (2001); Sedgwick, Touching Feeling (2003); Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (2004); Ngai, Ugly Feelings (2005); and Probyn, Blush (2005).

Second, she points out that people, even those who “we” (scholars, lay people, charity institutions, nonprofits, and government agencies) call “victims”—those who live in dire situations and are disempowered based on systemic racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, nationalism, and the privileging of the able body—are complex and contradictory people. This axiom haunts contemporary scholarship and must guide those who study culture. As Gordon states, “[t]o study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it. This confrontation requires (or produces) a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production” (7). While Gordon does not explicitly address affect or emotion, she hints at it in her discussion of the failures of poststructuralist thought (“a crisis in representation” of the subject) to interject and analyze the “the evidence of things not seen”—the subtlety of issues of power and complex personhood (195). I draw gratefully on her notion of complex personhood, one that encompasses injury and agency, the ghostly hold of the past and the survival strategies and creative envisionings of the present and future.

In Feeling in Theory: Emotion After the “Death of the Subject,” Rei Terada offers a far-reaching argument that poststructuralist thought is precisely the place where emotion is constructed. Her thesis is clear enough: emotion is the sign that subjectivity is illusory.

Poststructuralist thought about emotion is hidden in plain sight; poststructuralist theory deploys implicit and explicit logics of emotion and . . . willingly dramatizes particular emotions. It has reason to stress emotive experience, for far from controverting the “death of the subject,” emotion entails its death” (Terada 3).

How she comes to her conclusions are not so straightforward. Drawing on Derrida's work in particular, Terada walks her readers through Descartes, Rousseau, Husserl, Paul de Man, Ronald de Sousa, Daniel C. Dennett, and Gilles Deleuze to demonstrate how and where emotion "becomes nonsubjective and interpretational" (Altieri 609). Her understandings of critical philosophy are impressive, yet her argument is circular and flawed. Terada's separation of emotion from the subject only works because of her dedication to deconstruction. It presumes the death of the subject prior to thinking through how and where emotions stem from. If not from any given "I," then how can emotions exist? The "I" that I speak of here is not necessarily coherent or unified, but it does exist and experiences the world. "Clearly there is something about emotions that is not the epistemic or volitional control of the subject, however, *we* constitute the subject" (612, my emphasis). Sharon Patricia Holland's Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity (2000) makes clear why "the death of the subject" prematurely erases subjectivity, particularly for black people. How can such deconstructive maneuvers attend to the experiences of black people when these subjects "never *achieve*, in the eyes of others, the status of the '*living*'?" (15, original emphasis). She continues by poignantly questioning "when '*living*' is something to be *achieved* and not *experienced*, and figurative and literal deaths are very much a part of the social landscape, how do people of color gain a sense of empowerment" (16, original emphasis). This line of questioning challenges the basic tenets of poststructuralist thought and Terada's approach to affect. In the remaining texts, the authors make clear that any close attention to affect, and specifically notions of differentiated affect that attend to the specific material and ideological conditions of race, class, gender, sexuality,

and nationality, necessarily entail a discussion of subjectivity. It seems impossible to discuss the psyche, pleasure, pain, loneliness, anger, and joy without acknowledging subjectivity.

Sara Ahmed's intellectual project in The Cultural Politics of Emotion (2004) is grounded in materialist analysis of affect. The epigraph in her introduction oppositionally sets the stage for both her study, and serendipitously, mine as well:

Every day of every year, swarms of illegal immigrants and bogus asylum seekers invade Britain by any means available to them . . . Why? They are only seeking the easy comforts and free benefits in Soft Touch Britain. All funded by YOU—The British Taxpayer! (*British National Front Poster*, qtd. in Ahmed).

Not only does this anti-immigration propaganda play with and into the emotions of the individual (white) British citizen's rage ("How dare illegal immigrants seek "easy street" on my back?") it also ascribes shame to a nation ("Soft Touch Britain"). For her part, Ahmed is deeply interested in "how emotions work to shape the 'surfaces' of individual and collective bodies" (Ahmed 1). She turns her attention to texts that circulate through the public sphere and "work by attributing 'others' as the 'source' of our feelings" (1). Importantly, "Soft Touch Britain" is not just a narrative that runs through white, supremacist literature; it can also be located in official British government policy on immigration. "Soft touch Britain" resonates at the individual and social level, so Ahmed is compelled to ask "what do emotions do?" (versus what are emotions?), and how do they circulate between bodies (versus within the body) (4). By analyzing the contingency of pain, the organization of hate, the politics of fear, the performativity of disgust, shame

before others, and love, Ahmed offers a comprehensive exposition of the cultural politics of emotions as well as the textuality of emotions, or how figures of speech (e.g. the epigraph above) generate affects.

While Ahmed is interested in social performances of emotion, Ann Cvetkovich examines the cultural meanings of public feelings vis-à-vis women's punk music festivals, activist groups, sex toy stores, incest memoirs, and performance events in An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures (2003). "Public feelings" may, in fact, sound like an oxymoron.²⁷ Emotions within modernity are private matters and entangled with Enlightenment gender codes (man=public=rational/objective; women=domestic=irrational/emotional). Cvetkovich argues otherwise by examining the archive of everyday life (everyday traumas) in lesbian communities. She is "drawn to the category of trauma because it...names experiences of socially situated political violence . . . [and] forges overt connections between politics and emotions" (Cvetkovich 2-3). Importantly, she does not argue for the inclusion of lesbians in trauma studies or discussions of the public sphere. Cvetkovich names lesbian sites as spaces that "give rise to different ways of thinking about trauma...in order to resist authority given to medical discourses and especially the diagnosis of traumatic experiences as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (3-4). "Archives of feelings"—self-representations of how and when sexuality dovetails with trauma in her women informants' everyday lives—are a collection of acts of survival and moments of affective experience that provide a new basis for understanding who and what constitute public cultures.

²⁷ For an excellent and earlier analysis of emotions in the public sphere, see Berlant, The Queen of America Goes to Washington City (1997).

The next two texts I want to discuss focus on two specific emotions: loss (Eng *et al.*) and compassion (Berlant). David Eng and David Kazanjian begin their edited collection, Loss (2003), with a provocative discussion of the creative power embedded in an examination of mourning and loss. Drawing on Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," they contend that to ask the question "what is loss?" demands an interrogation of what remains. "Loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, but how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (Eng 2). Whether one is looking at a photograph of Emmett Till's casket or reading the testimonies of South African women in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, these cultural artifacts present an affective ghostly presence of panic, cultural and individual pain, horror, and trauma that not only remains embedded in people's memories but generates activity—a politics of mourning—that compels social change. Lauren Berlant's edited collection, Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion (2004), provides a counternarrative to Eng *et al.*'s Loss. If loss is creative, then compassion, according to Berlant, is a term that denotes privilege and detachment—stasis. Compassion is an emotion in operation: "you, the compassionate one, have a resource that would alleviate someone else's suffering" (Berlant, Compassion, 4). Turning their attention to literary articulations of compassion, the authors in this collection discuss the aesthetic of compassion and its accompanying undertone of irritation by the scene of suffering:

Repeatedly [in the work throughout this volume], we witness someone's desire to not connect, sympathize, or recognize an obligation to the

sufferer; to refuse engagement; to snuff it; not to rescue . . . to feel bad for the sufferers, but only so that they will go away (9).

This disengagement, this inability to feel vulnerable to someone else's suffering, is also, as Berlant argues, the core of present-day "compassionate conservatism." The authors' analyses of sentimental American literature produce questions about the state and its role as economic, military, and moral actor in the world. What are individual and collective obligations to alleviate and attempt to end suffering?

While this dissertation examines affect in relation to five Caribbean women's text, I want to make clear from the outset that I am not making the claim that cultural theories of emotion are gendered or racialized. This field can and should intersect with work that interrogates masculinity/nationality, masculinity/race, religion, and ability so that, for example, the coupling of "men-emotion" is demystified, analyzed, and valued in culture. Literature, dance, performance, music, poetry, film, and archives of personal correspondence are examples of untapped sources for just such a study. For my own contribution to theoretical constructions of affect, I am interested in how emotion intersects with textual representations of violence against women. First, as stated earlier, I am concerned with the blind spots in literary criticism concerning women's sexuality and violence. By and large, scholarly work on Caribbean women's migration literature does not attend to issues of rape, domestic violence, and incest.²⁸ Yet two novels written by Puerto Rican-American women grapple with domestic violence, two novels authored by women from Hispaniola address rape, and one activist Jamaican-British writer confronts incest. Second, I investigate the textuality of emotion within the texts. I am

²⁸ Notable exceptions are Donette, "Silences Too Horrific to Disturb" (2004) and Suárez, The Tears of Hispaniola (2006).

interested in how the novel positions the reader to make political, social, cultural, and emotional connections with its subject matter. Each of the novels I examine has the potential to reach at least three sets of readers: (1) those that live (or have lived) in fear while in violent situations, (2) transnational migrants, especially those who reside in the United States or Great Britain, and (3) those who have never thought through the connection between colonial, state, and personal violence.

Criss-crossing journeys through the Atlantic Ocean mean that women and men's cultural identities shift continuously during adaptation, resistance, and/or negotiations in new cultural landscapes. Feelings of pain, bitterness, loneliness, fear, isolation, longing, loss, anger, occasional joy, and frustration fuel the plots of these narratives and underscore the fluidity of cultural identity. The texts traverse the ambiguous, and sometimes treacherous, terrain of race, age, class, sexuality, citizenship, nationality, and gender by exploring the characters' emotional experiences. Yet literary analyses do not often acknowledge and contemplate the power of emotions and their cultural politics when theorizing individual and social identities. As cultural critic Karen Christian argues in Show & Tell: Identity as Performance in US Latina/o Fiction (1997), "[i]f literature is, among other things, the exploration of human identity in all its fullness—its historical, social, psychological, spiritual facets—reading ethnic literary texts through the lens of history and material relations can render only a partial view of the dynamics of identity" (Christian, Show, 13). Scholars write incomplete literary and cultural interpretations when they do not account for the immaterial circumstances (the emotional, psychological, and spiritual) of the characters' everyday lives in texts. Emotions give

meaning to the material experiences of violence and dislocation and demand our understanding of cultural identity as performative.

Judith Butler's work on performativity helps to further conceptualize the fluidity of the complex cultural identities in the novels.²⁹ According to Butler, identity must be understood as a process, a series of performative acts that gain acceptance and coherence through repeated, and sometimes unconscious, enactments of specific utterances and signs (e.g. dress, speech, and body language). As a result, "culturally intelligible" identities appear as natural categories of existence. Challenging essentialized notions of the self, Butler argues that "the 'coherence' and 'continuity' of the 'person' are not logical analytic features of personhood, but socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility" (Butler, *Gender*; 15). Through regulatory discourse, socially enforced, "intelligible" cultural identities form: female=feminine=heterosexual and male=male=male=heterosexual. The persons who exist outside this strict repetition remain "unintelligible"—transgressive, discontinuous and misunderstood.

Individuals enact multiple cultural identities, consciously and unconsciously, when they interact with their social worlds. It is in this contested, ambiguous space -- in-between the individual and social—where identities form and create meaning and misunderstandings. Importantly, this matrix ushers in an unstable world; one that is filled with anxiety about who is "feminine/masculine," "heterosexual/homosexual," and "black/white," because identity is in a constant process of being re-worked, re-signified, and mimicked. Thus "transgressors" (or the unintelligible) are only meaningful in this process of contestation. By suggesting that cultural identity is an "illusion" and

²⁹ Certainly, Butler is not the first to theorize identity as ambivalent, fluid, and entangled in cultural discourse. She draws heavily from Hegel, Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, and Austin.

“repetition,” Butler breaks down the dichotomy between culturally intelligible and unintelligible identities, and provides the theoretical groundwork for Gilroy in The Black Atlantic. This intellectual work leaves the door open for scholars and cultural critics to address complex notions of a humane “humanity” that has the potential to create social and cultural change.

Many critics are quick to point out that Butler’s early notion of performance in Gender Trouble (1990) located “unintelligibility” and “intelligibility” within an analysis of gender/sex/sexuality at the expense of other categories of identification—particularly race. In Bodies that Matter (1993), Butler expands her argument to suggest that “performativity is the efficacious expression of a human will in language” and that “bodies that matter” “seeks to recast performativity as a specific modality of power as discourse” (Butler, Bodies; 187). With this re-articulation, she can account for the performativity and simultaneity of multiple cultural identities, including race. Specifically in her chapter, “Passing, Queering: Nella Larsen’s Psychoanalytic Challenge,” Butler responds to her critics directly, stating:

If as Norma Alarcón has insisted, women of color are “multiply interpellated,” called by many names, constituted in and by that multiple calling, then this implies that the symbolic domain, the domain of socially instituted norms, is composed of racializing norms, and that they exist not merely alongside gender norms, but are articulated through one another. Hence, it is no longer possible to make sexual difference prior to racial difference or, for that matter, to make them into fully separable axes of social regulation and power. (182).

With specific reference to the performativity of race, Butler insists that “whiteness” requires “blackness” for its recognition and power in the world. Paradoxically, it is only through “disavowal” (racism) that “whiteness is constituted, and through that institutionalization that whiteness is perpetually—but anxiously—reconstituted” (171). Similar to the gendered equations scripted above, racialized subjectivities in white dominant cultures exist outside institutionalization of power and therefore are constructed as “marginal,” “other,” “transgressors,” and “unintelligible”—not because they are marginal or other. Moreover, performance theory makes sense in analyzing affect. Since the character’s and/or reader’s emotions fluidly shift based on context, and, in part, constitute identity formation and propel behaviors, performativity and affect work in concert with one another.

(Re)Framing American Studies

In the September 1998 issue of American Quarterly, Latina cultural studies scholar Frances R. Aparicio published a review essay of Antonio Benitez-Rojo’s The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective, titled “Performing the Caribbean in American Studies.” Long overdue, it was the first moment in the discipline’s history that an American Studies scholar named the Caribbean as integral to American Studies. In the essay, Aparicio issues both a criticism and challenge to the discipline’s scholars:

Today American Studies as a field constructs itself, epistemologically, linguistically, and socially, within the U.S. borders . . . [it] resists being transformed into Studies of the Americas. Yet the growing tension and

fruitful overlap between the American and the Americas are creating new intellectual possibilities. (Aparicio, 637)

Certainly a number of American Studies scholars share Aparicio's general "call to arms" for conceptualizing American Studies more broadly, but only three items that mention or draw connections to the Caribbean have appeared in American Quarterly since her review. None center the Caribbean. The three are Amy Kaplan's Presidential Address, "Violent Belongings and The Question of Empire Today" (2004), Jung Moon-Ho's "Outlawing "Coolies": Race, Nation, and Empire in the Age of Emancipation" (2005), and Rebecca Mina Schreiber's review, "The Labors of Looking: Unseenamerica and the Visual Economy of Work" (2004). Transnational work in American Studies such as these pieces, as well as Laura Brigg's Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico (2002) and Mary Renda's Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940 (2003) remap the geographic contours of what counts in and as American Studies. Yet, in critiquing twentieth-century U.S./American imperialism, all these pieces help to maintain a United States hegemony, albeit a revised one that focuses on America's nefarious interests in "other" nations. Quite literally, the Caribbean as a socio-cultural space and geo-political place is absent in American Studies paradigms.

My research on late twentieth-century Caribbean women's migration narratives simultaneously centers the Caribbean as an object of inquiry in American Studies and reinterprets American Studies as a transnational field. If the Caribbean and its diaspora become an object of study in American Studies, it is clear that such work cannot be just a "study of the Americas," but a study of the Black Atlantic world. Specific island

histories link the Caribbean to Africa, Western Europe, and the Americas, as well as the Middle and Far East; therefore, it has been important for me to develop this dissertation as an American Studies project that examines these histories *relationally*. London, New York, and specific locales in the Caribbean are interconnected, and the linkages become apparent as the characters negotiate the possibilities and promises of migrating to the United States or the United Kingdom and returning to the Caribbean.

The novels I have selected to do this work (The Line of the Sun, America's Dream, Geographies of Home, Breath, Eyes, Memory, and The Unbelonging) have not been treated sufficiently by scholars and have been largely ignored within American Studies, excepting perhaps Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory. Terry Eagleton and Paul Lauter's engagements with the significance of canon formation point to reasons why Caribbean women's migration literature remains invisible:

The fact that we always interpret literary works to some extent in the light of our own concerns—indeed that in one sense of 'our own concerns' we are incapable of doing anything else—might be one reason why certain works of literature seem to retain their value across the centuries.

(Eagleton 12)

If we tease Eagleton's argument out a bit, it may read something like this: because the dominant culture has maintained the classics of the literary canon as those works that address the concerns of those in power, they remain valued cultural products. As Lauter suggests, "the problem we face is that [the canon] itself is fundamentally misleading." The normative model posits that heterogeneous texts written by women, men of color, and migrants are "abnormal, deviant, lesser, and perhaps unimportant" (Lauter, Canon,

48). A comparative approach, on the other hand, asks what the concerns are for a particular social group, what distinguishes their discourse from that of the dominant culture, and re-positions “Anglo-European male writing as but one voice, albeit loud and various, in the chorus of ‘American’ culture” (51). This strategy diffuses what constitutes “must read” texts and argues that the stakes in expanding (or exploding) the borders of American Studies are more considerable than just articulating revisionist history. If, as Lauter (through the work of Toni Morrison) argues, the narrative is “the principle way in which human knowledge is made accessible,” then expanding literary history is a matter of survival—not so much for the text itself, but for “the experiences to which they give expression and shape” (59). This dissertation remaps western literary history to include Caribbean women writers and make visible women’s struggles against colonialism and violence in the Caribbean, the United States, and Great Britain.

Yet this statement of purpose gives me pause. Doris Sommers makes clear in Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas (1999) that this comparative work is not an easy task. She begins with a warning. “Be careful of some books. They can sting readers who feel entitled to know everything as they approach a text . . . with the conspiratorial intimacy of a potential partner” (ix). The acts of drawing “marginalized” writers to the center and/or inscribing the experiences of multicultural America or Britain walks a fine line between “contact and conquest” (ix). I am not at all certain that my goal here is to make The Line of the Sun, America’s Dream, Geographies of Home, Breath, Eyes, Memory, and The Unbelonging “canonical.” Rather, I hope to engage the complexity of their subject matter (migration, women’s sexuality, violence, affect, and subjectivity) with respect. I feel relieved when Sommers

assures her readers that “[w]orry should be part of the work” (xi). As a white, female, American Studies scholar working with Caribbean women’s literature, I stepped carefully and deliberately into my project. I hope that my efforts can be and will be interpreted as an effort to build bridges, in the spirit of Moraga and Anzaldúa’s This Bridge Called My Back. When I discuss my research on Caribbean women’s migration, I am acutely aware of, and in many contexts have experienced, the ever-so-slightly raised eyebrow. In this fleeting moment, I understand that because of my physical markers and the inherent privileges that come with being white, female, and educated in the United States, I have transgressed some expectation, some sensibility, some intangible border of cultural identity and cultural authority. When asked, I tell the stories of how I came to my project, not as rationale, but because it lays bare my own stakes in doing research on Caribbean women’s migration literature:

Story 1: There were two courses in college (“Future Directions of Feminist Theory” and “Women’s World Literature”) that helped me to understand that intellectual work could mean pursuing projects that were both ethically important and engaging to me. Each deliberately focused on the ways that gender, race, nation, and class formations complicated accepted ways of seeing the world. The literary works I read in these classes, such as Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony and Jean Rhys’ Wide Sargasso Sea sparked my imagination as counternarratives to facile understandings of cultural identity.

Story 2: My broader theoretical orientation developed while a student at the University of Birmingham, UK, yet my inspiration to embark on this particular project came from my involvement as the director an eating disorders unit at a small, nonprofit organization in Leicester, England. Mostly black British women filled the seats in our counseling session. Although their stories were distinct and complex, my clients spoke with a collective voice full of pain about the cultural rifts they experienced with their parents, school personnel, and peers. Our sessions often delved into the uneasiness they felt inside their own skin. In order to help me better understand their experiences, African-Caribbean and South Asian community workers pointed me not to medical journals but to a handful of literary texts, including Joan Riley's The Unbelonging. I recognized the significance of this suggestion: medical and community health sources fall silent on the possible causes and treatment of eating disorders among young African-Caribbean and South Asian women. Migration literature, in contrast, captured the broader emotional and cultural experience of being black in white, middle England.

Self-reflexivity is a form of feminist praxis that locates the researcher's subjectivity (for better or worse) in the writing process. My experiences shape the theoretical lenses that construct what appears in these pages.

In the chapters that follow, I use close textual analyses alongside discourse analysis, visual analysis, and two interviews with publishers to shed light on the role and place of Caribbean women's migration literature in culture. The chapters are anchored in

two ways: (1) by geographical location (Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, and Jamaica respectively) so that I can engage specific histories of colonization within a large, global framework; and (2) by forms of interpersonal violence (domestic violence, rape, and sexual abuse respectively) that gender migration. I organize Chapters 2 and 3 by coupling texts to examine cultural patterns connected to Puerto Rico and Hispaniola respectively. Chapter 4 examines Joan Riley's The Unbelonging specifically because it is the only text in Caribbean-British women's literature that engages issues of incest explicitly. Although this organizational choice runs the risk of essentializing the novels along national borders, it also provides a structure in which I can recognize and analyze identity formations that exist in the literature. First and foremost, my intention is to treat the novels as both narrative (placing women's stories at their center) and theory. I take cues from noted scholars Barbara Christian in "A Race for Theory" and Carole Boyce Davies in Black Women, Writing and Identity. As a result, I hope to make clear that my interpretations of these novels, as well as my understanding of the specific island-nations' histories, propel my use of literary and cultural theories. To use a term coined by Claude Levi-Strauss, I select from a "bricolage" of literary and cultural theory, picking and choosing from postcolonialism, feminist theory, performance studies, affect, and African-diaspora theory based on what is in the text in order to shed light on the everyday lives and cultural processes represented in the novels.

In chapter 2, "In Search of the 'American Dream': (Domestic) Violence, Migration, and Affective Citizenship," I analyze Esmeralda Santiago's America's Dream alongside Judith Ortiz Cofer's The Line of the Sun to explore how domestic violence and poverty in Puerto Rico drive the characters to search for a sense of subjectivity and

belonging—that is differentiated “affective citizenship.” Chapter 3, “Geographies of Pain/Narratives of ‘Resistance’: Rape and Migration between Hispaniola and New York” examines how women’s histories of state-sanctioned sexual violence and healing are told through Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory and Loida Maritza Pérez’s Geographies of Home. In Chapter 4, “Forging Subjectivity: Incest, Migration and Affect in Joan Riley’s The Unbelonging” I analyze Joan Riley’s The Unbelonging as a complicated coming of age story, to trace how the protagonist must invent and re-invent herself in order to survive in sexually and racially dangerous places (Jamaica and London) as the text inscribes a complex young, black female subjectivity. Chapter 5, “Mapping (Trans)Textualities,” contextualizes the close readings of the novels by examining the materialist processes of publishing contemporary Caribbean women’s writing. It is a small-scale study of canon-formation via the processes of marketing and dissemination that draws on ethnographic data collected from Peepal Tree Press (Leeds, UK) and Soho Press (New York) as well as published secondary sources canonization, translation, and material/visual culture. In this chapter, I ask and answer two key contextual questions: (1) why these books at this given historical moment and (2) what was the publishing process that brought them to the reading public? As such, it underscores how the cultural work of women’s Caribbean texts is simultaneously part of and resists capital modes of production.

As Caribbean-born Audre Lorde writes in her powerful text Sister Outsider: “Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change”

(Lorde, 127). The texts I examine here are “talking back” to the ways colonial, national, and interpersonal forms of violence—in both the Caribbean and the metropole—are mapped on women’s bodies (hooks 1984). Caribbean women writers narrate both the cultural performance of identity—that is how a subject is constructed by and interacts in the social worlds around her—and the political significance of affect (interiority) in women’s acts of survival, resistance, and healing. Thus, one of the goals of this project is to underscore how Caribbean women’s migration literature actively seeks social change by inscribing lost histories central to evolving understandings of diasporic community formation.

Chapter 2: In Search of the “American Dream”: (Domestic) Violence, Migration, and Affective Citizenship

In 1985 during the United Nations Third World Conference on Women, the delegates “identified violence against women as an issue requiring priority action and called upon governments to intensify efforts to strengthen forms of assistance . . . through shelter, support, legal, and other services” (Pargass 40). As a result, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) released General Recommendations 12 and 19 requiring states to protect women, eradicate violence, provide support, and collect and report data on domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape, sexual harassment, and stalking. The United States (and thereby Puerto Rico and its other territories) as well as all Caribbean Community (CARICOM) governments signed and ratified the CEDAW’s General Recommendations. In 1993, at the second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, delegates declared that violence against women is a violation of human rights.¹ Although domestic violence does not occur at the hands of state actors (as is the common assumption in human rights violations), physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, and economic violence between two intimates inhibits women’s fundamental freedoms, their “ability to enjoy rights on the basis of equality with men,” and denies them their dignity—the basis of what constitutes human rights (CEDAW par. 19). As these events unfolded on the world’s stage, two Puerto Rican authors, Judith Ortiz Cofer and Esmeralda Santiago, grappled with the complexity and local dimensions of domestic violence for the Puerto Rican migrant working poor in

¹ For further discussion on women’s rights as human rights, see Peters and Wolper, ed. Women’s Rights, Human Rights (1995).

Puerto Rico and mainland United States in their novels The Line of the Sun (1989) and América's Dream (1996).

“Domestic violence” circulates through scholarship in women’s studies, family studies, legal studies, sociology, and psychology largely as a way to frame how men physically and emotionally abuse women, though there is a growing literature on intimate violence in gay and lesbian relationships as well as the small percentage of women who abuse men (Walker 1979 & 2000; Ferraro and Johnson 1983; Ferraro 2000; Stark and Flitcraft 1996; Lawless 2001, Russo 2001; Sev’er 2002; Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky 2003). This body of work generally analyzes the effects of battering and emotional abuse, and demands that law enforcement and the general public recognize and take action against it. “The fear of violence permeates women’s daily lives, curtailing their freedom . . . and limiting what they do,” and as a result, violence against women is a public matter and affects women as citizens within any given nation (Pargass 39).

Despite the efforts of intellectuals, Inter-governmental Organizations (IGO’s), and Non-governmental Organizations (NGO’s), domestic violence continues to circulate through public discourse as an individual or family issue bound within a private, domestic space that outsiders, including the police, are reluctant to enter (Ferraro 1989, 1993; Kelly 2003; Fineman 1994).

According to police records in Puerto Rico (Policía de Puerto Rico, División de Estadísticas), reported domestic violence incidents have increased, on average, 2.5% from 1995-2005. The same source verifies that Puerto Rico has the highest number of reported cases of domestic violence in the United States, including all U.S. territories. In 1990, the rate was 384.1 per every 100,000 inhabitants, and by 2005, that number had

increased to 588.7 per every 100,000 (Policía 1-2). According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), poverty and domestic violence are inextricably linked, and with forty-five percent of Puerto Rico's residents living at or below the poverty line, "this creates a real barrier to ending domestic violence in Puerto Rico" (NCADV par. 4). The Oficina de la Procuradora de Mujeres, the government's women's bureau, estimates that fifty-two women are victims of domestic violence every day. In 2004, 31 women were killed as the result of domestic violence (qtd. in NCADV par. 1). These statistics represent at least two possible phenomena: women report more cases of domestic violence than they have in the past, and/or structural changes in legislation and education at local, national, and global levels has, thus far, made little impact. Amnesty International states succinctly what is happening, "we are not in a position to celebrate the elimination of violence against women in the Americas" because of loopholes in the legislation, judicial inexperience and lack of political will (Amnesty International par. 2).

What is certain is that women's voices get lost in institutional approaches to domestic violence. In much the same way that Ann Russo frames her personal narrative of violence in "The Struggle for Integrity in an Unjust World: Feminist Resistance through Storytelling," the written stories and unwritten silences of the men, women, and children in The Line of the Sun and América's Dream inscribe "interlocking layers of victimization, surviving, thriving, and fighting abuse and violence" in ways that statistics do not reveal (Russo 185).² In the novels, the authors create subjects out of individuals

² For ethnographic approaches to women's experiences of domestic violence, see Baker, "And I Went Back" (1997); Websdale, Rural Women Battering and the Justice System (1997); McClusky, "Here Our Culture is Hard" (2001); Giangrande, "A Roof Over My Head" (2004); and Berns, "When You're Involved, It's Just Different" (2007).

otherwise labeled “victim/survivors” and take readers on a journey through their terror-filled worlds in Puerto Rico and New York.

In this chapter, I explore how The Line of the Sun and América’s Dream expand feminist and public discourse on domestic violence by focusing on the lives of the Puerto Rican migrant poor, how these narratives redefine what constitutes domestic violence vis-à-vis citizenship and the “American Dream,” and how the cultural politics of shame and fear circumscribe experiences of domestic violence. The novels analyzed in the following pages represent domestic violence as private, individual trauma in the home *and* acts of violence within the nation, involving denial of full citizenship and the racialization and exploitation of the Puerto Rican working poor. Moreover, as will become clear, the texts draw parallels between the power relationships found in interpersonal violence (males terrorizing women and parents neglecting children) and the postcolonial violence of U.S. paternalism and colonialism in Puerto Rico.

This chapter argues that the Puerto Rican migrant working poor characters live in regulated spaces—family, work, and the nation—that induce, perpetuate, and/or are complicit with domestic violence. They negotiate horrific circumstances, living in fear and always on the run, and actively construct and reconstruct their identity in the process. As victims/survivors of domestic violence and migration, the protagonists (Guzmán, Marisol, and América) engage in a process of identification and disidentification with *seemingly* stable constructions of citizenship and nationality (Puerto Rican and

U.S./American), gender (masculinity and femininity), and class (bourgeois and proletariat) to live (survive) in the Puerto Rican/American borderlands.³

The performativity of Puerto Rican cultural identities in the texts dismantles constructions of citizenship (who counts) and the “American Dream” (who can succeed). According to myths that surround “immigrants” who enter the United States, Puerto Ricans who are, by law, American citizens, have the special access to the same opportunities as native-born citizens. These opportunities are constructed through particular ideologies: Enlightenment individualism (the belief that all rational people have the same rights), the American work ethic (the belief that if one works hard s/he will succeed regardless of gender, race, and class), and assimilation (the belief that adaptation to dominant cultural norms is required to become “American”). The texts unravel these myths by rewriting “citizenship” as a haunting narrative full of trauma, anger, fear, pain, and uncertainty. American colonization, state sanctioned violence against the working poor via economic policies, and racism percolate through the surface of the texts, and undergird interpersonal violence. Following a brief discussion of citizenship and the special case of Puerto Rican citizenship in the next two sections, I consider the following questions in my literary analysis of The Line of the Sun and América’s Dream: what counts as (domestic) violence; what counts as “American citizenship”; what is the “American Dream” and who has access to it; and how do the answers to these questions intersect with gender, race, and class formations in Puerto Rican and American cultures.

³ Muñoz posits disidentification as “a third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz 11).

Theorizing Citizenship

Sociologist Stephen Castles and political scientist Alastair Davidson assert in their introduction to Citizenship and Migration that “citizenship is in crisis” (2). Cultural studies scholar Lauren Berlant claims in The Queen of America Goes to Washington City that “something strange has happened to citizenship” in our contemporary era (1). With an unprecedented number of people on the move in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, there are clearly global anxieties about who belongs where and on what basis. The political debate on illegal Mexican immigration in the United States, racial and ethnic turmoil in Germany because of the influx of Turkish migrants, and the refugee crisis in Chad because of the genocide in Darfur are all good examples of how this anxiety is deployed on the world’s stage. Because of the magnitude of these crises, the United Nations in 2006 hosted its first high-level, multilateral discussion devoted to global migration, “a subject that was considered taboo in international diplomacy” (Migration Information Source, “Issues,” par. 2). In response to these global shifts, recent scholarship in anthropology, sociology, history, cultural studies, and women’s studies offers three theoretical approaches to understanding the complexity of citizenship in a world increasingly determined by global economics and porous borders: legal/political citizenship, cultural citizenship, and affective citizenship.

Traditionally, social scientists, particularly political scientists, legal scholars, sociologists, and historians, use the terms “legal or political citizenship” to convey the formal political structures and certifying processes of the nation-state as well as the rights and responsibilities of its citizenry. Passports, birth certificates, the census, and other official documents mark human beings as members of a given nation. In turn, those

members of democratic nation-states have the right to vote and carry out their lives so long as they pay taxes and abide by federal, state, and local laws. Legal/political citizenship as defined by both liberal political theory and Marxist critique “requires that the subject deny its particular private interests to become the ‘abstract citizen’ of the political state” (Lowe 26). This form of citizenship operates on a consensus model—that is by majority rule—and assumes that all citizens (born in a nation or naturalized) are equal under the law.

Recent work in the social sciences and humanities reframes the contours of what constitutes the “nation” by calling into question who is *actually* and *accurately* represented at the level of the nation state. Since the 1990’s, scholars have argued for a new paradigm of “cultural citizenship” (Rodríguez 1989; Lowe 1996; Ong 1996; Ong 1998; Kerber 1997; Flores 1998; Rosaldo 1999; Andrew *et al.* 2005; Miller 2006). This new mode of inquiry is necessary to account for “the multifaceted and differential experiences of groups in society” who are systematically denied access to the certifying procedures of the nation state, yet still must live according to its laws (Ong, Cultural, 738). According to Ong, cultural citizenship “signifies the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory” (738). Cultural citizenship embraces “difference” and operates on a model of particularism and conflict. The paradigm relies on binary modes of thought and essentialized cultural identity in order to elucidate how immigration policy—indeed the nation-state itself—perpetuates racism. For example, in Immigrant Acts: Asian American Cultural Politics, Lowe persuasively argues that citizenship is ultimately

denied to Asian American immigrants based on their race and ethnicity, and it is this disavowal that solidifies the white subject as the only “American citizen”:

[T]he American citizen has been defined over and against the Asian immigrant, legally, economically, and culturally. These definitions have cast Asian immigrants both as persons and populations to be integrated into the national political sphere and as the contradictory, confusing, unintelligible elements to be marginalized and returned to their alien origins. (Lowe 4).

Although immigration policy and therefore citizenship demand assimilation, Asian Americans remain “foreign”—outside the bounds of the nation both historically and ideologically. Cultural citizenship challenges “the terrain of national culture on the basis of differentiation” and operates at the level of beliefs and norms (2). Race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and all other categories of identity formation matter greatly in determining who belongs in the nation and what treatment that will receive. According to Kerber, nine groups of people under the rule of the United States government “have experienced American citizenship substantially differently” from heterosexual, white males, including Puerto Rican “noncitizen nationals” (Kerber 836).⁴ I will return to the special case of Puerto Rican/U.S. American citizenship in a moment after discussing “emotive citizenship.”

⁴ The nine groups that Kerber names as experiencing the meaning of citizenship differently are: women, enslaved Africans and their descendents, Native Americans, involuntary immigrants (such as the Mexicans who lived in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California before annexing the land), “noncitizen” nationals who live in territories that never became states, voluntary immigrants from Europe eligible for citizenship, voluntary immigrants from Asia ineligible for citizenship, refugees who believe they can never return home, and refugees, such as the Vietnamese, that were uprooted because of United States policy.

In An Archive of Feelings, Cvetkovich argues that “it is important to incorporate affective life into our conceptions of citizenship and to recognize that these affective forms of citizenship may fall outside of the institutionalized practices that we customarily associate with the concept of a citizen” (Cvetkovich 11). Emotive citizenship by-passes the essentialism—whether it is the mobilization of “all citizens” or “all women”—inherent in legal and cultural citizenship. As a paradigm, emotive citizenship operates at the level of the psychic cost that the constant negotiation of the legal system and dominant belief systems and norms exacts on individuals and groups. As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, differentiated affective citizenship carves out a space in which the Puerto Rican migrant working poor can reject the dominant cultural scripts of nation, race, gender, and class but still aspire to belong to a concrete geographical, political, and social place. This way of making sense of experience, works in the spirit of cultural citizenship by seeking the guarantee of full rights and responsibilities to those persons marginalized by static constructions of national identity. However, differentiated affective citizenship pushes the boundaries of “belonging” to operate at both the national level (e.g. Puerto Ricans in the United States), *and* familial/interpersonal level.

A Brief Note on Puerto Rico and American Citizenship

The main island of Puerto Rico, along with the smaller islands of Vieques and Culebra, Mona, Desecheo, and Caja de Muertos, is located just east of the Dominican Republic and west of St. Martin/St. Maarten, Anguilla, and St. Kitts/Nevis in the northeast region of the Caribbean. Puerto Rico’s northern beaches border the Atlantic

Ocean and its southern ones, the Caribbean Sea. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Puerto Rico's total population in 2000 was 3,808,610 with women (51.9%) slightly outnumbering men (48.1%). Seventy-nine percent of adults live in "family households," and fifty-four percent identified themselves as a "married-couple family," twenty-one percent as female-headed households, and just over eighteen percent as living alone. Nearly ninety-nine percent self-identified as "Hispanic or Latino of any race," and since the census separates ethnicity (Hispanic or Latino) from race (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander), 80.5% identified themselves as "White," with eight percent as "Black or African American" and seven percent as "some other race." The remaining five percent identified with "two or more races" (U.S. Census 2000 par. 3)

As Jorge Duany points out in Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States, census statistics must be contextualized in terms of both how the U.S. Census Bureau charts out race and ethnicity and how Puerto Ricans conceptualize race. Puerto Ricans have steadily identified themselves as "White" since 1802, and while this may, in fact, represent a "whitening" of Puerto Rico, it most certainly signifies that U.S./American hegemonic constructions of "race"—based on cultural heritage—do not translate into Puerto Rican culture (Duany 248).

Unlike Americans, most Puerto Ricans do not consider race primarily a question of descent. Like other Caribbean and Latin American people, Puerto Ricans emphasize physical appearance in representing racial identity . . . Racial identification depends largely on skin color and other

visible characteristics such as the shape of one's mouth and nose and hair texture. (245)

In Duany's fieldwork in Barrio Gandul, a poor urban community in San Juan, he documented nineteen racial terms. For example, *blanco(a)* references someone who is white and *jabao(a)* refers to someone who is "fair skinned with curly hair"; *café con leche* refers to someone with "tan or brown skin" and is differentiated from *piel canela* which means someone who has tan or brown skinned but with more cinnamon color (238). "Race" and "color" are synonyms in this taxonomy, and Puerto Ricans use a more fluid continuum to distinguish racial identity. As Duany suggests, "occupational prestige and family connections can alter a person's 'race'" and this, too, stands in sharp contrast to U.S./American racial stasis. However, "[i]n Puerto Rico, as well as in the United States, an ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority has prevailed since the days of colonial slavery" (246).

Contemporary understandings of Puerto Rican nationality and citizenship are intricately woven into its history of colonization and racialization. On August 12, 1898, at the end of the Spanish-American War, the Treaty of Paris officially granted the United States the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. Spain relinquished control of Cuba and granted sovereignty of the land to Cubans. Specifically, Article 2 of the Treaty "cedes to the United States the Island of Puerto Rico and other islands now under Spanish sovereignty in the West Indies, and the islands of Guam in the Marianas or Ladrones." Unlike other land annexed to the United States during westward expansion, Puerto Rico never achieved statehood. Under Article 9 of the Treaty, "[t]he civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United

States shall be determined by the Congress.” As such, Puerto Rico was promised Puerto Rican nationality with the added “benefits” of American citizenship and United States protection (Perusse 85-86).⁵

In everyday practice, however, Puerto Ricans could not ward off the encroachment and control of American capitalist, military, and social interests (Meléndez 1993; Findley 1999; Briggs 2002). The United States transformed the sugar industry and invested millions of dollars to rebuild the infrastructure of Puerto Rico following the Spanish-American war. As communication scholar Mario Alfronso Murillo documents, “[physical] conditions improved somewhat for many Puerto Ricans . . . yet illiteracy, unemployment, and personal income saw very little change during the first generations of U.S. control” (Murillo, 28). In Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico, Laura Briggs follows up on Eileen Findlay’s Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920 to trace how the United States’ interest in “reproduction and sexuality have defined the difference that makes colonialism in Puerto Rico possible and necessary, what makes ‘them’ need ‘our’ regulation and governance” (Briggs 4). By World War One, the majority of legislators in the United States Congress agreed that it was in their interest to once again address Puerto Rico’s territorial status. In 1917, under the Jones Act, the United States imposed a bicameral legislature in Puerto Rico, denying Puerto Rico representation in the U.S.

⁵ See Perusse’s The United States and Puerto Rico (1990) for a brief history of Puerto Rico, including the reprinting of primary documents from the Spanish Constitution in 1876 to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 1541, December 15, 1960.

Congress, and granting the President of the United States veto power over the local legislature.⁶

Today, Puerto Rico is officially a “self-governing commonwealth” of the United States. Puerto Ricans are legally United States citizens who (1) vote in national primaries but not in general elections, (2) elect one delegate, a Resident Commissioner, to the United States House of Representatives who can voice Puerto Rico’s concerns but cannot vote; (3) are subject to the United States Constitution and federal laws; (4) have a three-tiered governing structure with an elected governor (executive branch), elected members to a Senate and House of Representatives (legislative), and a court system comprised of judges appointed by the governor with informed consent of the Senate (judicial); (5) are granted social security cards and are therefore permitted to live in, work in, and travel back and forth between the United States and Puerto Rico; and (6) are not taxed by the United States government on income that is earned in Puerto Rico. According to political scientist Edgardo Meléndez, such a system creates a politics of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion:

Policies of exclusion . . . comprise the structures of colonialism and keep Puerto Ricans from having access to the power invested in the federal government. On the other hand, policies of inclusion (such as citizenship and federal welfare programs) have inserted Puerto Ricans, at least in a formal way, into the structures of the metropolitan state. (Meléndez 42)

Because of Puerto Rico’s geographical location, cultural inheritances, and economic and government ties to the United States, Puerto Rico exists in the United States/Puerto Rico

⁶ For a recent history of United States expansion into and jurisdiction over Puerto Rico, see Burnett and Marshall, eds. Foreign in a Domestic Sense (2001).

borderlands as a territory/colony, a fledgling nation in the Americas, and a physical place in the Caribbean region.⁷ Puerto Ricans inhabit the borderlands of citizenship; they are granted partial legal/political citizenship and denied cultural citizenship because culturally and normatively they are “different” from the mainland United States.

At its core, citizenship is about belonging—nationally, culturally, and emotionally—and therefore it is inextricably woven into the fabric of identity formation. The Line of the Sun and América’s Dream carefully mark how the Puerto Rican working poor—men and women—are caught in systems of interpersonal and racial violence and poverty, and are, therefore, denied access to legal/political and cultural citizenship, though they actively carve out spaces for some sense of emotional citizenship. For those working poor migrants, like Guzmán and América, who flee under the cover of night to escape violent living arrangements, very few places exist where they can feel as if they belong. Their physical and emotional dislocations constitute an archive of trauma, and it is the affective lives of these marginalized characters, countering the familiar narratives of “home” and the “American Dream,” that interest me most in The Line of the Sun and América’s Dream.

Violence at Home

The first half of each novel is set in Puerto Rico. In The Line of the Sun, Ortiz Cofer frames her story of the Vivente family (Guzmán, Mama Cielo, Papa Pepe, and his sister Ramona) by introducing the reader to the imaginary small, rural farming village of

⁷ Puerto Rico’s status as a self-governing commonwealth divides loyalists and nationalists, and periodically is the subject of debate in the United States Congress. For further reading on Puerto Rico as a U.S. colony, see Carr, Puerto Rico (1984); Meléndez *et al.* Colonial Dilemma (1993); Santiago, “Subject People” and Colonial Discourses (1994); Monge, Puerto Rico (1997); Grosfoguel, Colonial Subjects (2003); Malavet, America’s Colony (2004); and Bosque-Pérez, *et al.* Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule (2006).

Salud, Puerto Rico.⁸ This community is full of idiosyncratic characters and is representative of life outside of Puerto Rican urban spaces such as San Juan and Ponce. For Guzmán, Salud is where he was born and raised, but it is not “home.” He lives in exile from his own family and community because of his “wild” ways, and his mother, and later church women, spend years attempting to control his behavior through physical violence and shaming. Santiago’s América’s Dream starts out in Vieques. Unlike Salud, Vieques exists within a global imaginary signifying militarism and imperialism due to the United States Navy test bombings that have taken place there for years. The military controls approximately 75% of Vieques, which is used for land, sea, and air practice operations with live munitions, including depleted uranium, and the storage of those munitions (“Military” par. 10).⁹ In the novel, protests to the bombings form the backdrop for the more personal and intimate terror that the main character, América, experiences daily at the hands of her lover.¹⁰ She is a battered woman living in a besieged land.

The land, the town, and buildings, as well as the characters’ relationships with one another, play crucial roles in the performance of nation, ethnicity and gender in both novels. Both narratives unfold in places that vacillate between an essentialized island utopia, bursting with lushness, and an impoverished territory that has fallen prey to U.S./American colonization. In The Line of the Sun, *Central*, the local sugar refinery, represents the United States’ far-reaching capital interests and the name is symbolic for

⁸ “Salud” means health, or the state of well or ill being, in Spanish. One might also say “salud” in toasting to someone’s health.

⁹ On June 13, 2006, the United Nations’s Special Committee on Decolonization called on the United States to “expedite the process to allow Puerto Ricans to exercise fully their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, and return all occupied land and facilities on both Vieques island and Ceiba” (UN Special Committee on Decolonization par. 1). Various organizations have protested the U.S. military’s use of Vieques over the years because of its contamination of the environment and the quality of people’s lives.

¹⁰ There is a certain amount of irony Santiago uses in naming her protagonist, the victim of domestic violence, “América” while the United States of America assaults the island of Vieques with its bombs.

its role in the community. *Central* compounds the hardships of the working-poor on the island. The townsmen have few employment choices in Salud: maintaining the cane fields, working in the refinery, running small businesses in town to service the community, dedicating one's life to the church, or joining the military. Many of the working-poor toil in the fields for long hours under dangerous conditions established by "The American":

Someone named Jesus had passed out on the job that morning. When they removed his shirt to let him cool off, they had seen the horrible open sores all over his back. They knew at once the sores had been caused from leaks in the cylinder that he had strapped on his shoulders to manually fumigate the field the previous day. The American had introduced this economical new system. A crop-duster airplane cost a bundle to run and it wasted chemicals over unused land. Manual dusting could be done by the men themselves in shifts, and nothing was wasted (11).

The "American" refuses to put up more capital for a crop duster, so in order not to "waste anything," the refinery hires human labor to do the work that machines should do. In the global economy, human beings are expendable. The men of Salud must put their life on the line to provide for their families, and the community has no choice but to tolerate, and within paradigms of imperialism, be grateful for "The American" presence.

U.S./American colonization reaches far beyond commercial exploitation of the land and laborers in The Line of the Sun. "The American" also claims the townspeople's personal lives as his own. The Santacruz family lives in a cottage on the Clement's estate because Don Juan, the patriarch, is the foreman in the fields. Certainly, Don Juan has

authority over the fieldworkers and his own family, but he is powerless within the global industrial complex. In order for his family to receive food, shelter, and income, “The American” demands that Don Juan hand over his eighteen-month-old, blond-haired, fair-skinned, and brown-eyed baby, Josefa, “because Mrs. Clement is barren” and wants a child (60). Without debate and in an act that is as violent as the act of demanding the child, Don Juan tears the crying Josefa from his wife’s arms and hands over the child to The American. In the text, domestic violence is embedded in state-sanctioned systems of exploitation. The United States dominates Puerto Rico land and its people, and Puerto Rican men dominate women. Colonial power is uncontrollable and transforms the private and public lives of Puerto Rican citizens.

Similarly, América’s Dream reveals the layers of violence and exploitation that are a part of daily life in Vieques for América and her family. In addition to raising her daughter and living in fear of her abusive boyfriend, Correa, América works as a domestic in a local hotel that caters to U.S./American tourists. On the first page of the novel, readers are introduced to América as she works:

It’s her life, and she’s in the middle of it. On her knees, scrubbing behind a toilet at the only hotel on the island. She hums a bolero, a love song filled with longing . . . Most of the time she’s not even aware of the pleasing music that comes from her and is surprised when tourists tell her how charming it is that she sings as she works (1).

América’s body is the topography upon which tourists map their colonial assumptions and desires. To the tourist gaze, América is exotic, “charming,” the quintessential Puerto Rican woman happily singing as she works. There is no regard for what she is humming

or how it might reflect her life—nor can there be because in América’s words, “they look right past her,” rendering her invisible (30). As cultural theorist bell hooks argues:

[T]he commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated . . . by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other’s history through a process of decontextualization” (hooks, Black Looks, 31).

América is aware of her own objectification. In her words, she “represents the charm of the tropics: a colorfully dressed woman walking along a sunlit road, her shadow stretching behind her as if she were dragging her history” (16-17). And it is precisely América’s self-knowledge and historical knowledge that resist first world ideologies of the exotic “other.”

Sociologist Mimi Sheller places the tourist gaze within modes of Western modernity. “[C]onsuming the Caribbean occurs first through its displacement from the narrative of Western modernity (decontextualization), followed by its recontextualization as an “Other” to serve the purposes of Western fantasy” (Sheller 144). The essentialized exotic “Island Woman” with her happy disposition and colorful appearance is precisely what the tourists imagined of their island paradise. This modern, imperial gaze is laid bare in the text as the reader’s gaze. The reader located in the metropole comes to América’s story as the tourist, and it is his/her gaze that is being challenged by the text. The text counters this process of recolonization by giving voice to América. She “talks back” throughout the text by challenging the tourist gaze:

She knows more about them than they will ever know about her. She knows whether they flail in their sleep, or whether they sleep quietly on one side or the other. Whether the tropical night is so cool they have to use blankets, or whether they sleep exposed to the foul sereno. She knows the brand of toothpaste they use, whether they have dentures. She knows if the women have their periods. She knows if the men wear jockey or boxer underwear, and what size. She notices how they look right past and pretend not to see her. She feels herself there, solid as always, but they look through her, as if she were a part of the strange landscape into which they have run away from their everyday lives. Those who do see her, smile guardedly, then slide their gaze away quickly, ashamed, it seems, to have noticed her (30).

According to psychologist Silvan Tompkins, shame “operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated” (qtd. in Sedgwick and Frank 5). The tourists who meet América’s eyes avert their gaze, ashamed to have taken pleasure from their objectification of her. “When one hangs one’s head or drops one’s eyelids or averts one’s gaze, one has communicated one’s shame and both the face and the self unwittingly become more visible, to the self and others” (137). It takes but a moment for América to recognize and feel the tourist’s shame, and, as bell hooks argues in From Margin to Center, it is from her subjugated position—underscored by the use of the third person—that América has the critical distance to know intimately both the tourist and herself.

The built environment further establishes how the colonizing first world dominates the local population. Just as the great sugar *haciendas* once dominated the

landscape, wealthy American military and businessmen and their families now live in the hills with commanding views of the town and sea:

The houses here are built on a monte with a view of Phosphorescent Bay and, beyond it, the turquoise Caribbean Sea. Each house in this neighborhood has a four-wheel-drive vehicle in its marquesina, the lawns are neatly trimmed, and potted plants sway from hooks on the shaded decks. The community was devastated by Hurricane Hugo. Within a year of the hurricane, however, the lots were owned by Yanquis who have built cement-and-glass mansions dangling from precipitous slopes, adorned with elaborate wrought-iron rejas at the windows, doors, and marquesina gates. Rejas that seem to be decorative but are meant to protect the part-time residents from the vandalism and robbery they fear is imminent the minute they turn their cars in the opposite direction (18).

The wrought-iron *rejas* symbolize the delineation of white/inside and other/outside and mark the landscape to accentuate how all local Puerto Rican citizens are potential criminals. As Ahmed argues “fear works through and on the bodies of those who are transformed into its subjects, as well as its object . . . fear involves relationships of proximity, which are crucial to establishing ‘the apartness’ of white bodies” (Ahmed 62-3). The politics of fear, in this case, are such that white, wealthy homeowners project their stereotypes that they bring with them from the United States onto the Puerto Rican body (and land) and create their own fears.

It is a mistake to argue that Puerto Rican cultural space simply reflects United States’ colonization, and by extension, to suggest that U.S./American citizens control the

cultural landscape. The local community also regulates itself and perpetuates its own form of domestic violence in deeming some people unworthy of cultural or emotive citizenship through performances of gender, religion, and class. As Frantz Fanon argues in Wretched of the Earth:

The national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket. (120)

Rather than banding together to overthrow *Central* in The Line of the Sun or to rebuke the tourism industry in América's Dream, the citizens of Salud and Vieques mimic and reinforce colonial ideologies. Whether it is Correa's watchful eye over América in América's Dream or Mama Cielo and her fellow church-going matriarchs of Salud monitoring Guzmán's every move in The Line of the Sun, empowered, "intelligible" community members (those who exist within the proper bounds of the society) seek to control, through violence and shame, those considered "unintelligible."

In The Line of the Sun, according to the norms of Salud, women's moral responsibility—sanctioned through the church—is to reign in men's uncontrollable sexuality and maintain women's purity. According to the narrative:

The President of the Holy Rosary Society was Dona Martin Modesto, the plump young wife of the town of Salud's only lawyer. Married only five years to the town's most eligible bachelor (now its most zealously guarded husband) . . . [s]he had since assumed her rightful position as queen of

Salud society, a situation that by its nature demanded that she and her ladies be the watchful guardians of the moral status of the town. (76)

The Rosary Society aids the Catholic Church in keeping watch over its flock by adopting the “master’s tools” (Lorde 1984). As the wives of the wealthiest men in town, the rest of the community (including the elderly priest) is powerless to resist their dictates. The Rosary Society has access to cultural power through scrutinizing and disciplining the working poor.

The working poor, on the other hand, are rendered “unintelligible” by both U.S./American and local Puerto Rican dominant cultures. The Puerto Rican working poor live in a state of abjection. According to feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva, abjection is both a state and a process—“the condition/position of that which is deemed loathsome and the process by which that appraisal is made” (qtd. in Shimakawa 3). In much the same way that U.S./American ideology constructs Puerto Ricans as the “other,” the Rosary Society, including Guzmán’s mother, establishes who does and does not belong within the community. Even before his birth, Mama Cielo labels Guzmán the shame of her existence:

They say Guzmán had been a difficult pregnancy for Mama Cielo . . . She claimed the little monkey was climbing her ribs, that she felt fingers grabbing her bladder and squeezing, so that she had to stop attending mass for the shame of urine trickling down her legs (1).

Two things interest me in the above passage: Mama Cielo feels humiliated in church for a natural bodily function, and she passes the blame for her shame along to her unborn son. According to Tompkins, “shame is an experience of the self by the self” and

requires the face of someone else to recognize it, yet Mama Cielo refuses to experience her own shame (in the face of the church), and Guzmán spends his life on the receiving end of her open hand. Growing up defiant of his mother's authority (he spends his days among men who gamble on cock fights and his nights visiting his friend "Angela, the hunchback"), harsh words ("*nino del diablo*"), and physical violence, Guzmán is happiest in the company of others, like him, who are marked as "different."

One such character is Rosa, the spiritualist who lives on the edge of town dispensing root potions and wisdom to the townspeople. Despite the Rosary Society's renaming her "*La Cabra*" (meaning "the she-goat"), and assuming that she is a prostitute, Mama Cielo and the Rosary Society seek out Rosa as their last resort to control Guzmán's wild ways. The text inscribes Rosa's spiritualist center, potions, and healing rituals—all symbolic of santería and markers of magical realism in Latin American fiction—as performances of ethnic excess. "Ceramic statuettes of saints, a mahogany wand with a gold tip, a bowl of water, and several cigars" are the tools she uses to transform herself into "the soul of a great warrior slain by the priests because it would not swear allegiance to the Spanish cross" (24-25). These objects are not only powerful symbols to the community, but also are powerful props. When the women arrive with an adolescent Guzmán in tow, thick cigar smoke and bitter drinks filled with liquor and pure cane sugar give the illusion of mysticism but in actuality constrict the women's throats and force them to pledge their trust to Rosa and her treatments. Yet, in the end, it is a trick that gives Rosa leverage to insist that Guzmán live with her in the valley, away from the violence he experiences. In the years that follow, both Rosa and Guzmán transgress the lines of respectability and civility by living together, bringing more shame to his

family and provoking “the beginning of the last witch hunt in Salud” (75). Rosa and Guzmán find solace in each other and in their exile from the suffocating life of Salud.

In América’s Dream, Correa’s propensity toward violence is as inherent to masculinity as it is for the Rosary churchwomen to police Salud under the guise of femininity. América and other women in the community know instinctually—indeed by “training”—that men control women’s bodies and subjectivities:

She’s heard the men talk about how a man has to show his woman, from the very first, who wears the pants in the house. Especially nowadays, when women think they can run the world. Even Feto, father of six daughters, says a man has to teach women the way he likes things, and if the only way she can learn is “a fuerza de punos,” well then, his fists should be the teacher. Tomas says he doesn’t believe in hitting women with his fists. An open hand, he says, is as effective. “A man who hits a woman with his fists,” he says, “is taking advantage.” (34)

Whether by fist or open hand, the community of Vieques subscribes to the notion that it is a man’s duty to “keep women in their place.” If a man cannot control “his woman” then he is the object of disrespect and humiliation among the other men. Whereas in The Line of the Sun, it is a woman’s moral *responsibility*—via the sanctioning of the church—to control a man’s sexuality through shaming tactics, it is a man’s *right* to control a woman through fear in América’s Dream. As Ahmed argues in “The Affective Politics of Fear,” “fear is felt differently by different bodies,” and in the case of women fearing men, the organization of fear takes on spatial dimensions (Ahmed 68). “Fear involves shrinking the body; *it restricts the body’s mobility precisely insofar as it seems*

to prepare the body for flight” (69, original emphasis). Bodies in fear take up less space and “emotions work to align bodily space with social space” (69). Women, such as América, in domestic violence situations, guard themselves both in the home and outside of it. As the narrative makes clear, it is impossible to fight back, so the answer is to endure the violence or flee.

Codes of femininity are linked to patterns of domestic violence in the text. Correa demands that América wears dresses, high heels, and make-up when she is with him in public, and at the same time, if another man acknowledges her beauty with a nod or stare, he beats her. Throughout the text, América acknowledges that his actions set an unfair trap for her—indeed it restricts her actions and expands his—but in general, she revels in her femininity:

[W]omen should be soft and round, not sharp and angular. Her own body is full at the hips and buttocks, ample in the breasts with enough flesh to cushion the bones, but not so much that it jiggles. Well, some parts jiggle, but only if she makes them. She’s proud of her sensuous walk. (100)

In this brief passage, the text elucidates the *pleasures* of femininity, which are often the aspects of womanhood that are most overlooked by feminist theory. Inasmuch as América actively cultivates her sexuality, she also is conscientious of the limitations of women’s pleasure and its link to power:

It is expected that boys will be men, but girls are never supposed to be women. Girls are supposed to go directly from girlhood to married motherhood with no stops in between, to have more self-control, to not allow passion to rule their actions, to be able to say no and mean it. When

a boy has sex, it elevates him in the eyes of other people. When a girl has sex, she falls (113).

Male and female sexualities are contradictory, but through the repetition of daily life “femininity” and “masculinity” appear normalized and perpetuate women’s and men’s social roles and behaviors. One can seek the pleasures of femininity, but only insofar as they give way to motherhood and being the moral keepers of men’s sexuality. Similar to the Rosary Society in The Line of the Sun, women in América’s Dream are the linchpin of familial and community formation. Anything outside of this performance is “unintelligible” and met with violence.

The texts trace how performances of masculinity and femininity are interdependent. Both authors refuse to provide easy conclusions about who “men” and “women” are and what they want. As such, the characters represent Gordon’s notions of “complex personhood”:

[E]ven those who live in the most dire circumstances possess a complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity that is never adequately glimpsed by viewing them as victims or, on the other hand, as superhuman agents. It has always baffled me why those most interested in understanding and changing the barbaric domination that characterizes our modernity often – not always – withhold from the very people they are most concerned with the right to complex personhood. (4)

In América’s Dream, women are not simply victims of men’s controlling sentiments and behaviors. They embrace and restage the cultural codes of femininity and acts of violence such that their daughters and sons are on the receiving end. América’s

relationship with her daughter Rosalinda is fraught with tension, and when América slaps Rosalinda's face "full on the mouth, the sound flat against her daughter's echoing scream" (43) or later yells at the children she's minding, readers are jarred by the ease with which this happens. According to Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten," victims of abuse desire to punish and to be punished, to subordinate and to be subordinated, and to deliver pain and to receive pain. Therefore, if "the identity formed at the point of injury is identity formed in part out of trauma, then there would also be a certain reassurance, and possibly even erotic gratification, in restaging the injury, either at the site of our own bodies (masochism) or at the site of another (displaced masochism)" (Brown 55). Such a restaging affirms who a person is and continues until the initial trauma is addressed and healed. Therefore, cycles of violence—whether colonial or interpersonal—are rooted in both social and psychological worlds.

Guzmán (in The Line of the Sun) and América (in America's Dream) do not seek their marginal status or the violence directed at them. Indeed, they long for a different life, if not inclusion in the community, a safe home, and a sense of "home." Joshua Price in "The Apotheosis of Home and the Maintenance of Spaces of Violence," explores the production of the home as both an ideologically maintained site of safety and refuge to "scrutinize the home as frequently a central place of terror and danger" (Price 40). Price is not interested in "home" as a physical structure in the way, for example, that Dolores Hayden analyzes housing in The Power of Place and Building Suburbia. Rather he takes up home because it "connotes a normative ideal that excludes the possibility of violence against women *at the level of the meaning* of 'home'" (Price 40-41; original emphasis). "Home" in The Line of the Sun and America's Dream illustrates Price's point, and in turn

his work makes clear that the assumptions that the home is a place of “peace, succor, tranquility, achievement . . . even . . . sacredness” is misplaced and maintained by patriarchal discourse (40).

The only space of belonging Guzmán can find is in the natural environment. As evidenced by this nostalgic description of Salud in The Line of the Sun, the characters are drawn into the comforts of their island homeland through the natural landscape, which is richly textured by hints of the exotic and by markers of Puerto Rico’s island essence:

Just behind Mama Cielo’s home was la Granja. Bananas grew abundantly on plants that were man-tall but weighed down with great stalks. They looked like *campesinos* carrying heavy loads on their shoulders. There were also guavas just beginning to ripen. Their soft pink pulp was sweet and delicious . . . In a few acres grew mangoes, bananas, plantains, breadfruit, avocados, tamarinds, and roots such as the yucca that could be cooked and eaten like potatoes. It was easy to imagine how the original inhabitants of the Island had led an easy life in an earthly paradise, subsisting on what the earth and sea gave them. (Cofer 132-33)

Guavas, mangoes, bananas and plantains dot the farmland, and one can nearly taste the produce of this earthly utopia. The land nurtures Guzmán in a way that his mother can not. The physical terrain is his home—the source of his rejuvenation and sustenance. As a youngster running from the raised hand and strictness of Mama Cielo, he heads for the fruit groves to eat, sleep, and find refuge. When Guzmán leaves his mother’s house to live with Rosa, they find their paradise in the seclusion of the island’s beauty. Sitting below the flamboyant trees, “thick with branches and sweet-smelling orange flowers that

cast shade,” they find peace (91). Later, after the church women run Rosa out of town, Guzmán finds the clarity of direction he sought in the essence of his homeland. In “the thick vegetative expanse of land [where he] would be able to hide for a while until he thought things out,” he realizes that he must leave for the United States, *Nueva York*, in order to find Rosa and reclaim his sense of self.

América also finds solace outside of her home and in her mother’s garden in the backyard. In América’s Dream, any sense of “home” is elusive and any Westernized romantic vision of Puerto Rico is jettisoned. Though he is married to another woman, Correa has claimed América’s body as his own since they met. Together they have a child, and around town, it is well known that América is “Correa’s woman”—possessed by him, beaten by him, controlled by him:

“You’re my woman,” he said to her. “We don’t need a paper to prove it.” He’d gone on to prove it to the whole island, however, in other ways. She examines her face in the side mirror. Her cheeks are puffy, her lower lip swollen. Correa’s woman stares back . . . In the fifteen years Correa has been in her life, no other men have dared enter it, for fear he will kill her (22 & 25).

Correa’s violence is imprinted on América’s body and her home. “When Correa built her room out of a back terrace, he left space in the concrete wall for a window but never put one in . . . At night she sleeps with the door ajar and a fan on for air. Correa didn’t put in a closet either, so her clothes hang from nails in the concrete walls” (7). The house that América shares with her mother, Esther, and daughter, Rosalinda, is incomplete, chaotic. Correa comes and goes as he pleases, but will not allow América out of the house or to

have others over as guests; Ester drinks heavily when she's not working; and Rosalinda leaves to join her boyfriend. América understands that the women in her family have passed along these social patterns from generation to generation:

They said all the women in her family were loose. That there had never been, in their memory, a husband in that family of hers, only babies, girls bringing up girls, never any boys, never any men . . . She thinks about this history as she polishes the tiles the women in her family have polished for more than a hundred years. América had hoped that Rosalinda would break from her history, that she would educate herself, marry above her station, like Yamila Valentin, and live in a house where she would employ maids, not be one (60, 77).

América's house is one of quiet desperation where poverty, uncertainty and violence surround and silence all three generations. Only Ester's herb, fruit, and vegetable garden can provide sustenance and healing power:

The air is fragrant with Ester's herbs, which are planted along narrow paths or on raised beds lined with logs and rocks. Pigeon-pea bushes grow along the fence. Two lemon trees reach their spiny branches into the neighbor's yard. Every bush, plant, and vine is edible, or useful in treating burns, headache, or stomach upset (63).

Similar to how the natural environment shelters Guzmán from the townspeople of Salud, the garden alleviates América's pain. In a house ruled by domestic violence, burns, headaches, and stomach upset are common occurrences. And since América cannot afford to visit doctors, nor is she allowed, only the garden can treat her wounds.

América's boss, Don Irving, who fears for América's life, takes it upon himself to ask recent guests of the hotel, the Leverett family, to hire América as a live-in domestic and nanny in New York. As she considers the Leveretts' invitation to work *interna*, she catches herself thinking about the contours of her life:

Is [this] any way to live? She can't answer the question. It is the only life she's known. The first fourteen years of her life centered on Ester and her demands as a mother. The second half of her life has been shadowed by Correa. Is that any way to live she asks herself again, but is afraid to answer. The question hangs in the fragrant air of her mother's garden, punctuated by the flashing red sky, the thumps of bombs finding their target, the yielding earth quaking beneath her feet (68).

Here the text makes a direct connection to the United States' militarism in Puerto Rico, which parallels the unending domestic abuse that América suffers. Moving to the United States is a means by which América can leave behind the controlling space of her home(land), claim her subjectivity, and pursue her own dreams. Yet, unlike Guzmán, who actively seeks a new life to escape the wrath of the community in Salud, América falls into her chance to leave. According to these two narratives, gender matters a great deal when seeking routes out of violent situations.

Routes/Roots: In Search of an "American Dream"

Clara Rodríguez identifies three periods of migration from Puerto Rico to the United States: 1900-1945, when the majority settled in New York City; 1946-1964, characterized as "the great migration" because the largest number of migrants arrived in urban (New York, Connecticut, and Chicago) and rural areas; and 1965-present,

identified as “the revolving-door migration” because of fluctuations in migration, return migration rates, and how Puerto Ricans were dispersing throughout the United States (Rodríguez, Puerto Ricans Born, 3-4).¹¹ The second half of The Line of the Sun details the experiences of Guzmán and his family in Buffalo, New York and Paterson, New Jersey; while the second half of América’s Dream depicts América’s experiences in the exclusive suburbs of New York. Despite the fact that Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, both Guzmán and América move to the mainland unaware of this fact, and as a result, suffer discrimination and exploitation at the hands of their respective employers. In Guzmán’s case, he is so desperate to leave Salud that he signs on with a “lottery recruiter” to work in New York. “The lottery had begun during President Truman’s administration to help bring cheap labor to the growers on the mainland and to aid the Island’s unemployment problem after the return of the soldiers from the Korean War...The lottery slipped into the hands of enterprising con men who made fortunes selling chances” (149). What awaits the men in Buffalo is an internment camp. *La tierra de nieve*, the land where “children run around making balls out of it and eating it like ice cream” was simply a myth concocted by the recruiters to convince men to leave the island (152). Under the cover of darkness, the con men smuggle Guzmán and the others into the mainland and transport them to a village of army tents surrounded by concrete

¹¹ For more information on the first wave of migration, see Maldonado, “Contact Labor” (1979); History Task Force Centro de Estudios, Sources for the Study of Puerto Rican Migration (1982); and Korrol, From Colonia to Community (1994). For further information on post-World War II period, see Pantoja, “Puerto Rican Migration” (1972); Whalen, From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia (2001); and Flores, ed. Divided Arrivals (2003). See Rodríguez, “Puerto Ricans and the Circular Migration Thesis” (1988-1989); Ortiz, “Changes in the Characteristics of Puerto Rican Migration” (1986) and “Circular Migration and Employment among Puerto Rican Women” (1992); Morales, Puerto Rican Poverty and Migration (1986); Fitzpatrick, Puerto Rican Americans (1987); and Torre *et al.*, The Commuter Nation (1994) for an examination of the most recent period of migration. Primary sources that detail the numbers for the second and current period of migration are Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico, Negociado de Análisis Económico, and the U.S. Census Bureau. For an overview of Puerto Rican migration, see Rodríguez, “A Summary of Puerto Rican Migration to the United States” (1997).

and barbed wire. The men are trapped in a harsh, frigid English-speaking land where their lives matter little outside of their hours of labor.

When Guzmán arrives in New York City as a fugitive from the illegal labor camp, a fellow Puerto Rican advises him to “stay off these streets in daylight for a while. At night, all cats and Puerto Ricans look black.” (200) “Illegals” can’t just assimilate into white U.S./American society. Regardless of citizenship laws, the Puerto Rican working poor must wait until the darkness to find their position in society, and as Karen Christian notes in Show & Tell, “Guzmán can achieve a degree of invisibility in American society by performing as a member of an established racial minority, i.e., as an African-American” (Christian 93). In fact, Guzmán remains unintelligible within the dominant black/white racial dichotomy, as there is no room within it for “a short man, bronze as a new penny, with the face of a wise harlequin” (Cofer 191). His invisibility within the black/white binary renders him homeless and powerless, only this time living “on the lam” in New York’s subway system.

In América’s Dream, América also leaves Puerto Rico under the cover of darkness, but in her case, it is necessary to break away from Correa. She plans her escape so that he won’t miss her “for at least a day” (122). She leaves Vieques in search of her own dreams: “owning a house full of children . . . curtains fluttering in the breeze, gardens flowering in a million colors, birds singing sweetly in the shade. There was a husband in her dreams . . . and they would be filled with love for each other” (107). Both América and Guzmán migrate to the United States in search of intangibles: a sense of self, love, happiness, and freedom. These migrant working-poor’s dreams provide counternarratives to the “American Dream,” which, according to Lauren Berlant is:

A popular form of political optimism, it fuses private fortune with that of the nation: it promises that if you invest your energies in work and family-making, the nation will secure the broader social and economic conditions in which your labor can gain value and your life can be lived with dignity . . . Yet this promise is voiced in the language of unconflicted personhood: to be American, in this view, would be to inhabit a secure space liberated from identities and structures that seem to constrain what a person can do in history. (Berlant 4)

While both characters leave Puerto Rico in search of a better life, neither América nor Guzmán fantasize about material wealth, upward class mobility, or becoming “American.” Rather, they seek emotive citizenship—a place to belong and simply be themselves.

Migrating to New York is América’s means of survival, and as readers we understand her desperation and fear through the tone of the text. “I wonder if he knows. Each hour since she left Vieques has been punctuated by that question. Did someone see Don Irving take her to the airport . . . her eyes alert for Correa’s jeep . . . Don Irving waited until she boarded the small plane” (127). As Ahmed suggests, feelings are not necessarily written into the text, but words “circulate and generate effects” (Ahmed 14). The nagging question of *if* Correa knows she left, “punctuated” by the passing of each hour, and her constant surveillance for Correa take readers on her frightening journey. She does not utter her fear: in fact, the text tells readers that she “maintained a serious expression,” yet her anguish is conveyed effectively. América relaxes with each passing mile, becoming more certain that the mainland will afford her safety and a place to heal,

yet as the text makes clear, her airplane journey is symbolic of her own personal middle passage. When she arrives in New York, she spends most of her days locked inside the Leveretts' home working fifteen to eighteen hours and earning very little money. The text implicitly draws a parallel between Correa's violence and the Leverett's exploitation, thus redefining domestic violence to include the exploitation of domestic help, the assumption that Spanish-speaking peoples are childlike and need constant reminding of their duties and obligations (even if the demands are unreasonable), and the denial of citizenship or a sense of belonging, and therefore a disavowal of subjectivity. As Leonore Walker notes, domestic violence is an issue of power over another person, but as América's story illustrates, these power relations extend beyond the borders of intimacy, gender, and sexuality (Walker 1979; Walker 2000).

When América encounters Karen Leverett at the airport, the reality of her decision to leave Puerto Rico makes her uneasy. The shocking cold weather punctuates her sense of loss and fear about navigating the metropole as a Spanish-speaking native who has never traveled outside of Vieques:

She's never thought of snow as anything but what tourists avoid by coming to Vieques. But here she is, in the middle of a snowstorm, in a place most of the people she's ever met try to get away from. What have I done, she asks herself, not quite believing that she's come this far, and already she's having second thoughts. (131)

In Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," he "establishes a continuing dialogue with loss and its remains—a flash of emergence, an instant of emergency, and most important a moment of production" (Eng and Kazanjian 1). The chaos of the

airport, how underdressed she is for the weather, Karen Leveretts' constant chatter, and the snow give América pause as in that moment she briefly mourns the loss of her temperate homeland and time with her mother and daughter, *and* recognizes that she has overcome her greatest fear of leaving an abusive relationship.

Similar to Guzmán's exile to the underground world of the New York subway, América enters a new prison of her own. The length of her days is measured by how much work she can do before she can go to bed so that she can wake up and do it all again the next day. She shops for and prepares the family's food, cleans the entire house almost every day, and tends to the children so much that she becomes their surrogate mother. When América informs Karen that her extended family lives in the Bronx, she registers Karen's disappointment and immediately reminds herself to only ask for an occasional weekend. This brief scene in the novel inscribes the differentiated affect of fear that migration has wrought. In New York, the power dynamics between Karen and América parallel those that existed between Correa and América in Puerto Rico. Karen's look of disapproval is enough to remind América that she works for them, and therefore it is best to withdraw her protest and she shrinks from confrontation. Although América is not physically beaten, nor does Karen raise her voice, América understands that she is in a disempowered position within the household through a simple look. The fear of losing her job, and therefore losing her anonymity in New York, or worse, having to return to Vieques, compels her to stay quiet and to restrict her own body's mobility. Eventually, after many months of working fifteen-hour days, seven days a week, and after speaking with other *internas* in the area, América gathers the courage to ask for one weekend off a month; the Leveretts agree to give her twenty-four hours off a month instead.

Pronounced class differences between América and the Leverett family grip her immediately:

Everything in the Leverett household is done by machine . . . But the Leverett's seem to have more than their share. There are three machines for getting a cup of coffee. One to grind the beans, and depending on whether she wants cappuccino or regular coffee, two to make it. There are machines for baking bread, making pasta, steaming rice, pressing and browning sandwiches, chopping vegetables, juicing fruit, slicing potatoes. There are two regular ovens, plus a toaster oven and a microwave, an enormous refrigerator in the kitchen, a smaller one in the sports den, a freezer. There are machines for washing and drying dishes and clothes. Machines for sweeping rugs, waxing floors, and vacuuming furniture. Machines for brushing teeth, curling hair, shaving legs, rowing, walking, climbing stairs. A pants-press machine, a sewing machine, a machine that spits out steam for dewrinkling garments. Charlie has a machine to shine his shoes, and Karen has one that steams her face. There are three computers in the house, a telephone system with intercom and preprogrammed numbers for the children's schools, Karen's and Charlie's offices, beepers and carphone numbers. And there are other machines whose uses she can't identify. (152-53)

The ironic tone in the text is hard to miss. América is not envious of the gadgets, home, and cars that the Leverett's own, rather, she has the critical distance to recognize that three computers and coffee makers, two ovens, and three machines for pressing clothes

represents U.S./American excess. These machines are so superfluous, in fact, that they sit idle while América keeps the house in order.

After months of catering to the Leveretts' needs day and night, América's anger over her working conditions bubbles to the surface. She realizes that "[o]ne week of my work puts her out the price of a pair of shoes . . . It doesn't seem right" (218). América prepares herself to confront her employers. As bell hooks explains, "[t]alking back' means speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It means daring to disagree and sometimes it just means having an opinion" (hooks 5). Yet, given the dynamics of the relationship between América and the Leveretts, indeed how racial and class hierarchies operate in American culture, she second guesses herself:

It is their house. They can be themselves in it. She's the one who has to watch every step and be always on the alert. She's the one who must always be conscious of how they perceive her because she's dependent on them. But they depend on me too, she contradicts herself, at least Karen does. She presses hard on the pillowcase she's been ironing. How stupid can I be, she chides herself; rich people don't depend on anyone. I can be replaced with a phone call. (207)

América's rage subsides to resignation. The Leveretts, and Americans in general, appear calculating, selfish, heartless, carrying the power of colonial history behind them. When América finally asks for a raise, Karen questions her competency and demeans her character: "I still can't believe it takes you six hours every day to clean this house, come on . . . I'm sure you can work this out, América. You just need to be more efficient, so you can have time. I know you can do it, okay?" (256). In much the same way that

batterers blame their victims for the abuse inflicted on them, Karen rationalizes that it must be América's inability to do the work that is the problem. Thus, América's Dream expands the contours of domestic violence to include class- and race-based inequities.

Most of the second half of The Line of the Sun jumps forward in time and focuses on Guzmán's extended family. Readers are introduced to Guzmán's niece Marisol (who readers learn is the narrator), and to his sister Ramona (Marisol's mother), and reintroduced to his friend Rafael (who has since married Ramona). As the text shows, no one is immune from the brutal "razor white teeth" of racism in the mainland. Shortly after Marisol's birth, Ramona moves with her to join Rafael who has enlisted in the United States Navy. Marisol grows up in *El Building*, a tenement in Paterson, New Jersey, and she, too, feels the brunt of racism. Walking home from school, she and her brother move quickly with their heads down, signaling that they do not want "trouble." But trouble is inevitable:

As I came to the last street I had to cross before reaching home, I felt a brutal shove on my back and fell in the dirty slush, scattering my books all over the sidewalk. I recognized the laughter as I slid into the puddle of frigid water: it was Lorraine and her friends who had ambushed me. Lorraine was a black girl who had been my playmate in grammar school and had become, in the "normal" course of development for black and Puerto Rican kids in Paterson, my adversary. The hostility was not personal; even the children seemed to know this on an instinctive level. It was a reflection of the adults' sense of territorial and economic competition. (207-08)

Even as a child, Marisol recognizes the pitting of (relatively) dispossessed people against each other as a way to maintain the status quo. As the text inscribes, only those racialized subjects who can pass for white, can find a means to attain “the American Dream.”

Those who can perform as the assimilated, “intelligible” American migrant are granted affective citizenship. The cost, however, is erasure of Puerto Rican identity. Rafael—nicknamed “Gringo” by his wife’s friends—is fair-haired, blue-eyed, and committed to defending his adopted culture. While residents of *El Building* may ridicule Rafael, the dominant culture condones “some forms of racial passing are condoned since they do not threaten the integrity of a national sense of self which is defined as white” (Nakamura par. 3).¹² Therefore, his fair characteristics allow him to find work, send his kids to private school, and save money to buy a home. As Marisol explains, “[h]e had escaped the brunt of racial prejudice only because of his fair skin and his textbook English, which sounded as formal as a European’s” (170). In order to pass, however, he also must discard island traditions and embrace American customs. Christmas, for example, is quite different in Rafael’s household compared to the rest of *El Building*:

It seemed the women were cooking at once, saturating the place with the smells of coconut candy and pasteles the luckier ones had received from mothers and grandmother [from the island], frozen and carefully wrapped in banana leaves and tin foil and hidden in the depths of shopping bags.

The partying would last until Three King’s Day on January 6, when the

¹² For other sources on the cultural significance of racial passing, see Ginsberg, *Passing and the Fictions of Identities* (1996); Sollors, *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both* (1997); Wald, *Crossing the Line* (2000); and Sánchez *Passing* (2001); Brown, *The Literature of Immigrant and Racial Formation* (2004); Fabi, *Passing and the Rise of the African-American Novel* (2004); Belluscio *Passing for White, Passing for Black, To Be Suddenly White* (2006), and the performance art/video art of Adrienne Piper, discussed in Phelan (1993).

children received their presents. In our house we went shopping at Sears and Penney's. We had a Christmas tree with presents under it that we would open on the twenty-fifth of December. (186-87)

As patriarch, Rafael insists that his family celebrate Christmas, not the traditional Three King's Day. This act clearly separates them from their "more ethnic" neighbors and points to their (relative) "Americanness," yet this passage also conveys a sense of loss. The description of Three King's Day is as saturated with joy as *El Building* is with the smells of Puerto Rico. On the other hand, the family's celebration of Christmas is banal and sounds robotic. Indeed, the lack of words used to describe their annual celebration reveals the family's melancholia.¹³ Rafael works hard to ensure that his family mimics the cultural codes that are necessary to live out the "American Dream." Each time he returns home from his tour of duty, he implores Ramona to move out to the suburbs—to a neighborhood like *Fairlawn*, "an affluent community where the doctors, lawyers, and other Paterson professionals lived" (172). The name itself—Fairlawn—inscribes U.S./American, and Rafael's, investments in how whiteness can provide safety, respectability, and inclusion.

In contrast to Rafael, Ramona's interaction in *El Building* with fellow ex-patriots maintains her Puerto Rican identity and happiness. Assimilation for Ramona is impossible because, as Marisol explains, "my mother seemed like an alien and a refugee, and as I grew to identify with the elements she feared, I dreaded walking with her, a human billboard advertising her paranoia in a foreign language" (174). The tone in The Line of the Sun shifts as Marisol adapts to American culture. As a child, she looked to

¹³ For a discussion of racial melancholia as a productive site of intervention, see Cheng, The Melancholy of Race (2001) and Gilroy, Postcolonial Melancholia (2006).

her mother for protection from the mean streets of Paterson; as an adolescent, Marisol sees her mother as foreign, something and someone she is not. This disidentification extends beyond adolescent rebellion. For Marisol, Ramona's shopping at the bodega and wearing gypsy-like clothes she buys in Puerto Rico are not acts of resistance but evidence of Ramona's paranoia. Given the narrative structure, the use of "paranoia" here references the psychiatric definition of the term:

A mental disorder characterized by systematized delusions and the projection of personal conflicts, which are ascribed to the supposed hostility of others, sometimes progressing to disturbances of consciousness and aggressive acts believed to be performed in self-defense or as a mission. ("Paranoia" par. 1)

However, as Ngai argues, paranoia may best be defined in late capitalism "as a species of fear based on the dysphoric apprehension of a holistic and all-encompassing system" (Ngai 299). Ramona's paranoia, in this sense, is a creative political act. She sees and understands how American life is subsuming her family and refuses its encroachment. And while Marisol may resent Ramona's appearance and wish that her mother would "cut and spray her hair into a sculptured hairdo [and] wear tailored skirts and jackets, like Jackie Kennedy," Ramona sees such embodied performances only as cultural loss.

After a fire destroys *El Building*, Rafael has an irrefutable reason to move the family to the suburbs. The fire, caused by the resident's spiritualist meeting, "clearly signifies the dangers of ethnic excess" (Christian, Show, 97). As a local resident proclaims, "the [island women] mean well, but here in America their hocus pocus only complicates things" (246). The accidental fire in *El Building* signals the literal

destruction of the family's Puerto Rican way of life. After losing their home and possessions, Rafael spends his leave time looking for a house in middle-class Italian neighborhoods, which real estate agents consider "the best compromise" for an upwardly mobile Puerto Rican family (282). U.S./American institutions, such as real estate and housing policies, militate against ethnic identity so that places like Fairlawn are inaccessible to Puerto Rican migrants. While Ramona escorts Guzmán back to Puerto Rico, Rafael moves the family to suburbia. When Ramona returns, her new home is surrounded by the silence, and "she would be the proverbial bird in a gilded cage" (285). As Christian points out in *Show & Tell*, "[b]eautiful surroundings (again by middle-class, Anglo-American standards) cannot mask the fact that both bird and immigrant are trapped, isolated from others of their kind" (101). Ramona with her limited English and education cannot integrate into an American suburban neighborhood. Even the freshly painted white walls of their new, larger home serve as a constant reminder that she is surrounded by whiteness, and is a stranger in her own home. "Where were her plaster saints, the ones who got her through the lonely, difficult times when Rafael was at sea? What about the brilliant reds and greens and yellows that reminded her of her lost Island paradise?" (Cofer 284).

Whereas Marisol reads *El Building*, the *bodegas*, plaster saints, and vibrant colors as Puerto Rican ethnic excess, América finds the "Goya section" of the supermarket comforting, familiar, and unexpectedly empowering. When she purchases *adobo*, *sazon*, and *achiote* for the Leveretts' dinner or teaches their children Spanish, she wields a certain amount of power and forces brief moments of transculturation. In her words, it's inevitable:

Isn't it strange . . . They're learning so much from me . . . All these Americanitos are learning about life from us [domestic workers]. We're from a different country, we speak a different language, but we're the ones there when they are hungry, or need something" (228).

Inasmuch as women like América have power to transform their employer's daily rituals, ultimately the Goya section triggers acute feelings of homesickness and nostalgia. "[T]he piles of *malanga*, *yautia*, *batata*, and fresh bunches of *racao* remind América how long it's been since she ate *viandas* with eggplant...The homesickness that seemed a new experience a few weeks ago has become as familiar as her own face in the mirror" (233). Within literary criticism, nostalgia is often cast in a negative light—intimating only cultural loss (Rubenstein 2000). However, América's memories of her mother's fragrant herb garden and slow-cooked food make her sad *and*, in response, she recreates the intimacy she experienced at her mother's dinner table for the Leverett children. In Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel, John Su offers a counternarrative to nostalgia as a form of suffering by arguing that nostalgic fantasies are crucial to ethical visions presented in postcolonial novels (Su 2005). Nostalgia represents cultural loss *and* is suggestive of the ways the dominant culture deliberately contains ethnic others. As such, nostalgia may say more about so-called "multicultural" America than it does about migrant suffering.

Uneasy Endings

In the concluding pages of América's Dream, Correa learns through their daughter, Rosalinda, where América lives. When I assign this text to my upper-division American Studies and Women's Studies students, they invariably report that while

reading the last few chapters, they *feel* terrified for América. The third to the last chapter begins, “[t]he doorbell. Two tones, dingdong . . . She’s been sitting motionless on the edge of her bed next to the phone for so long that she has to think about moving before she can . . . Dingdong . . . It’s a friendly reminder that company has arrived (314). These matter-of-factly words effectively convey América’s fear (without using the words “fear” or “panic”), and send chills down my and my students’ spines. When América does not come to the door, Correa finds his way into the Leveretts’ house and approaches her from behind with a knife while she is dialing “911.” After Correa stabs her twice and a short chase scene ensues, she kicks him hard enough so that he falls, hits his head on the corner of the granite coffee table, and dies. Through tone and the narrative structure, which promises but postpones Correa’s reappearance, the text inscribes fear, so much so, that my students tell me that they turn the final twenty pages frantically, needing to know what happens.

In class, students also discuss with me how they leave the text feeling uneasy. Correa is dead, América leaves the Leveretts’ house and finds her own apartment, her daughter comes to live with her, and she finds work as a housekeeper in a big hotel. My students want América to strive for more than domestic work, find a husband, have another child, and live out their idea of the American Dream. Instead, she lives above a bodega on a bustling road, rides the subway to work five days a week, and is alive, safe, and happy among other Puerto Ricans; this is her American dream and where she belongs. Significantly, students are also left feeling uneasy because after reading América’s Dream, they discuss how they will never question again why women stay in violent domestic situations. Scores of texts—ranging from websites for domestic

violence hotlines or feminist scholarship—have implored people to think this way for years with some effectiveness, yet the novel does this cultural work affectively so that readers come to their own conclusions about the vicious cycles of domestic violence. Because readers are *in* the text—that is they travel with América on her journey—counternarratives to dominant discourses are possible.

Unlike América's Dream, the concluding pages of The Line of the Sun explicitly tell the readers about Marisol's uneasiness living in mainland U.S./American culture as a Puerto Rican:

At thirteen, I was being counseled in humble acceptance of a destiny I had not chosen for myself: exile or, worse, homelessness. I was already very much aware of the fact that I fit into neither the white middle-class world of my classmates . . . nor the exclusive club of *El Building's* expatriates.
(177)

Marisol's "homelessness" forces her to turn inward, to forge a sense of self through continuous negotiation between two cultures, and disrupts any sense the reader might have that migration makes life better, or that integration in U.S./American culture is possible, for the Puerto Rican migrant poor. Marisol and her extended family members strive for the American Dream but cannot quite reach it. At thirteen, Marisol knows instinctively that affective citizenship, belonging, is something that she will have to carve out for herself while she carries her "Island heritage on her back like a snail" (114).

Homi Bhabha claims that the "theoretically innovative" and "politically crucial" investigations of subjectivities and cultures rest in the borderlands. Following his line of argument, and Gilroy's celebration of hybridity, it is crucial to analyze critically the "in-

between spaces” to understand how “new signs of identity innovate sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha 2). Yet, America’s Dream and The Line of the Sun illustrate Anzaldúa’s theorizing of the borderlands as violent places, and where “creolization, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity” represent individual and cultural negotiations that come with a cost—racialization, discrimination, and cultural erasure unless one can pass as an U.S./American citizen. The complexity of characters in the novels, in fact, tell readers about the societal constraints on the Puerto Rican migrant working poor and challenge dominant discourses about what constitutes domestic violence and citizenship in the Black Atlantic.

Chapter 3: Geographies of Pain/Narratives of “Resistance”: Rape and Migration between Hispaniola and New York

“Rape” is a verb that circulates easily through postcolonial studies. In part, it serves as a strong metaphor for “developed” nations’ colonization of “third world” land, resources, and people (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Renda, 2001). According to Anne McClintock in Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context, “Sexuality as a trope for other power relations was [and] certainly [continues to be] an abiding aspect of imperial power. The feminizing of the ‘virgin’ land ... operated as a metaphor for relations that were very often not about sexuality at all” (McClintock 14). She continues by arguing, “[b]ut seeing sexuality only as a metaphor runs the risk of eliding gender as a constitutive dynamic of imperial and anti-imperial power” (14). Jenny Sharpe suggests that “the strategic absence of ‘the woman’ in allegories of sexual and racial violence is symptomatic of the colonial discourse to which the story of rape belongs” (Sharpe 1). Such criticism raises the question: how and where are women’s histories of sexual violence told if their sexuality is theorized so readily as a colonial allegory, trope, metaphor, indeed as a mere literary and political abstraction?¹ As Barbara Christian suggests in her essay, “A Race for Theory,” much of this reclamation is done in narrative form—through the stories that women create (Christian 336). It is precisely women’s sexuality, and more specifically, the subjection and subjectivity that emerge from violence in Haiti and New York and the Dominican Republic and New York that Edwidge Danticat and Loida Maritza Pérez inscribe in Breath, Eyes, Memory

¹ Francis also takes up this question in “‘Silences Too Horrific to Disturb’” (2004). I recently encountered her essay, after I had formulated my argument and crafted this chapter.

and Geographies of Home respectively. The texts give voice to these lost histories of women's painful experiences that have been written out of national narratives *and* exist within imperial histories of conquest, war, and state-sanctioned violence.

In this chapter, I argue that it is precisely through the experiences of rape and coming to terms with it (that is, literally going through the emotional and physical trauma as well as beginning the process of healing) that the women in Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home articulate their subjectivity. Racial, political, bodily, and psychic violence infuse the characters' experiences in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and as a result, the families migrate to the United States to seek a different life. Like The Line of the Sun and América's Dream, these two texts underscore how the "American Dream" is a myth inaccessible to working-poor migrants because of cultural racism and structural inequalities, but these discussions fall to the background of the texts. Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home narrate "the body in pain" by grappling with what the *act* of rape means for a woman and how that rape produces what Avery Gordon calls a "ghostly presence" that haunts everyday life.² The women who are raped pass along traces of this inherited violence to their daughter and sister respectively; the texts inscribe how women within families are affected by intimate violence, must forge their identity, and begin to heal in the midst of trauma. As I suggest in this chapter, women's cultural stories of rape are, in part, the vestiges of modernity and constitute an "archive of emotion" that demands readers' attention (Cvetkovich 2001).

Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home inscribe women as both victims of state-sanctioned and inter-personal violence *and* as active subjects. Feminist analyses of rape generally examine (1) the unequal power relationships that exist between men and

² In this chapter, I draw on and expand Scarry's notions of "the body in pain" in The Body in Pain (1985).

women; (2) how institutions, such as the law, fail to support, and in many cases, continue to blame women-victims; and (3) how “we” (individuals, families, communities, nations, and an international body of people) must value women’s lives in order to treat women victims of rape and actively work to stop rapes (Herman 1984; Morgan 1977; Griffin 1979; Dworkin 1989; Brownmiller 1993; Buchwald *et al.* 1995; Russo 2001). Such work is necessary, and valuable, and speaks to the social conditions in which women live. The novels examined here, however, center women’s interiority alongside patriarchal and state-sanctioned violence as they negotiate the trauma of migration, rape, and its aftermath. Thus, I turn my attention to critical work on trauma and subjectivity.

Cathy Caruth’s Trauma: Explorations in Memory, Deborah Horvitz’s Literary Trauma: Sadism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in American Women’s Fiction and Kali Tal’s Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma investigate how “the borders between their ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds dissolve” when women’s lives are “irreversibly disrupted by both an internalization of violent sadomasochistic events and an externalized projection of these events” (Horvitz 5). How a “life threatening event ... displaces [one’s] preconceived notions of the world” becomes a thematic center of these works (Tal 15). As I argue in the following pages, these feminist approaches, which draw on the psychoanalytic work of Jessica Benjamin, Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Jane Flax, and Carol Gilligan, go far in helping to interpret the mother’s and sister’s experiences in Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home. However, such lenses do not make the connections between traumatic moments, recovery, and women’s agency that the two protagonists, Sophie and Iliana, embody. In this regard, Walter Benjamin’s Illuminations, Farah Jasmine Griffin’s “Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women’s

Bodies, the Erotic and Resistance in Contemporary Novels of Slavery,” Sharon Patricia Holland’s Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity, Ann Cvetkovich’s An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures, and David Eng’s and David Kazanjian’s edited collection Loss offer particularly useful insights for my analysis.

In the novels themselves, national and domestic scenes, as well as the deployment of secondary characters—Sophie’s mother Martine and Iliana’s sister Marina—set the stage for narrating “the body in pain.” In Breath, Eyes, Memory, Martine is the youngest daughter in her immediate family. At the age of sixteen, she is raped on her way home from school in Haiti by an individual whom the family assumes is a *Tonton Macoute*. Although she never sees her assailant, stories about a private army of death squads under President Francois Duvalier and his successor/son J. C. Duvalier circulate through her community and terrorize Haitian citizens:

In the fairy tales, the *Tonton Macoute* was a bogeyman, a scarecrow with human flesh . . . In his knapsack, he always had scraps of naughty children, whom he dismembered to eat as snacks . . . Outside the fairy tales, they roamed the streets in broad daylight, parading their Uzi machine guns. (138)

In Sophie’s words, “My father might have been a *Macoute*,” as chances are good that someone who raped Martine as a school-aged girl during the day, threatening to shoot her if she looks up, is someone who walks through the streets with impunity. As Charles Arthur details, Duvalier and his militia “employed indiscriminate violence against all opposition, whether real, potential, or imagined to establish a brutal dictatorship . . . All

major institutions in civil society . . . were crushed or infiltrated, and as many as 30,000 of his opponents were killed” (Arthur 23). Lucía Suárez turns to a 1994 report by Human Rights Watch and the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees (now called the National Coalition for Haitian Rights) to argue that although rape is “one of a number of commonly deployed acts of violence in Haiti,” it is also one that carries with it fleeting or no repercussions for the perpetrator (Suárez 61). The report reveals that “[v]ictims of rape by state agents or their auxiliaries fear that lodging a complaint will only further endanger their and their family’s lives” (qtd. in Suárez 61). After Martine is raped, she moves to New York to try to forget.

On the other hand, Marina (Geographies of Home), one of the middle children in a large family who has escaped the brutal dictatorship of Trujillo, is raped by an African-American astrologer in his shop in New York. Leaving the Dominican Republic was particularly hard on Marina; most of her family assumes she is mentally unstable “and insist that she had dreamed it all” (17). However, according to her story, “a man who divined her loneliness and predicted the coming of a dark stranger like himself . . . became enraged when she said no—” and she is brutally raped (17). The cultural identities of each of Martine and Marina’s assailants, as well as their connections to state and spiritual power, are significant. The texts lay bare how men in positions of power have unfettered access to women in their communities and how they can harm them with impunity. These male characters (as well as the other men in the two novels) simultaneously exist along the margins of the narrative *and* set a series of events into motion. The mysterious and brutal *Tonton Macoute* embodies terrorizing nationalist practices but has very little power within the Haitian regime. Likewise, the black

astrologer is marginalized within American racial and religious structures, but preys upon women seeking comfort in the knowledge of the future. These stranger-men suggest the authors' understandings about why and how cultural violence replicates itself; men who feel disempowered within institutions gain power by raping women. Their heinous actions are indicative of the structural inequalities that govern relationships between women and men and between the colonized and colonizer under dictatorships and across geographies.

Significantly, it is the memory of the rapists' bodies and their sexual power—their haunting presence—that structures how Martine and Marina interact with the world, and ultimately how their bodies and actions mimic those of their assailants. Martine avoids her family by not returning to Haiti and summons her daughter Sophie to live with her in New York. When Sophie arrives, Martine controls her behavior, particularly her sexual behavior, through “testing” her daughter to ensure her virginity. In Geographies of Home, Marina develops a mental illness, clings to religion for answers, hates and blames all black men for her rape, and later, rapes her sister Iliana during the night. By telling their stories of rape and migration, the texts inscribe how colonial violence and women's traumas re-articulate themselves through and across generations. Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home re-map national narratives of what constitutes state and racial violence, explore how and where women have access to their own sense of power, and examine what it means for female postcolonial subjects to cross borders in search of healing. The cultural work that Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home undertake is to explore the complexity of women's daily lives: their negotiations of suffering *and* triumph, victimization *and* agency, complicity *and* refusal, and mimicry

and revolt within the context of state-sanctioned violence in Hispaniola and the United States.

Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and a Shared History of Violence (Abbreviated)

It would be easy to launch into a literary analysis of these two texts without discussing the entangled racial, political, economic, and social history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but to do so is mistakenly to unhinge the texts from their own foundations. Hispaniola's colonial histories, revolutions, rise of consolidated state power and violence, bloodshed across its border, and the role of Western (that is, U.S./American and European) imperialism circumscribe the characters' respective rape and migration narratives. The western third of the island of Hispaniola is Haiti, while the eastern two-thirds constitute the Dominican Republic. This second largest island in the Caribbean is an international crossroads of cultures, and its collective history is "complicated by the linguistic and racial demographics of the island. Haiti's population is largely of African heritage and French Kreyòl speaking, while the Dominican Republic is Spanish-speaking with a mulatto population" (Shemak 107). Haiti was the first colony to establish a free black republic in 1804 after a successful slave revolt (James 1963; Fischer 2004). Dominican Republic was the first settlement in the New World, colonized, re-colonized by the Spanish, French, United States, and even Haiti for a short period of time, and becoming a sovereign state in 1844 (Torres-Saillant 1998). Neither nation can claim itself as fully independent, given their fraught histories of European invasion, American imperialism, and long spells of dictatorship. Importantly, the texts do not articulate full renderings of these historical events and cultural differences; rather, moments of these

larger histories percolate through the texts in the form of flashbacks and narrations of the families' histories. Both Haitian and Dominican regimes terrorize the psyches of all the family members in these two texts, and specifically target women's bodies, thus forcing them to seek refuge in the United States. However, crossing borders does not mean that one leaves one's histories behind. Rather, as April Shemak argues, "remembering . . . Hispaniola entails a confrontation with a history that is corporeal—a 're-membering'" (Shemak 85).

Today an island that is slightly smaller than the state of South Carolina (29,300 square miles) divided by a river and mountain ranges, Hispaniola houses two republics, many cultures, and a complex history. Many historians, political scientists, anthropologists, and sociologists have detailed the island's expansive histories.³ What is of interest to me is how Haiti and the Dominican Republic are inextricably linked to each other via colonial histories, state-sanctioned violence, and the mobilization of nationality, ethnicity, and racial identity. In "Re-Membering Hispaniola: Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*," Shemak draws on border theory to make this connection:

Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have struggled to assert their independence as nation-states while also negotiating the space of the island with each other. Border theory has typically been associated with Chicano studies of the US/Mexican geo-political border. There are . . . many similarities between this border and the Dominican/Haitian border,

³ See, James, *The Black Jacobins* (1963); Ferguson, *Papa Doc, Baby Doc* (1987); Trouillot, *Haiti: State Against Nation* (1990); Pons, *The Dominican Republic* (1998); Torres-Saillant, "The Tribulations of Blackness" (1998); Wucker, *Why the Cock's Fight* (1999); Renda, *Taking Haiti* (2001); Shemak, "Re-Membering Hispaniola" (2002); Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint* (2003); Sagás and Molina, *Dominican Migration* (2004); Gallin *et al.*, *The Dominican Republic* (2005); and San Miguel, *The Imagined Island* (2005) for discussions of the fraught history between and within Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

including the often unsanctioned migration of laborers from one nation to the other (Mexicans to the US, Haitians to the Dominican Republic), the exploitation of those migrants' labor, and their precarious position on the margins of the nation—often serving as the scapegoats for national anxieties. (Shemak 85-86)

A geographical border divides one side of the island from the other. Literally, it splits the terrain and insists that the space on either side be strictly controlled and maintained. The border represents power and inequality, and in the special case of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the border signals struggle, confrontation, racial tension, and bloodshed. Similarly, imaginative borders—those that exist between individuals, genders, racial/ethnic communities, classes, regions, religions, and nations—map cultural landscapes by separating, dividing, and sometimes inviting reconciliations among people. The geographical and cultural borders between Haiti and the Dominican Republic mark a shared, but differentiated history of racial and political-economic violence.

The Dominican Republic and Haiti are the “cradles of blackness in the Americas” (Torres-Saillant, “Tribulations,” 126). Santo Domingo served as one of the first ports of entry for the slaves in 1502, and today, ninety percent of the Dominican Republic’s population is black or mulatto (126). Haiti became the first free black republic, gaining its independence from France on January 1, 1804, and it is the only nation to form as the result of a successful slave revolt. Today, ninety to ninety-five percent of the Haitian population claim African ancestry, with a small percentage of people self-identifying as mixed or ethnically white. Despite the overwhelming number of people of African ancestry in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the cultural meaning of “blackness”

is different on each side of the border, consolidated by a history of wars between the two nations and Dominican state ideology.

The Dominican Republic did not gain its independence from Haiti until February 27, 1844. From the mid-nineteenth century to the present, “the state-funded guardians of the official culture have been intent on stressing the predominance of the Hispanic heritage among Dominicans,” even if the population, for example, practices West African voodoo and speaks Haitian Creole in significant numbers (132). “During the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961), the Dominican state became most emphatically committed to promoting Eurocentric and white supremacist views of Dominicanness” (132). According to Ernesto Sagás, darker-skinned citizens are referred to as “indio”—even though indigenous Amerindian populations have not lived in the Dominican Republic for centuries—thus erasing blackness from constructions of nationality.

The Dominican government uses indio as a skin color descriptor in the national identity card that every adult Dominican must have. That way, indio is no longer a slang term but an official racial category accepted and used by the Dominican government for identification and classification purposes. Most Dominicans fall within the indio category. Those with darker skin tone are labeled Moreno, but actually very few Dominicans are labeled black, due to the term’s pejorative connotations (Sagás 6).

“Black” is an identity category reserved for Haitians in Hispaniola and remains pejorative because of the power of Western and Dominican state ideologies.⁴

⁴ Torres-Saillant argues that it is time for Afro-Dominicans to embrace their blackness. In his words, “negrophobia has endured . . . and can still manifest itself in ways that interfere with the well-being of dark-skinned people . . . and I would argue that the African-descended majority of Dominicans will benefit

Given the stranglehold that Trujillo, “Papa Doc” Duvalier, and “Baby Doc” Duvalier had on Dominican and Haitian society (supported by United States foreign policy), as well as deteriorating economic conditions, thousands of Dominicans fled to the United States since the mid 1960’s, and thousands more from Haiti *tried* to enter the United States in the late 1970’s through the 1980’s. As mentioned in my introduction, census data reveals that by the 1990s, the Dominican Republic became one of the top five sending countries. “The 2000 census found 764,945 persons of Dominican origin in the United States” (Duany, “Transnational,” 27). These staggering numbers point to the debilitating socio-economic conditions in the Dominican Republic, and when put in the context of Haitian immigration policy, highlight discriminatory U.S. practices. It is statistically significant that the United States allowed this many Dominican migrants to enter, while the first Bush Administration forcibly repatriated Haitian refugees. According to legal scholar, Malissia Lennox, United States immigration policy since 1992 “has resulted in the rejection of 98 percent of Haitian asylum claims” (688).⁵ As one Clinton aid told The New York Times in 1993, “[t]he main goal is to keep Haitians in Haiti” (Sciolino A2). Despite these differences in policy, the novels inscribe how both Dominicans and Haitians are racialized as “black” and discriminated against in the United States. Migrants from Haiti and the Dominican Republic share this violent space, and their specific histories are connected through an archive of cultural alienation.

The bodily and psychological pain that envelopes the lives of the characters in Haiti and the Dominican Republic forces the families in these texts to migrate to New

greatly from a model that allows them to perceive their ancestors as the real protagonists of the epic of the Dominican experience.” (“Tribulations,” 140)

⁵ President Bush (the first) mandated the complete exclusion of Haitians without a review of their political asylum claims through Executive Order 12,807, 57 Fed. Reg. 23,133 in 1992. For further details, see Lennox, “Refugees, Racism, and Reparations” (1993).

York. The memory of the rape, the terror and the atrocities under dictators in both countries, a long history of invasion and occupation, and the racism and paternalism of U.S. American occupation haunts and structures the lives of the characters. In Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home, the female characters' fear, pain, determination, shame, loss, and healing give meaning to the material experiences of the violence waged against them. Drawing attention to complicated and sometimes contradictory emotions and behaviors—to the content of subjectivity—grants agency to women who are sometimes cast solely as “victims” in the cultural theories that examine race/class/gender/sexuality. By repositioning women from objects to subjects of cultural stories, the texts provide a counter-history that works to reclaim women's sexuality from violent national histories by narrating “the body in pain.”

Narrating Trauma/Narrating “The Body in Pain”

Like the tide that meets the shores of the island, Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home are women-centered migration narratives that move back and forth through time and diasporic space as the characters recall vivid memories in order to tell their stories of violence. Fragments of memory, in time, rise to the surface of women's consciousness at different points in the narrative in a way suggestive of Tal's “telling and retelling of the story of [a] traumatic experience to make it real” (Tal 21). The texts move migration narratives beyond cultural stories of assimilation or even quests for belonging. Rather, they add to an archive on the histories of trauma. As Cvetkovich argues in her chapter, “Transnational Trauma” in An Archive of Feelings, “[t]he presence of geographical dislocation in a range of trauma histories suggests the intersections of

trauma and migration” (Cvetkovich 120). She proceeds to give examples of the Holocaust, the Middle Passage, and the forced movement of refugee communities. The texts examined here explicitly tie migration to the atrocities under the Duvaliers in Haiti and Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. As noted above, Martine in Breath, Eyes, Memory is raped as a young woman, and in her shame and fear of becoming pregnant with a *Macoute*’s child, flees to the United States. In the Dominican Republic, families must prove their loyalty to Trujillo by hanging the dictator’s portrait prominently in their home. Iliana’s father refused to worship Trujillo, and “when news spread of soldiers inspecting homes and executing or carting off to jail those daring to disregard the law, he had dropped to his knees to pray that his house be overlooked” (147). When oppressive labor practices and the terror of Trujillo’s regime become too much, the family plots how they will escape to the United States. As Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar suggest in Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration, studies of international labor migration “emphasize the macroeconomic factors and underestimate the importance of local political and sociocultural influences” (Grasmuck and Pessar 3). Their own work integrates many factors into understanding migration between the Dominican Republic and New York, and the novel makes clear that feeling terrorized, and its resulting trauma, propel migration. Cvetkovich argues that trauma “is one of the affective experiences, or to use Raymond Williams’ phrase, ‘structures of feelings’ that characterizes lived experiences” within modernity (17). Mid-twentieth century dictatorships—ideological terror—and the concrete experiences of rape—structure feelings of pain, violation, fear, loss, and forces migrations in search of spaces where the political and personal body may find a modicum of safety and heal.

In James Clifford's Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century, "traveling" is not only constitutive of cultural meaning, it is the basis of how human beings live. "Everyone is on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel" (Clifford 2). As such, migration "is, and has long been, the norm" (5). While Clifford maps how to interpret contemporary global cultures and intercultural connections, he, like Gilroy, may celebrate prematurely the actual process of what it means to move, especially for women. The juxtaposition of migration patterns from Haiti and the Dominican Republic to the United States reveals that socio-political and economic upheavals in each respective home country increase the rate of migration (Loescher and Scanlan 1984; Grasmack and Pessar 1991; Dash 2000). For example, following the assassination of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1961 with eased emigration regulations, "the total number of Dominicans legally admitted to the United States between 1961 and 1986 was 372,817. While fewer than 1000 . . . entered . . . annually between 1951 and 1960" (Grasmack and Pessar 20). Legal and illegal migration from Haiti to the United States increased significantly with the rise of power of Duvaliers ("Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc") following the United States' occupation of Haiti. According to some estimates as many as 300,000 Haitians migrated illegally in the 1980s to escape the repression and poverty of Haiti (Loescher and Scanlan 313). The texts examined here expand Clifford's notions by suggesting that migration can be linked to violent histories and emotional trauma. While Sophie's mother flees to New York so that she might escape her recurring nightmare that "he [the *Macoute*] would creep out of the night and kill her in her sleep . . . [that] he would tear out the child growing inside her" (139), Marina's family seeks safety and economic security in the United States.

In her groundbreaking work, The Body in Pain, Elaine Scarry separates physical pain from “psychological suffering” in order to demonstrate that physical pain is a human feeling that is beyond language (unlike psychological suffering) and therefore cannot be articulated to another human being. As a result, and despite each of our wanting to communicate its overwhelming presence, “pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed” (Scarry 4). Scarry’s analysis of pain is abstract and general. While she is interested in analyzing it as wrought by war and torture, she does not produce a gendered or racialized account of how pain is inflicted and endured; more specifically, she does not discuss rape. Government and NGO documents and statistics, personal accounts, fictional narratives, and the media document how women are raped and tortured during war.⁶ On the heels of World War II, the international community recognized that rape was a weapon of war. Specifically, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (August 12, 1949) stipulates that “women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault.” (Robinson par. 5). Contemporary testimonies of rape during war in places such as Sudan, Sierra Leone, Darfur, and Kosovo enter in the public sphere because of the efforts of mainstream organizations (e.g. Human Rights Watch and BBC News), underground journalism (e.g. Narconews and The Fund for Authentic Journalism), and academic organizations such as the Center for Women’s Global Leaderships, including its production of Testimonies of the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights. As I wish to suggest, the novels examined here (like the narratives of rape victims/survivors during war) provide

⁶ For an analysis of women’s testimonials and truth commission mandates, see Nesiah, “Gender and Truth Commissions” (2006) and Suárez, The Tears of Hispaniola (2006).

another lens for complicating Scarry's theoretical understanding of "pain" vis-à-vis Haitian and Dominican women's experiences and function as a form of fictional testimonial.⁷

Novels like these are important contributions to the cultural work of linking physical pain, emotional anguish, and political violence. Martine and Marina's rapes *simultaneously* cause physical pain and severe mental distress, inextricably linked by the violence perpetrated against their bodies. In Archive of Feeling, Cvetkovich pushes Scarry's work on pain and Tal, Caruth, and Horvitz's theorizing of the unconscious of women's trauma by arguing that analyzing trauma "opens up space for accounts of pain as psychic, not just physical . . . and forges overt connections between politics and emotions" (Cvetkovich 3). In as much as readers can glean from the texts, we do not know what the attack physically *felt like* for these women. However, their post-traumatic suffering and the paradigmatic way in which Martine and Marina relive and transfer that pain throughout the novels communicates its significance and confirms its existence and affect. As the following passage from Breath, Eyes, Memory demonstrates, Martine communicates quite effectively to Sophie, the narrator, that she experienced acute pain from her rape, and that traces of it remain in her unconscious and affect their everyday life:

I know the intensity of her pain through her nightmares. I had seen her curled up in a ball in the middle of the night sweating and shaking as she hollered for the images of the past to leave her alone. Sometimes the fright woke her up, but most of the time, I had to shake her awake before she bit

⁷ For more on fiction as a form of testimonial, see Shemak, Textual Trespassing (2003).

her finger off, ripped her nightgown, or threw herself out of a window
(193).

Similarly, in Geographies of Pain, Marina silently conveys the physical pain and mental distress resulting from her rape by consciously harming herself, thus creating new layers of physical and mental pain:

When its steam obliterated her image in the mirror, she collected a razor, a can of Lysol, several Brillo pads from under the sink, and stepped into the stall . . . Determined to rid herself of the odor and to reclaim her defiled body, she reached soapy fingers into the folds between her legs . . . then she shaved her pubic hairs as well as those under her arms . . . She meticulously scored herself with Brillo . . . When her skin blistered and she could stand the pain no more, she stepped from the stall and sprayed herself with Lysol. (19)

Given the terrible vividness of these passages, readers understand Martine and Marina's pain. As much as family members try to ensure that their loved ones do not commit suicide or spiral into insanity, it is precisely the pain and re-articulation of that pain that "un-does" Martine and Marina. Their lives are irrevocably shattered by the anguish caused by the physical act of rape. Eventually Martine commits suicide in the family's bathroom by stabbing herself in the stomach when she learns that she is pregnant. Marina's mental health unravels to the point where she cannot discern reality from the worlds that her unconscious produces.

Both these female characters suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, yet the text steers clear of labeling it as such. In her own work, Cvetkovich "resists the authority

given to medical discourses and especially the diagnosis of traumatic experiences as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),” and the narrative structure in the novels seems to be asking readers to do the same thing (Cvetkovich 4). Perhaps, instead, what these passages do is ask readers to consider the nature of trauma. According to E. Ann Kaplan:

[T]rauma requires a triadic structure both in its occurrence and in its confronting. In its occurrence, there is the victim, the event, and the unusual psychic processing which overwhelms the affective portion of the brain and makes it impossible for the event to be cognitively processed—unable, then, to be “known.” In confronting trauma, there needs to be another triadic structure within which the trauma can begin in some senses to be “known”—that gap between affect and cognition broached, in other words. (Kaplan, “Shattered,” 230)

Martine and Marina do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to process their respective experiences, and as a result, they suffer from PTSD. As Kaplan and Judith Herman suggest, however, trauma must be confronted in order for the healing process to begin.⁸

As feminist scholars have insisted for years, the law, criminal justice system, popular culture, and other institutions that codify sexuality create hostile environments in which women are asked to prove that their traumatic experiences happened, much less describe what they felt like. In July 2000, political scientist Neve Gordon disclosed that “eight percent of all rape cases are considered ‘unfounded,’ [while] only two percent of

⁸ For more information on current trends in the treatment of PTSD, see Brown, *Counseling Victims of Violence* (2007); Kirmayer *et al.*, *Understanding Trauma* (2007); Follette and Ruzick, ed. *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies for Trauma* (2006) Garrick *et al.*, *Trauma Treatment Techniques* (2006); and Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds* (2006).

all other crimes are regarded as such. Put differently, a raped woman's testimony is not deemed to be as trustworthy as that of a man whose wallet was stolen" (Gordon par. 9). She convincingly argues in "Sanctioned Rape" that "if stopping rape is the objective, it is crucial to recognize that . . . rapists terrorize women without fear of being penalized. Even in a so-called developed country, rape is a politically sanctioned practice" (Gordon par. 9). As a result, women who are victims of rape hide their wounds.

In Breath, Eyes, Memory, readers learn that it took Sophie "twelve years to piece together [her] mother's entire story. And by then, it was already too late" (61). It is clear that in Geographies of Home Marina never tells anyone in her immediate family because pious women do not visit astrologers. As a result, everyone believes that she simply suffers from a nervous breakdown. Both the intimacy of the crime and the way in which the dominant U.S./American culture and specific Haitian and Dominican Republic cultural mores silences women's stories of rape creates a hostile environment preventing women from seeking help. Additionally, as Amaya Naomi Roberson argues in "The Silence around Black Women in Rape" in Off Our Backs, "because of racism and chauvinism (both of which have been internalized by the Black community) we exist in a world that doesn't acknowledge that Black women can be sexually victimized" (Roberson par. 4). Martine and Marina internalize their pain and do not express what they are feeling to other characters. If, as Roberson suggests, women already marginalized as "others" cannot tell their stories of rape for cultural reasons, then this nuances Scarry's suggestion that pain escapes communicable expression. The female migrant characters relieve such tensions by inflicting harm to their own minds and bodies: erasing their sexuality, questioning their "feminine" identity, and harming/destroying their physical

selves. Such deliberate negotiations are linked to systemic structural inequalities that accompany the dominant cultural ideologies around rape, gender, sexuality, race, and national identity.

What if the larger culture—whether in Haiti, the Dominican Republic or the United States—were to *pay attention to, understand, and value* how women’s pain is expressed? The novels detail what emerges as “history” when the victim becomes the subject rather than the object of rape. Martine and Marina, as recent migrants and women caught in cultural and familial structures, cannot find avenues in Haiti or in the United States to bear witness to their sexual assault. Rather, both suffer in silence while the pain finds other avenues to re-articulate itself. The original traumatic event becomes a horrific memory that structures their everyday lives, ravaging their bodies, consuming their identities, commanding their emotions, affecting their mental health, and permeating their relationships. In these novels, the trauma takes on its own genealogy, and is passed along silently between generations of women.

Genealogies of Fear: Migration and the Re-Enactments of Rape in New York

Both protagonists—Sophie and Iliana—migrate to the United States as children, and the processes of migration and adaptation to some extent structure the underlying themes of each narrative. Despite these over-arching similarities, each text crafts the protagonists’ lives from different social locations and perspectives. In Breath, Eyes, Memory, Danticat uses the intimacy of a first person narrator to convey Sophie’s childhood experiences in Haiti with her Tante Atie, her migration to the United States at the age of thirteen to reunite with her mother, her daily life in New York, and her eventual return to Haiti. In Geographies of Home, the plot unfolds through a more

objective third-person narrator, thus giving the reader more information than some of the characters may have at their disposal. It opens with Iliana struggling personally and academically at a small, elite college in New York several years after her family has migrated to the United States, as she is being urged to return home to New York City to help care for her family. In neither text can the characters' lives be narrated independently of their interaction with other family members, a textual necessity highlighting the interdependencies of and ruptures between generations within the diaspora.

Breath, Eyes, Memory narrates the mother/daughter-like bond between Sophie and Tante Atie and the closeness they feel to others in Croix-des-Rosets. As sociologists Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, Barrie Thorne, Anna Chee, and Wan Sun Eva Lam explain in "Transnational Childhoods: the Participation of Children in the Process of Family Migrations," "[l]eaving children behind frames children as dependents. Their care depends on the willingness of kin to provide for them and on the financial support that families are able to send back." "Chain migration," a term designated by sociologists to refer to how individual family members migrate at different times, "operates within a notion of family that includes extended relatives, 'other mothers'" (Orellana *et al.* 580). Tante Atie is Sophie's "other mother," and the extensive kin networks in their village run deep and tie the community to a place that was "open to everybody who wanted to come . . . friendships were reason enough to get together, eat, and celebrate life" (11-12). Despite Sophie's desire to stay in Haiti with her loving aunt, her mother, Martine, sends word that Sophie is to come live in New York. The text brings to the forefront both the fear of and courage required for a child leaving home: "Our faces were dry, our heads

up. We were like sunflowers, staring directly at the sun . . . A red dust rose between me and the only life I had every known. There were no children playing, no leaves flying about. No daffodils” (31). Life as Sophie has known it ceases to exist, and this too is part and parcel of the archive of trauma and migration.

Very few scholars have centered children in migration studies “and as ‘pivotal points’ in the construction of transnational social fields” (Orellana *et al.* 573).⁹ Even in “Transnational Childhoods,” the authors draw on ethnographic research with adults to explain how “chain” or “stage” migration results from economic necessity and the desire of adults for a better life for their children. Only perhaps through an extrapolation of how philosophers discuss emotion and time, can we discuss the loss and fear that sent-for-children experience in migration. The objects that Sophie experiences as loss are tied to how she envisions home in Haiti (her Tante Atie, community, children playing, and the land itself). This loss is coupled with fear, which according to Heidegger “is not in the present, in either the spatial or temporal sense of ‘the here and now’ . Fear responds to what is approaching rather than already here” (qtd. in Ahmed 65). Fear anticipates injury. And although her aunt explains that “In this country, there are many good reasons for mothers to abandon their children” (20), fear of the unknown—of the future with a biological mother who has never known her—grips Sophie.

After Sophie arrives and settles into her new life in New York, Martine recounts her experiences in Haiti in order to explain why she left her daughter:

⁹ See Knörr’s introduction in her edited book Childhood and Migration (2005), for a rehearsal of anthropological and sociological work done on children and migration. The authors in her collection move away from these traditional approaches of seeing children as objects of study to children as subjects of their own narratives.

A man grabbed me from the side of the road, pulled me into a cane field, and put you in my body. I was still a young girl then, just barely older than you . . . I did not know this man. I never saw his face. He had it covered when he did this to me. But when I look at your face I think it is true what they say. A child out of wedlock always looks like its father. (61)

Martine's re-telling of her rape is devastating in that she both condemns her own actions (she has a child out of wedlock) and maps her memory of the rape onto her daughter's body. The *Macoute's* body and his culpability are literally erased. Sophie's presence—her very being as a child born out of wedlock to a mother raped by a Haitian death squad member—becomes the physical and emotional reminder of that violence.

The bonds between parents and children are similarly but differently strained in Geographies of Home. Through a series of scenes in which the parents recall life in the Dominican Republic, readers understand that with no work available and after witnessing family and friends die at the hands of Trujillo's regime, the family is forced to migrate to New York. However, the only way to do so financially is to separate the family, and as with Sophie's family, move in staged migrations. This particular family's migration falls within the bounds of what cultural studies scholar Avtar Brah theorizes as "new migrations" (178). The older migration paradigm of the "economic migrant" or those people who leave in order to find work and take care of their family is a problematic construction "as global events increasingly render untenable such distinctions as those held between the so called 'political' and 'economic' refugees" (179). Migration also disrupts patriarchal familial structures. In Geographies of Home, Rebecca, the eldest daughter, migrates first to start working and sending money to her family. Papito follows

her to do the same and find a place for all of them to live. Later, the mother, Aurelia, arrives in the United States, leaving her youngest children in the Dominican Republic with her sister. However, unlike Sophie's memory of a kind aunt who nurtures her creativity and development, the remaining children are terrorized and abused in their kin network:

Despite the dollars she and Papito had sent for their children's care—money converted into more pesos than they themselves had ever had in the Dominican Republic—her sister, whom she had trusted to do right, had housed all three children in a chicken coop and barely clothed or fed them.
(32)

If chain migration is traumatic in its own right for both parents and children alike, one can only imagine how familial neglect and abuse for children left behind compounds the scars.

Geographies of Home is a particularly dark narrative. Emotion (anger, jealousy, resentment, pain, fear, and loss) seethes beneath the surface, though it is almost never articulated among the characters. Rebecca (the eldest child) is resentful of the responsibilities she is saddled with at the age of twenty-one:

Had it not been for her, they would have still been picking mangoes to keep from starving . . . she was the one who, until her marriage, had contributed half of her earnings toward her parents' expenses, something none of her siblings had ever considered doing. And what had it gotten her? (62)

Parents are protective and angry that their children do not understand their sacrifices, and children are the recipients of angry words and the lashing of their father's belt. The house itself becomes emblematic of the failure of the "American Dream" for working-poor migrants. According to the narrative, Papito purchased "the dilapidated, condemned building for three hundred dollars he had hidden in a woman's purse under their bed" (21). These passages give texture to research done on Dominican migration. According to Grasmuck and Pessar, "[m]ost Dominican immigrants earn wages below the family-subsistence level" (Grasmuck and Pessar 150). Ramona Hernández and Francisco Rivera-Batiz note that "Dominicans currently have one of the lowest average income levels in the country. The mean annual per capita household income . . . in 1999 was \$11,065.00 . . . and in New York City . . . [it] was \$10,032.00" (Hernández and Rivera-Batiz 79). This places Dominican populations in the United States at a lower per capita income than African Americans and other Latino/a populations. Inside their home, Papito's anger and religious convictions make living at home nearly unbearable. "Wary lest his daughters wind up whores and his sons in jail, he had wielded religion as sword and shield in their defense. Not once had he expected those methods to cause them harm" (146). Yet, this discipline, the family's struggle, fear of losing it all, and a profound sense of disillusionment flood the pages: "only after their arrival had they realized that those who moved to the States lived as miserably as most in her own country" (59). Readily-accepted cultural mores guarding women's sexuality and children's dependence in the Dominican Republic cannot be sutured with American ideologies of happiness, upward mobility, self-reliance, and independence. Both texts inscribe how migration does not alleviate poverty or the pain and fear that any of the

family members experience in Haiti and the Dominican Republic; rather, moving through diasporic space only transforms and compounds these hardships.

In Breath, Eyes, Memory, one of the traditional ways Haitian mothers guard their family's dignity is to "test" their daughters to make sure they are "pure" for marriage. In order to see if a young woman is still a virgin, her mother inserts a finger into her daughter's vagina to see if her hymen is still intact. As Myriam J.A. Chancy argues in Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women, "in Haiti, as in other parts of the Caribbean, even though a quasi-matriarchal system seems to be in place, it is one that represses women" (Chancy 127). Testing is a process that has been passed down through generations of women. Martine's mother tested both her and Atie, and when Sophie becomes innocently interested in an older man, Joseph, the tradition is passed to her. According to Chancy, testing in Haiti is "born out of necessity and out of the legacy of African social formations" (127). Ultimately, it reinforces patriarchy. If tradition dictates that Haitian men desire virginal women, then working-poor women like those in the Caco family have a chance at social mobility through marriage only if they are virgins. Mothers test their daughters in hope of providing them with a better life. In New York, Martine reinvents "testing" to protect and deter Sophie from what she knows to be the "dangers of men." However, from Sophie's perspective, "testing" is a performance of gender and national identity that violates a young woman by mimicking the affects of rape:

[S]he made me lie down on the bed . . . slipping her hands under the sheets and poking her pinky at a void hoping that it would go no further than the length of her fingernail . . . I mouthed the words to the Virgin Mother's

Prayer . . . In my mind I tried to relive all the pleasant memories I remembered from my life. My special moments with Tante Atie and with Joseph and even with my mother. As she tested me, to distract me, she told me, “The *Marassas* were two inseparable loves. They were the same person, duplicated in two . . . When you love someone, you want him to be closer to you than your *Marassa* . . . The love between a mother and daughter is deeper than the sea . . . You and I we could be like *Marassas*. “There are secrets you cannot keep” my mother said after the test . . . I closed my legs and tried to see Tante Atie’s face. I could understand why Tante Atie had screamed while her mother had tested her. (84-85; 155)

This corporeal ritual symbolically transfers all the differentiated affects her mother experienced during and after her rape—anger, fear, frustration, and shame—to the next generation. Certainly, the intention behind a mother testing her daughter differs from that of stranger-rape. However, both are acts of power, violations of women’s bodies, and manifestations of the colonization of women. It is important to note that Sophie’s mother tells her the story of *Marassa* to explain why she tests Sophie. In an interview with Renee Hausmann Shea in the journal Callaloo, Danticat explains that “*Marassa* is actually part of the African tradition where there are twin deities. I wanted to use all the connotations of twins in the story. Going back to the mother-daughter relationship, the idea is that two people are one, but not quite; they might look alike and talk alike but are, in essence, different people” (Shea 385). Sophie herself doubles (disassociates) during her mother’s frequent testing because it allows her to survive a very painful experience, and at the same time, as Danticat points out, it also “allows

people [her mother] to do very cruel things” because she remains silent (385). For Sophie, the combination of migration, her mother’s rigid control of her behaviors, and ultimately this testing, begets an eating disorder.

Becky Thompson’s “‘No Way Outa No Way’: Eating Problems Among African-American, Latina, and White Women” has transformed how some theorists and practitioners treat eating disorders among women of color. Drawing on her ethnographic research, Thompson argues that the discourses of “thinness” have very little connection to eating disorders in women of color. Certainly self-esteem and self-image, which may in fact be connected to cultural definitions of “femininity” matter, but specifically, media images of an unobtainable body size do not account for the emotional roots of eating disorders among women of color. Rather, she proposes that “eating problems begin as ways women cope with various traumas including sex abuse, racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and poverty” (Thompson 547). Sophie’s affectivity of pain is manifested in her eating disorders. As Chancy argues, “the truly unkeepable secret is the act of abuse itself, which Sophie attempts to exorcise through the only thing she feels she can control: food” (Chancy 125). And just as Martine struggles to reclaim her body from the memory of her rape, now Sophie must fight to reclaim her sexuality from this growing archive of trauma.

In Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics, bell hooks defines “resistance” as “[a]n opposition to being invaded, occupied, assaulted and destroyed by the system. The purpose of resistance is to seek the healing of yourself in order to be able to see clearly” (hooks 43). Whereas Martine ultimately does not seek a means to help herself deal with

the trauma of her own rape, Sophie draws upon her humiliation of being tested in an attempt to gain control and break the cycle of violence:

I went down to the kitchen and searched my mother's cabinet for the mortar and pestle we used to crush spices. I took the pestle to bed with me . . . My flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed sheet . . . It was gone, the veil that always held my mother's finger back every time she tested me. (87-88)

In a desperate act to reclaim her body and emotions—to stop her mother's testing—she believes that her only means of resistance is to harm, indeed to rape, herself. The mental anguish of being tested by her mother turns into a new articulation of embodied pain. “My body was quivering . . . I ached so hard I could hardly move. Finally, I failed the test . . . She seized my books and clothes and threw them at me. ‘You just go to him and see what he can do for you’” (88). The Caco women's geography of pain is built on secrets that keep systems of oppression intact, and women's secrets can only be disrupted by instances of pain and sorrow. She flees to live with Joseph “bound to be happy in a place called Providence [Rhode Island]. Who would not want to live there?” (89). After hospitalization to treat her uncontrollable bleeding, sexual intercourse is excruciating and eventually giving birth to her daughter nearly kills her. “The body in pain” continues its cycle, and she knows that she must return to Haiti to heal.

Rape is an act that violates both women's bodies and minds, leaving women fearful and silent. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's body of work, Sara Ahmed argues in The Cultural Politics of Emotion that fear is a socially constructed, embodied experience (Ahmed 68). However, she pushes Fanon's discussions of how some bodies are more

vulnerable than others in order to talk about the social space that women occupy. “Fear works to contain bodies within social space through the way it shrinks the body, or constitutes the bodily surface through an expectant withdrawal from a world that might yet present itself as dangerous” (70). If a woman such as Marina in Geographies of Home has already been raped, she literally withdraws from public space (the streets of New York and her family) because “outside” is dangerous. She withdraws into the inner sanctum of her mind, and this slippage from reality to insanity is written into the narrative. She sets fires at work and at home, and “her impulse toward violence was daily growing stronger...Not only had God marked her as special by resurrecting her from among the dead, He had also seen fit to equip her with a sight that enabled her to see into the hearts of those who wished her ill” (113, 245).

With her family unraveling at its seams, Iliana returns home from school to do what she can to help. Much like Marisol in The Line of the Sun, Iliana literally lives in-between cultures as the bilingual child who translates for her mother, the first person in her family to attend college, as someone who is neither “black,” “white,” nor “Hispanic,” since she is from the Dominican Republic. “She yearned to look like the Puerto Rican or black American girls so that she could be easily identified as belonging to either group . . . She would have traded her soul” (190). Her racial identity exists in the borderlands, and the text inscribes this “third space” as one burdened with responsibility to her family, guilt for her opportunities and independence, and shame in comparison to her classmates and other Americans. Drawing on Silvan S. Tomkins’ work, Ahmed observes in her chapter, “Shame Before Others,” that “shame as an emotion requires a witness: even if a subject feels shame when it is alone, it is the imagined view of the other that is taken on

by a subject in relation to itself” (105). Iliana is ashamed of her family and national identity; while at school, she keeps to herself and never invites friends to her home. Her world is an internal one, and as much as she tries to escape home and assert her independence by going to college, family pulls her back to the city in their despair.

Importantly, her family does not summon her; rather, her mother comes to her in ghostly form “waking her with news of what was taking place at home” (2). This element of “magical realism” in Geographies of Home does several things: it locates the novel in a growing canon of women’s postcolonial texts that draw on the fantastical; it interrupts linear notions of time, because as Iliana explains, she and her mother would “begin conversations where the voice had left off the previous night” (4); moreover, it links past generations of women with the present, and it inscribes a sensory power to women as their only means of transcending disempowered spaces. Magical realism “offers a way for writers to engage in Otherness within the text itself” (Hemminger 222). As literary scholar Kirsten Silva Gruesz points out in “Utopía Latino,” magical realism has the potential to challenge official histories by “countermemories that work in very different temporal structures” (Gruesz 58). The mother’s ghostly presence comforts Iliana when “the racial slurs began appearing on her door . . . the voice reassured Iliana of her own existence and kept her rooted” (4). However, what the mother character, Aurelia, in Geographies of Home is unable to do is warn Iliana of the dangers in coming home.

When Iliana returns, she must share a room with Marina, and in part, becomes responsible for watching her sister. It is important to keep in mind that only the reader knows that Marina has been raped. As far as the family is concerned, she’s possibly

schizophrenic and at the very least has had a nervous breakdown. Her father's religious blindness means that the family refuses medical intervention, and other family members believe that she is fully aware of what she's doing and "deserves the belt" (15). Marina has accused her brother, Tico, of raping her in the night, and much like Sophie in Breath Eyes Memory, she has wielded food as a protective weapon to encase her body from potential future injury. The family is in shambles and no one seems to know what to do but live each day at a time. The final act that ruptures the veneer of daily life is when Marina re-enacts her rape by raping Iliana:

Every cell in Iliana's body rebelled. Every circuit in her brain shrieked no. Yet her sister's strength, fueled by madness, was far greater than her own . . . Her sister's hand tore into her. The pain, when it shot through her, was incisive as a blade . . . Back arched against the raging pain . . . The world, as she had known it, crashed irrevocably around her head as her sister's hand curled into a fist . . . (284).

And when Iliana convinces herself to keep this rape a secret because she is emotionally strong enough to see this act as a manifestation of her sister's illness, Marina rapes her again with "raw, unadulterated hatred" (289). The pain for Iliana is unbearable, and her only means to resistance is to flee her family's house of horrors.

The Politics of Loss/Hope: Longings and Textual Healing

Cultural studies scholars David Eng and David Kazanjian in their introduction to Loss draw on Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in order to posit a dynamic politics of hope. Benjamin specifically is interested in the creative process

that constitutes history—that is the “animating of history for future significations as well as alternate empathies” and articulating “a tension between the past and the present, between the dead and the living” so as to unhinge history from fixed and grand narratives (Eng 2). Benjamin’s historical materialism encourages scholars influenced by him to turn their attention to the fissures in history to retrieve lost narratives. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot similarly argues that scholars in the humanities must listen to the silences of the past “through bodies and artifacts: living brains, fossils, texts, buildings” to produce more accurate histories (Trouillot, 1995; 29). Unearthing the unexamined, such as rape narratives, often yields histories of trauma and loss, and these cultural stories of “loss” must become the object of study. For editors Eng and Kazanjian, “loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained” (Eng *et al.* 3). This attention to the traces of history opens up intellectual space for “active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary” analyses (3). By reuniting loss with what remains, Benjamin, Trouillot, Eng, and Kazanjian offer a politics of acknowledging yet countering loss, pain, fear, and suffering.

Loss permeates Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home. In the former, Martine commits suicide and Sophie must retrieve her life, and more specifically her body, sexuality, and sense of self from the wreckage of colonial history. In the latter, Marina spirals into her unconscious worlds of hurt and rapes her sister, Iliana. The final act, in which Iliana permanently leaves her family—the people closest to her who struggle to survive in the hostile landscapes of the Dominican Republic and New York—

is one of tremendous loss. Both protagonists, Sophie and Iliana, long for happiness but do not wholly find it within the pages of these novels. Can the ghosts of past histories—the atrocities committed in the homelands and within the home—be transcended? These two novels inscribe the historical work of recovering from pain and loss and offer “textual healings” of women’s colonized bodies (Griffin 521).¹⁰

In the concluding pages of Breath, Eyes, Memory, Sophie returns to Haiti with her daughter to reunite with her aunt and better understand her history so that she might heal and move forward. As I pointed out in the introduction to my dissertation, Glissant’s theorizing of *détour* frames women’s back and forth movement as a set of cultural negotiations that are necessary in diasporic space. As Piper Kendrix Williams argues in “The Impossibility of Return,” [i]nstead of figuring the migration as a return, linear and singular, resulting in cohesion of racial self, *détour* allows for the various migrations necessary when gender is also considered” (Williams 56). In the case of Breath, Eyes, Memory, Sophie is not interested in the “old order of values” or an obsession with Haitian traditions, but in how moving in between cultures can begin to heal the body in pain. Haiti is serene, familiar, welcoming, and peaceful despite its poverty. Her aunt’s home is her refuge, or in hooks’ words her “community of resistance where she can return easily, where the conditions are such that she can recover” (hooks, 43). The essences of the island—the taste of the food, the healing flora, and the smell of the air—convince her that she has returned to the place where she belongs. In this space, she sutures the story of her life with the stories that explain her mother’s rape and offer insight on why generations of women value the “testing” of their daughters. Although

¹⁰ Other scholarly work that explores narratives of healing include but are not limited to Wilentz, Healing Narratives (2000); Burack, Healing Identities (2004); Brown-Guillory, ed. Middle Passages and the Healing Place of History (2006), and many of hooks’s monographs (1989, 1990, 2001, 2002).

she ultimately decides to return to the United States to be with her husband and raise her daughter, traveling to Haiti gives her the courage to confront the genealogy of her pain so that she does not pass it along to her own daughter. Instead, she will pass along her cultural memory of Haiti as a place where women can return to gather strength and perspective.

In Geographies of Home, exile, decay, and death are the dominant tropes. The family is exiled from the homeland in the Dominican Republic, Iliana lives in exile at the small school she attends in upstate New York, the family home is in a constant state of decay because of the lack of opportunities in New York for a poor migrant family, and Marina herself, if not the whole family, is dying a slow death. In Raising the Dead, Sharon Patricia Holland argues that black subjects are not just marginalized or exiled within the diaspora. “Their presence in society is, like the subject of death, almost unspeakable, so black subjects share the space the dead inhabit” (Holland 6). Healing is not inscribed in Geographies of Home and readers are left to wonder about Iliana’s and her family’s fates. Will she return to college? How will she survive in the uneasy borderlands between her past and the present, indeed, between the dead and the living? The only glimmer of hope in a text that is otherwise full of loss, misery and despair, comes at the end, as readers hear Iliana’s departing thoughts:

I will not fall or flinch . . . I may have been molded from your flesh but this body is mine and mine alone. You will not make me be ashamed . . . You will not make me recoil . . . I will survive all of this. I will walk out of this house erect. I will amount to more than you can ever hope to be and you will rue the day you saw me leave (313).

If wielded properly, as Audre Lorde suggests in her poignant essay “The Uses of Anger,” Iliana’s anger will lead to healing. Loving oneself enough to leave a violent space is an act of personal resistance. Geographies of Home and Breath, Eyes Memory are part of a growing body of literature that inscribes textual healing.¹¹ As Griffin argues:

It [textual healing] serves to raise a level of consciousness about the manner in which black women have come to know and feel about their bodies. Each provides a path out of this prison. Such work serves to let individual black women understand the ideologies and conditions that have led them to feel the way that they do about themselves. In this way it is no longer a case of individuals suffering from their individual dissatisfaction with themselves. By coming to terms with the ways they have been constructed by racist ideologies and historical acts of torture, they can begin to release the elements of those ideologies that they have internalized. This is most definitely an important step toward a political consciousness which in turn is the most necessary step for active resistance. (Griffin 534).

“Listen. Listen before it passes . . . There is always a place where, if you listen closely in the night, you will hear your mother telling a story and at the end of the tale, she will ask you this question: Are you free, my daughter?” (Danticat 234). Breath, Eyes, Memory and Geographies of Home are narratives that release Caribbean women from the silences of history and the cultural traditions that keep women’s sexuality, and

¹¹ Other narratives of healing that explore trauma and healing, and gendered and racialized identities include but are not limited to Bambara, The Salt-eaters; Erdrich, Love Medicine; Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God; Marshall, Praisesong for the Widow; Naylor, Mama Day; and Walker’s The Color Purple. Danticat’s and Pérez’s novels constitute a subset of this literature with their emphasis on rape and migration.

particularly stories about rape and “testing,” invisible. Yet, Danticat’s and Perez’s texts push the meaning of “resistance” beyond simply the “telling of a forgotten story.” By narrating “the body in pain” and its textual healing, the text opens up notions of power to a more diverse politics of Caribbean migrant women’s agency. This agency draws on a web of related practices: negotiation, complicity, refusal, mimicry, and revolt. These texts, then, inscribe complex notions of Caribbean women’s subjectivity. Yet the question remains, and it will be the next generation’s story to tell: how do postcolonial subjects who resist the violence inherent in systems of race/class/gender/sexuality/nation and who pass along their histories do so without transferring the scars of their trauma? How will future generations of women retain the cultural memory of violence against women so that they do not forget, without inflicting pain on their daughters?

Chapter 4: Forging Subjectivity in the Jamaican-British Borderlands: Incest, Migration, and Affect in Joan Riley's The Unbelonging

Incest is a form of rape that carries with it such a cultural taboo that very few scholars discuss its cultural significance (Herman 1977; Satter 2003; Lovrod 2005). In 1977, feminist psychotherapists Judith Herman and Lisa Herschman wrote, “Because of our extreme secrecy which surrounds the violation of our most basic sexual taboo, we have little clinical literature and no accurate statistics on the prevalence of incest” (Herman 735). Thirty years later, very little has changed. According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), “[b]ecause of the methodology of the National Crime Victimization Survey, [rape and abuse] figures do not include victims 12 or younger. While there are no reliable annual surveys of sexual assaults on children, the Justice Department has estimated that one of six victims are under age 12” (RAINN par 6). And of course, this estimated figure does not specify the number of rapes perpetrated against children at the hands of family members, and only details information about incest in the United States.

In my research, one charity organization in the United Kingdom, the National Society for the Prevention of Child Cruelty (NSPCC) advocates for the “full stop” of child cruelty. Affiliated authors Pat Cawson, Corinne Wattam, Sue Brooker and Graham Kelly produced “the first report on a major national study undertaken to explore the childhood experience of abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional)” in 2000, titled “Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom” (Cawson 1). It outlines what constitutes child cruelty and the prevalence of under-reporting. The lack of data regarding incest suggests

how instances of it are culturally repressed; this is especially true for women and girls of color. Melba Wilson's Crossing the Boundary: Black Women Survive Incest attests to this fact, and is the only nonfiction text in my investigations to traverse the treacherous terrain of incest, race, and migration. Her work is one of textual recovery and revelation of her personal experiences, and she actively seeks to deconstruct myths in relation to black women and sexual abuse: namely, that incest is normal in black communities and that black women can handle the trauma and post-traumatic stress of incest.

The gap in therapeutic and scholarly literature on incest raises questions about what counts as trauma. Cvetkovich's work suggests one avenue for analysis, opening the possibility that children might constitute a public culture. As she argues, it is necessary to keep "as open as possible the definition of what constitutes a public in order to remain alert to forms of affective life that have not solidified into institutions, organizations, or identities" (Cvetkovich 9). National discourse mobilizes nuclear families and children as ideal citizens, and condemns public instances of child sex abuse (e.g. pedophiles who act on their attraction to children) (Berlant 1997); yet incest and its archive of emotional trauma remains hidden, privatized, a family matter, in much the same way as domestic violence. These punctuated silences make it all the more significant that fuller explorations of incest find their articulation in women's imaginative literature, including Walker's The Color Purple, Morrison's The Bluest Eye, Allison's Bastard out of Carolina, and Riley's The Unbelonging. Such works themselves constitute the kind of archive of feeling Cvetkovich documents in lesbian cultural production.

In this chapter, I focus my attention on Riley's The Unbelonging. Like other texts examined in this dissertation, it inscribes a world full of pain, fear, alienation, sorrow,

and longing as it traces the journeys of the young protagonist, Hyacinth, between Jamaica and London. The Unbelonging substantially re-maps the scholarship on Caribbean migration to Britain by disrupting the dominant narrative of arrival to the Motherlands through inscribing a child's experience of a constant state of dislocation and through making visible sexual abuse and incest in black British communities. In this chapter, I will examine the affects and effects of childhood sexual abuse and Hyacinth's accompanying nostalgia for a loving, pure, beloved community. As I argue, her memory of Jamaica is a fantastical construction that allows her to negotiate and survive horrific familial violence and British racism, and that comes to symbolize her possible "self."

Joan Riley's published fiction (The Unbelonging, Waiting in the Twilight, Romance, and A Kindness to Children) has received relatively little scholarly attention. Carole Boyce Davies provides a brief analysis of The Unbelonging in Black Women, Writing and Identity, arguing that the novel "best captures the issue of displacement ... [and] is perhaps the most well-known of [black British women's] writings that engage the question of home and identity" (Davies, Black, 100). Isabel Carrera Suárez suggests in her article, "Absent (Mother)Lands" that "there is a literal and metaphoric absence that shapes [Riley's] books: the absence of a mother, a mothertongue [and therefore] the self—female and black—can only be reconstructed when this gap is bridged" (Suárez, "Absent," 295). Isabel Hoving points out in her In Praise of New Travelers that "the novel is structured around a very strong contrast between a reality of threatening witness and atrocious parental bodies, and a futile, immaterial world of blessed fantasy" (Hoving 63). I read The Unbelonging as a painful—if not horrifying—coming of age story vis-à-vis migration and sexual abuse that traces Hyacinth's ongoing process of inventing and

re-inventing herself to survive. The text itself narrates Hyacinth's navigation of the treacherous terrain of family, race, gender, class, nation, and sexuality, revealing how these negotiations evoke strong feelings of longing, homelessness, pain, and unexpectedly a growing comfort with living in Britain. The violence, hatred, and racism Hyacinth experiences, mixed with her deepening lack of self-esteem and cultural alienation, in tandem with her socialization vis-à-vis British institutions elicit contradictory affects. Consequently, the novel can be read as theorizing the production of affect in the wounded migrant, who is both female and a child.

The Unbelonging inscribes young black female subjectivity in all of its complexity and interrogates the binaries found in national narratives, such as “British” or “Jamaican,” “citizen” or “denizen,” victim or empowered agent, “colonized” or “colonizer.” Throughout the text, Hyacinth can claim all of these cultural identities, differently constructed in differing social interactions, and thus eliciting differentiated affects. The love and sense of belonging that Hyacinth remembers and ascribes to Jamaica, the pain associated with the brutality of her father's abuse in London, the sting of British racism that she feels so acutely, fuel the plot of the narrative and permeate her world. In The Unbelonging, Hyacinth's emotions give meaning to her material experiences of crossing geographical and social borders. Drawing attention to these complicated and contradictory emotions—to the content of subjectivity—repositions so-called “third world” child-migrants to the center of cultural narratives. Drawing on Ahmed's The Cultural Politics of Emotion, Probyn's Blush, Ngai's Ugly Feelings, and Su's Ethics and Nostalgia, I explore three themes in this chapter: the trauma of incest and domestic violence, cultural loss and alienation, and colonialism and consciousness.

However, before I begin a textual analysis of Riley's work, it is necessary to contextualize migration and race in Britain.

Beyond *Windrush*: Migration and "Race" in Britain

Within the last thirty years, Black British cultural studies scholars and broadcast journalists have named race as a constitutive element of British society and therefore a necessary category of analysis (Carby 1982; Hall 1989, 1993; Gilroy 1987, 1993; Mercer 1994, Baker *et al.* 1996; Dennis *et al.* 2000). My own experiences of discussing "race" while living in United Kingdom were filled with tension. I found that the vast majority of people I encountered believed that while the United States has a clear "race problem," Britain does not. They would readily agree that class discrepancies and discrimination exist, but remain willfully blind to the possibilities of racism in their midst. Of course, the extension of British empire and its participation in world systems of slavery and colonialism have meant that the British have engaged in the construction of race for centuries, but those national narratives carried with them notions of the "angel of progress"—promises of development, education, and civilization. Massive waves of migrations from colonial outposts to the shores of Britain during World War II meant that Britons had to confront the legacies of imperialism and commonwealth politics. Certainly, black men and women lived in Britain prior to World War II, but many historians delineate the war as a watershed moment in British immigration history. Colonization—particularly through education and the media—ensured that Caribbean/British citizens identified with England; thus, when the call for help went out

to rebuild the “Motherland” following the war, many Caribbean Commonwealth citizens heeded the call.

Hundreds of people boarded British sponsored ships, the *Empire Windrush* (June 1948), *Orbita* (October 1948), and *Reina del Pacifico* (January 1949). As Peter Fryer recounts in Staying Power and George Gmelch in Double Passage, the post-war British economy had a shortage of laborers due to the loss of life incurred during the war, including the deaths of soldiers and many civilians in British cities, as well as the decreasing birth rates (Fryer 372; Gmelch 42). Clive Harris, in “Post War Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army,” characterizes this migration otherwise, arguing that “[s]uch explanations are inherently limiting and fail . . . to understand the manner in which the process of combined and uneven development on a national and international scale creates ‘shortages’ at one pole and ‘surfeit’ at another’ (Harris 9). In his view, colonization and imperialism made it possible to draw on Commonwealth labor to expand the British post-war economy, and at the same time, see the Caribbean (and Indian subcontinent) migrations as temporary—a short-term “means to an end” so that Britain could retain its global strength. In 1951, the number of migrants arriving was estimated at 1,750; in 1955, it climbed to 27,000; by the summer of 1962, over 100,000 West Indians streamed into Britain “in response to the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill, which promised to restrict future immigration to the United Kingdom” (Gmelch 43). It was clear from the British government’s response, media, and personal reactions that in practice, Britain did not want Caribbean migrants to enter “their” country, despite the fact that prior to 1962, Commonwealth citizens had the right to live and work freely in the United Kingdom under their British passports.

As early as 1948, it is possible to see how racism grows alongside the increase in the numbers of migrant Caribbean people. As Harris points out, in a letter sent by eleven Labour Party MPs on June 22, 1948, “we find attempts to redraw the boundaries of a racialised British identity”:

The British people fortunately enjoy a profound unity without uniformity in their way of life, and are blest by the absence of a colour racial problem. An influx of coloured people domiciled here is likely to impair this harmony . . . We venture to suggest that the British Government should, like foreign countries . . . by legislation if necessary, control immigration in the political, social, economic and fiscal interests of our people. In our opinion such legislation or administrative action would be almost universally approved by our people. (Harris 24-5)

In this letter, “our people” clearly refers to white citizens born in Britain. Despite the fact that Commonwealth citizens are British citizens with British passports and live under British rule in 1948, the construction of “coloured” people as outside the bounds of the nation “is meant to throw into sharp relief what ‘we’ are” (25). “The persistent tendency to define non-whites as Other, as foreign, as immigrants, denies their long-term presence in the country and implicitly questions their rights to full citizenship” (Mama 113).

As Beverly Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe detail in their work on women and migration in The Heart of the Race, arriving in Britain meant a re-colonization for black women:

Black women were faced with no other prospect than to fill the jobs which the indigenous workforce were no longer willing to do, in the servicing,

semi-skilled and unskilled sectors. Service work was little more than institutionalised housework, as night and daytime cleaners, canteen workers, laundry workers and chambermaids—an extension of the work we had done under colonialism in the Caribbean (Bryan 25).

Even if, according to Michael and Trevor Phillips, the vast majority of indigenous Britons soon “lost interest in the Caribbean presence” following *Windrush*, “the colour of their skin ensured their isolation and shaped their relationship with British society” (Phillips 96). Migration ensured that race matters in British cultural landscapes; and black British cultural studies scholars, following in the footsteps of E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, reclaim this racialized history and chart a concrete course for its study. Many scholars have eloquently theorized race and anti-racist practices within British culture (Hall, Gilroy, Mercer, Baker). What is of interest to me in this chapter is how Riley’s *The Unbelonging*, a narrative that must be considered part of this archive of theoretical practices, complicates identity and difference in the diaspora—indeed the meaning of “blackness” in British culture—as it inscribes race through the eyes and experiences of a child.

Hyacinth’s migration does not fall neatly into sociological categories of childhood migration, like those described in Chapter 3; rather, her story transforms transnational constructions of “staged migrations.” Her aunt, her “other mother” in Jamaica, is so impoverished that she can no longer care for her niece. Thus she sends word to Hyacinth’s father in London that he must take responsibility for his child. Hyacinth’s biological mother is absent from the text (readers do not know and cannot assume what happened to her mother), and her father already has a family in London, so her coming is

not wanted or welcomed. Her crossing to England is a personal re-writing of the Middle Passage, filled with familial, cultural, and social ruptures and violence. As literary scholar Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues in “Gendering the Oceanic Voyage”, “[t]his contradicts Paul Gilroy’s promotion of the ‘playful diasporic intimacy that has been a marked feature of transnational black Atlantic creativity.’ The narration . . . offers a complex and alternative vision . . . which interrogates the benefits of oceanic travel, particularly for women” (DeLoughrey 206). When Hyacinth arrives in London, her world as she has known it is shattered. Her father is alcoholic and abusive. He eventually attempts acts of incest with Hyacinth while her stepmother turns a blind eye and worries about her own children.

“Suffering Graciously”: Incest and Violence at “Home”

In the opening pages of Joan Riley’s The Unbelonging, readers are drawn immediately into Hyacinth’s childhood longing for Jamaica. Readers walk into her girl-dreamland of an essentialized and emotionally “safe” place that is “laden with long-stemmed hibiscus and yellow trumpet flowers that hum with insect activity” (9). Dreams and waking fantasies are narrative devices Riley uses throughout the novel to emphasize the helplessness Hyacinth feels in London and her nostalgia for a pure, but nonexistent, Jamaica. “The narrative provides readers and Hyacinth herself with numerous clues that her recollections are false, and the idyllic picture is shattered in the novel’s final chapter” (Su 49). Her constructed memories of the Caribbean flicker through her mind, creating vivid performances that nearly convince her that she’s still in Jamaica each night, sustaining her hopes of returning to her beloved “homeplace” (hooks, Yearning, 41). In

crucial ways, this doubling keeps her alive as she endures the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of her father in the unwelcoming and racist British cultural landscape. The hard slaps and cruel whippings wake her daily from the life she leads in her dreams, and the cold, gray weather of England punctuates her unhappiness throughout the text. In her words, migration, an event that takes place prior to the opening of the novel, creates such misery that “she wanted to die” (37).

The novel theorizes how changing cultural encounters affect Hyacinth and how they construct cultural identity. With each new social interaction, Hyacinth must re-stage her identity; she lives her life as a chameleon, shifting and changing her survival tactics. In recent years, many black feminist theorists in Britain have developed methods to explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and class (Bryan 1985; Grewal 1986; Nasta 1991; Mirza 1987). I draw especially on Judith Butler’s nuanced account of identity:

[I]t’s not so much a double consciousness—gender and race as the two axes, as if they’re determined only in relation to one another. I think that’s a mistake—but I think the unmarked character of the one very often becomes the condition of the articulation of the other. Then the question is how to sustain an analysis that is able to shift perspectives sequentially in such a way that no one reading is actually adequate without the other.
(interviewed in Bell, 168)

Embedded in Butler’s notion of cultural identity is a haunting, specifically in her framing of how “the unmarked character of the one very often becomes the condition of the articulation of the other.” Borders and boundaries of identity are impossible to name, and Hyacinth’s story supports this idea that gender and race are fluid and can only mutually

articulate the partial conditions of each other. In fact, to distinguish moments in the text where Hyacinth's oppression and behaviors exists along an axis of race, gender, sexuality, or class is to oversimplify Riley's writing and Hyacinth's identity. She must manage the complicated locations of multiple and variable subject positions simultaneously, as she grows up in a violent home, attends unwelcoming schools, shifts from one social service facility to another, enrolls in college and university, and eventually returns to Jamaica. Crucially, her identity is affected by her social interactions; indeed, how she *feels* within each of these social and geographical locations matters, because she embodies gender, race, sexuality, and nationality differently depending on the context.

When the eleven-year-old Hyacinth arrives in England to live with her father, she is racialized and ghettoized as the "other" as soon as she steps off the airplane. Even as a child, she senses that she has come to a land where she does not belong: "There had been a sea of white faces everywhere, all hostile. She had known they hated her, and she had felt small, lost and afraid, and ashamed of her plaited hair" (13). Before she can utter a word, much less grow accustomed to her new surroundings, the persistent racist stereotypes and discourses that circulate through British culture cordon her off as "alien" and unwelcome in "their" country. She can feel it. As she looks around the airport and sees so many of "them" and just one of her, she decides that there must be something wrong with her. As an eleven-year-old child, she unquestioningly accepts their hostility—based solely on visible differences: black skin, thicker lips, and plaited hair—and internalizes her "unbelonging" with a growing sense of shame. As Sara Ahmed points out, "Shame can be described as an intense and painful sensation that is bound up

with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body” (Ahmed 103). Elspeth Probyn describes shame as “the most intimate of feeling because it makes our selves intimate to ourselves” (Probyn 41). As discussed in Chapter 2, shame requires another person, another “face” as Butler states in Precarious Life, so that “the subject, in turning from another and back into itself, is consumed by a feeling of badness that cannot simply be given away or attributed to another” (104). Hyacinth’s feelings of shame and inadequacy are particular and differentiated from, for example, Guzmán’s experiences of shame, because hers are tied to processes of racialization. They take hold because she feels she must measure herself in relation to the “sea of faces” of white British citizens—a people she has never met—but intuitively understands that they have power.

Hyacinth’s emotional anguish and physical pain drive Riley’s narrative. Her experiences with white British citizens and institutions clearly demonstrate her marginalization in British culture and propel her feelings of homelessness—but, importantly, they also initiate a process of internalized racism, self-hatred, a desire to be white so she can fit in. “How much she hated her brittle hair, the thickness of her lips . . . She had always wanted long hair, would have given anything for it, and she wished with all her might that her prayers would be answered and she would become like them” (13; 78). Frantz Fanon’s groundbreaking work in Black Skin, White Masks sheds light on the cultural processes taking place here. I am aware of the various feminist and queer criticisms waged against Fanon’s work as misogynist and homophobic (Mama 1995; Wright 2004). However, I agree with José Muñoz when he suggests that through a process of disidentification—that is, politically identifying with and resisting simultaneously—feminist and queer scholars can still find value in Fanon’s anti-colonial

work. As such, “this maneuver resists an unproductive turn toward good dog/bad dog criticism and instead leads to an identification that is both mediated and immediate” (Muñoz 9). In his chapter, “The Man of Colour and the White Woman,” Fanon writes powerfully of his own sense of (sexual) alienation and desire to possess the power of the colonizer: “Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly *white*. I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*” (Fanon, Black, 63; original emphasis). Similar to Fanon’s description of being disempowered and black in France, Hyacinth wishes to shed her “otherness”—her blackness—and perform as white in British society so she can feel empowered in this new land, even if this means simply blending into the cultural landscape. If “desire and disgust are dialectically conjoined,” then so too are whiteness and blackness (Ngai 332-33). In order for England to feel like home—where she belongs—Hyacinth must navigate her desire to be white and her disgust with her own blackness in a world that will only see her as foreign, an alien.

Like the texts I explore in Chapter 2 that inscribe Puerto Rican migration to New York, Riley’s text narrates the way pre-existing assumptions in the arrival country regarding ethnic and racial “otherness” make migrant characters identifiable targets for oppressive practices. Hyacinth explains that “as one of eight black children in school, she had become the butt of many jokes, taunts and cruel tricks” (12). Whether she is on the playground or in the classroom, she cannot find refuge from the racism and hatred that circulate around her:

“What are you staring at?” . . . “I . . . I wasn’t looking at you,” she stammered . . . “Well, don’t look again . . .”

Now her head flew up, mouth opening to protest. After another prod in her chest she clamped it shut, and her heart began to race with renewed fear . . . She had seen other black children picked on in this way . . .

“Kill the wog!”

It was a loud cry from somewhere in the crowd, but suddenly it didn’t matter where, for it was picked up and flung back from everywhere.

“Kill the wog! Kill the wog!” (15-16)

When fights such as this one occur, authority figures turn a blind eye and offer her no additional support, comfort, or safety. She knows that the white teachers “disliked her and had done so since her first day” (16). Mrs. Mullens, the physical education teacher, is the most vocal and offensive, publicly challenging Hyacinth’s right to exist in England following her unwillingness to participate in class:

She had been late getting to the lesson, and had found everyone jumping over a strange box thing which the teacher insisted was a horse. Hyacinth had known she could not jump over it. Everyone else had bloomers under their short skirt; she did not . . . Try as she might, the thought of the shame of exposing her panties had been too much for her. She had tried to explain to Mrs. Mullens but the woman had simply got angrier.

“You blacks had better learn that you are in our country now!” she snapped before ordering her to report to the headmistress. (16-17)

The language in this passage is reminiscent of the diction in the Labour MP’s letters in 1948 that mobilized “our” Britain as a pure, white nation. Here, it is made clear that Britain must remain unchanged; it is the black people who are in it that must adapt their

ways in order to survive. With each event (and there are numerous examples throughout the text), the reader understands the complex reasons for Hyacinth's actions and responses. As readers, we empathize with her belief that her only choice is to live friendless, alone, and in a constant state of fear. Poignantly, these are the moments in the text where Riley "writes back" to the dominant, white culture, challenging those who are culturally privileged to feel the pain associated with living in the borderlands, and makes clear that *this abuse* is part and parcel of the postcolonial condition of Caribbean migrants.

Importantly, it is not just her experience of living in an all-white community that leaves Hyacinth feeling fearful, and alone. Her father, a relatively recent migrant himself, subjects her to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, thus intensifying her powerlessness and diminishing sense of self. By her early teen years, Hyacinth has learned that her "femaleness" can only be a source of pain, and that the family home is a dangerous place for a young girl. Her father repeatedly tells her that her Aunt Joyce let her "get away with too much freedom" and that she is "dumb and insolent" without exception (14). While Hyacinth remembers how her Aunt Joyce created a home environment that was warm and loving in Jamaica, her alcoholic father creates one that is cold, demanding, uncompassionate, abusive, and sexually charged, and this continuously fuels her anxiety and fear. With each nervous, grave "error" that Hyacinth makes (wetting the bed from fear, spilling the tea, looking directly into her father's eyes), she must prepare for a slap across the face, a belt across her backside, or a kicking up and down the stairs. All the while, she is conscious of the ever-present "lump in his trousers" and what that will mean next for her. "Expectant emotions' like anxiety, fear, and hope

aim . . . at the configuration of the world in general, or (what amounts to the same thing), at the future dispositions of the self” (Ngai 210).

Migration ruptures Hyacinth’s only knowledge of “home” and represents an abrupt end to a caring, safe relationship with an adult for Hyacinth. Her departure from Jamaica severs the strong bond between Hyacinth and her aunt, and as Isabel Suárez points out, it destroys “the only positive image given in the book . . . the memory of Aunt Joyce’s warm embrace” (Suárez, “Absent,” 301). Her stepmother, Maureen, pays little attention to Hyacinth and rarely feeds nor protects her from her father’s physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. When the violence becomes too much, Maureen prepares to leave and eventually pleads with Hyacinth to join her and her children. However, Hyacinth has no reason to trust Maureen, exclaiming, “I wouldn’t go anywhere with her when I know how she hates me already . . . For all she knew the woman might even give her over to the white people . . . As far as I’m concerned the whole lot of you can drop dead!” (55). Since Aunt Joyce exists only in her memories and Maureen never plays a role in Hyacinth’s life in any meaningful way, “women” are effectively and affectively erased from the text. In this way, the text intervenes in a particular convention found in black women’s writing in which a community of women is present to rescue the suffering protagonist.

On the other hand, black men—especially her father—play a pivotal if negative role: they are violent, disrespectful, and hurtful to women. And while her father “himself is victimized by British racism,” he also “utilizes [Hyacinth’s] double fear and need against her (the fear of white racism and her desire for home) in order to maintain his control of her” (Davies, *Black*, 101). In The Unbelonging, “black women are . . . the only

available “other” to black men” (Suárez 294). Once Maureen is gone, her father turns his anger and sexual aggression onto Hyacinth and attempts to rape her in his bedroom. She flees the house “crying and stumbling on the stairs, shielding her head with one hand, pulling up her panties with the other” (63). Once outside, and only after being further terrorized sexually by a white, balding, middle-aged man on the streets, she calls the police—despite all her fears about white people—to ask for help.

After fleeing her father’s house, Hyacinth moves into a Youth Reception Centre in Leicester, a dormitory used to house children who are “in limbo,” waiting to be placed in a more permanent youth home. While white girls move in and out of the Centre daily, Hyacinth lives in this temporary housing for over a year, a passage of narrative time emphasizing her existence in the cultural borderlands. The care workers and her new house-parents make it obvious that she does not belong; “she could sense the woman’s dislike, and it made her feel alone and desperate. It would be like this everywhere, all of them being polite—hating you, but hiding it” (73). However, “[s]he always had to remind herself that they had not hurt her yet. Of course, they let her know she was not wanted, did not belong, but at least they were not violent like black people” (69). On a relative scale, Hyacinth would rather cope with being made to feel ashamed and guilty about her “blackness” than live in fear of physical harm. Her childhood experiences sculpt her ideas about the world, and it seems clear to her that black people *are* violent, untrustworthy, and capable of destroying her. Her understanding of “blackness” is complicit with pre-existing racial stereotypes that inform dominant discourses of “blackness” in England.

After years of abuse, Hyacinth finds it impossible to accept her black female body, and she pursues whatever avenues possible to erase it. After being told by the confident and handsome Colin Matthews (a former resident of her youth home who has returned to visit) that she's "too ugly for my use" and that he "liked long blonde hair, something I can run my hands through," Hyacinth scampers away and wonders "how she could compete with white girls" for attention (88). She decides a trip to a beauty salon will take care of her "distasteful, coarse plait of hair" and make her attractive (88). When she emerges from the shop two hours later, Hyacinth is unrecognizable even to herself. The hairdresser insists she's now a real "looker," and she cannot stop touching her newly acquired straightened hair:

She could not resist looking in the shop windows as she passed, slowing her step to enjoy the new picture she presented. She could hardly wait for them to see her at the home; and when they did, was gratified by the silence, the way their conversation tailed off as they noticed her. She might not have long hair, but at least it looked as nice as theirs now. (90)

Hyacinth's self-worth and happiness in this episode correlates to her performances of "whiteness" and "femininity." Hyacinth's transformed body is the key here "because it generates and carries so much meaning" (Probyn 41). With her straightened hair, she cannot "pass" as white in the sense that she becomes "unmarked" by racial hierarchies (Phelan 1993). Rather, the trip to the beauty salon enables her to feel as though she will be more accepted (thus "acceptable") and desirable if she performs "white femininity" by sculpting her hair to look "as nice as theirs now."¹ When

¹ In the United States, there is a substantial body of literature that attends to the politics of black women's hair. Key sources include but are not limited to: Rooks, *Hair Raising* (1996); Banks, *Hair Matters* (2000);

she arrives at the Youth Centre, Colin Matthews notices and suggestively asks her to come closer to him, but she freezes, and memories of her father flood her mind. “Now that she had achieved her objective she wasn’t sure what to do; was not even sure it had been worth it” (90). Her changed racial markings cannot erase her memories of abuse. Her emotions betray her new confidence and she recoils to the silence and safety of her own room where she can dream about the comforts of Jamaica instead of “how she hated black men” (93). As Ahmed suggests, hate is organized around the people and institutions that injure us. “Hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement” (Ahmed 44). Here, black men are signs of hate because of the injuries she has sustained at the hands of her father. Once again, Hyacinth takes refuge in her love of an imagined nation, a fantasized beloved community, because it is the only thing that offers her solace in a real world that continuously injures her.

“Remembering and Forgetting”: Nostalgia and Cultural Loss

Hyacinth responds to her persistent sense of “feeling alien among the white people” with intense longing for Jamaica and determination to return to her beloved island (67). Education affords her the practical steps toward her goal, and she commits all her time and energy outside of a part-time job to succeeding in school. Emotionally, she escapes to the safety, comfort, and security of her dreams in order to feel as though she belongs somewhere in the world. As she tells the reader, “the region of the night holds all my familiarity and comfort” (38). Her dreams revolve around her memories of

Jacobs-Huey, *From the Kitchen to the Parlor* (2006); and Patton, “Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair?” (2006); two relevant films include *Hair Piece* (1985) and *Nappy* (1997).

her loving Aunt Joyce and the rejuvenating experience of the Jamaican landscape. Her memories of that island space (the land, the town, and buildings), as well as her relationships with others, play crucial roles in her affective life. As evidenced in this nostalgic description of Jamaica, the landscape is richly textured by hints of the exotic and by markers of the island's ostensible essence:

The whole day spread in front of her, bristling with possibilities, and she hated the waste of even a few minutes. She thought they would never get there, but finally she was wading into the creamy surf, the green water almost transparent as she bent to look at the small fish darting round her legs. The breeze was warm and wet, the sea comforting in her ears, it stretched endlessly, as far as she could see. Here she could see boats skimming past, looking hurried and out of place on the lazy sea. . . . Glancing back she saw that her aunt had taken out her crochet, a cane-cutter's hat firmly on her head, while her bulk rested comfortably against the bole of a coconut palm. (58)

Caribbean scholar Wilifred Cartey explains in Whispers from the Caribbean that the landscape is an integral part of "most" Caribbean writers' imagination. "For in the Caribbean, moods, emotions, and living itself are all replicated in the landscape" (Cartey, 126). Certainly, this passage creates that sense. The Caribbean is serene, familiar, welcoming, peaceful. Hyacinth clings to this idealization of Jamaica, because it affords her the comfort of "never being over the age of ten and never having to face the unpleasant reality that was England" (74). Transporting herself to Jamaica in her dreams becomes her strategy for survival. Her dependence on her memory of Jamaica reflects

her assumption that the ancestral culture exists in a pure, mystic, uncontaminated state; she recalls from her childhood memory the essences of the land—the warm, wet breeze, the clear green water of the sea. People do not judge her in that fantasy-land because “there colour didn’t matter, for everyone else was the same” (68). Hyacinth has to believe that she can return to *this* Jamaica, a utopian fantasy in which fear, shame, and cultural alienation do not structure her daily life. The juxtaposition of her longings for Jamaica and the realities of the grayness of England inscribes her sense of insecurity and unbelonging throughout the text.

The years of dreaming convince Hyacinth that her memory of her homeland is real; she was too young when she migrated to have known the poverty and internal violence in Jamaica. It is not until later, when she arrives at her university, where her African and Caribbean friends insist that the “real” Jamaica is tainted with political corruption and neo-colonialism that she begins to confront a less idealized Jamaica. Yet still, Hyacinth willfully refuses to consider the imperfections of the only place she feels she belongs:

She herself could remember Jamaica perfectly and the one thing she had to say about it was that racism did not exist there. She supposed there might be some prejudice among the more ignorant people, but it was certainly nothing compared to Britain, and Jamaicans never meant any harm anyway (117).

Given all of Hyacinth’s experiences in the United Kingdom, her utopian vision of Jamaica—her motherland—is the only thing left that gives her a sense of happiness and purpose. Such an intense longing points the reader to Hyacinth’s deep feelings of cultural

loss, but as Eng and Kazanjian persuasively argue in Loss, cultural loss flags both a sense of hopelessness and hopefulness. What remains is the possibility that a place exists free of violence and full of love.

“Beset by Contradiction”: Colonialism and Consciousness

If Riley uses dreams and waking fantasies as a literary device to convey Hyacinth’s helplessness and nostalgia as a child, she deploys Hyacinth’s point of view as “naïf,” as innocent, as a young adult to inscribe ironically the impact of racism and colonialism on her consciousness. Although loss and longing tie Hyacinth to a loving third world space, there are poignant moments in the text when she alarmingly reproduces the racism that she experiences, and the text seamlessly inscribes how the “colonized” takes on the characteristics and ideology of the “colonizer” (Fanon, Black, 1967). Blackness represents violence, unpredictability, “otherness,” and mental anguish, and at every opportunity, Hyacinth attempts to distance herself from being “black,” as suggested in the beauty parlor scene above. Indeed, her identity is fluid, inconsistent, and inextricably linked to how she feels in any given social context. This is particularly true when she interacts with other people from the Caribbean or Africans in her community. Her own prejudice is linked to the hierarchy of color that she is inherent in British colonial modernity: white young women occupy the top of the pyramid and are most desirable and enviable; young Indian women, its middle rungs in this fabricated hierarchy, Caribbeans next; and Africans the bottom. While she is in college, studying for her A-levels, other Caribbean and African girls and boys attempt to befriend her. However, she prefers the company of Indian girls and shuns people within the

African/Caribbean community. “She always made a point of ignoring the black students, lifting her nose high when they came close to her, feeling the need to establish herself as different in other people’s minds” (81).

While at her university, she continues to impose racial hierarchies among the people closest to her, only this time by insisting that Jamaica is a perfect representation of democracy and “civil” society—unconnected to “a more primitive African nation.” Thus, for Hyacinth, her friend Perlene is acceptable and equal to her (despite Perlene’s radical socialist politics), because she is Jamaican. Yet, their postgraduate friend Charles, a political exile from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, is inferior because he is African. In a heated political discussion, in which she defends her beloved island from having any connection to the plight of people in African nations, she reveals her own racism:

“But your country must still struggle against domination, surely?” he asked gently. “You are still facing the problems of imperialism and neo-colonialism.”

Hyacinth shook her head, confident in his presence.

“It’s not like Africa you know,” she said confidently, “People are more civil . . . well aware of what freedom and independence mean.”

“You were going to say civilised, and yet we are the same people, Hyacinth,” he said sadly. “European civilisation is a poor yardstick for development . . .”

“I’m not trying to say Africans are not civilised,” she said hastily. “Only that we don’t have any tribalism in the Caribbean.”

He shook his head wryly. “Watch that when you go back to your island, you are not disappointed, Hyacinth,” he said gravely. (126)

Hyacinth conceptualizes Africa (and Africans) as “tribal,” “primitive,” and “uncivilized,” not as a connected diasporic people. Her categorization of people demonstrates the power of nationalist discourse, or Fanon’s terms, a colonial discourse. Ironically, her resistance to the idea of a black Atlantic highlights her *British* nationalism, which according to Fanon represents concretely how she has been colonized, unconsciously, by the mother country. For Fanon, “every colonized people finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country” (Fanon, Black, 18). The migrant unconsciously changes vis-à-vis the very practice of living in the “mother country.” And since Hyacinth is raised within the confines of British institutions, British discourses about nation, race, culture, and place have become a part of her identity. Perlene and Charles continuously argue with her that the history of the Caribbean—her homeland—is rooted in African history. Jamaica—the nation that was born on the backs of Africans, plundered by English colonialism, presently torn apart by violence, and “governed by so many ‘pass for white’ and white men”—is reality (117). Hyacinth’s internalized racism and colonialism, and their attendant self-alienations, become Riley’s most trenchant social critique. As Cvetkovich suggests, Riley’s text adds to the archive of trauma, bring to attention the destructive impact of migration on the immigrant child.

Hyacinth must remain loyal to Jamaica as her “untouched” homeland not for political reasons, but because Jamaica has come to symbolize her possible “self.” As DeLoughrey argues, “[w]hile Hyacinth’s body becomes a metonymic site of violence in England, the anti-colonial era in Jamaica offers no alternative. She dreams of a return

during Jamaican Independence, conflating national and personal coming of age stories” (DeLoughrey 226). This conflation of a national and a personal coming of age is emotionally deeply rooted: if she lets go of her Jamaica, she believes she will have nothing. Charles’s final words of warning—”watch that when you go back to your island, you are not disappointed”—foreshadow Hyacinth’s crushing return to Jamaica. While the prodigal return home is meant to be celebratory and therapeutic, it instead forces her to come to terms with the ambiguity of her own identity and its relation to an independent Jamaica. When she arrives in Jamaica, she “looks around blankly at the unfamiliar landscape. . . [t]his is not the place she remembered” (135-137). The familiar tug of fear and uncertainty returns to haunt her, and in a twist of fate that she doesn’t quite comprehend, she finds that her comforting thoughts and memories revolve around England: “She thought longingly of . . . England, so far away and safe. God, how civilised England seemed now” (138).

Steeling herself against her own fear, she walks up to the old “shack” where she lived with her aunt all those years ago and forces herself to knock. The woman she meets is Florence, a family friend, withered, terminally ill, unkempt, and surviving her pain through alcohol. Aunt Joyce died some time ago. “She stood frozen, head shaking in denial as the nightmare came to life” (139). The gifts she brings from England feel awkward and inappropriate, and she has nothing to say. Perhaps even more horrifying than the reality of the landscape are the few choice words Florence has for her:

“No sah, Hyacinth,” she said heavily, the anger full of sad regret now.

“Yu is a different person wid you speakey spokey ways. Yu noh belong ya soh . . . Go back whe you come fram.” The words whirled about

insider her head. How many times had she heard that since coming to Jamaica, or was it since she had gone to England? She felt rejected, unbelonging. Where was the acceptance she had dreamt about, the going home in triumph to a loving, indulgent aunt? Was this what she had suffered for? It was all so pointless, all for nothing . . . [I]f it was not Jamaica, where did she belong? (141-142)

Hyacinth's idealized dreams about Jamaica as her homeland haunt her present as nightmares. The depression and alienation she feels in England have been amplified and reconstituted by the reality she has encountered in the landscape and family ties of Jamaica. The book ends without closure, suggesting that it is impossible for Hyacinth to retreat to Jamaica to find her place of belonging and equally impossible for her to live a life free of racism, hatred and pain in England. Her only means of resistance lies within her potential power to negotiate her multiple social locations and forge her own subjectivity in the Jamaican-British borderlands.

Conclusion: “Even Those Called ‘Other’ Are Never, Never That”

The Unbelonging is not a narrative of paradigmatic suffering, but one that serves as a frame of reference for the reinterpretation and perhaps the future reorganization of British society (Turner 6). Hyacinth's life story emphasizes the “undisputed fact that race, gender, and class converge to produce the oppression of racial minority women in Britain as elsewhere” (Suárez 292). Thus in part, The Unbelonging functions as a social and political commentary on the affective dimensions of Caribbean-British migration, black experiences in Britain, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. However, The

Unbelonging does more than highlight the racism, sexism, and classism in Britain; it inscribes a young, black woman's subjectivity into a world that otherwise renders her invisible. The racism she confronts *and* displays, the abuse and fear that she endures, alongside her nostalgia for and painful experiences in Jamaica *and* Britain constitute and re-constitute her identity. Hyacinth's story is incomplete, and readers are left to wonder if, in the years to come, she will heal her childhood wounds and live her daily life able to negotiate the Jamaican-British borderlands. And though her narrative inscribes the horrors of her life as a migrant black girl, her ruptured social worlds, and the colonialist legacy differently shared by Britain and Jamaica, it is also about what her imagination reaches toward and what she seeks. Her story, like that of the other characters in the novels this dissertation examines, is the rendering of an emotional journey that inscribes her personhood—in all its complexity—into British culture and the transnational culture of the Black Atlantic.

Chapter 5: Mapping (Trans)Textualities: The Politics of Publication, Canonization, and Translation

In order to understand the broader cultural significance of Caribbean literary texts, and in particular the five novels that constitute this project, it is necessary to investigate and analyze the texts as deliberately *produced* objects that then circulate through global cultures as “things.” Interdisciplinary scholars argue persuasively that contexts (whether it is the production and/or consumption of the text) matter as much as content and form (Tompkins, 1985; Lauter, 1991; Radway, 1997; Huggan, 2001; McHenry, 2002; Davidson, 2004; Holloway, 2006; Wadsworth, 2006). Literary scholars who consider material and visual culture in their analyses suggest that objects themselves carry tactile, sensual, and layered cultural meanings (Brown, 2004). I am interested in drawing upon, weaving together, and expanding these traditions in order to elucidate the transnational, gendered, and racial politics of publication, canonization, and translation, and therefore the creation of an assumed reading public for the consumption of late twentieth-century Caribbean women’s migration literature. In this chapter, I will analyze first two independent publishers of Caribbean women’s writing as sites for exploring the relationship of publication to canonicity; and second, The Line of the Sun, América’s Dream, Breath, Eyes, Memory, Geographies of Home, and The Unbelonging as material objects, particularly with regard to their respective book covers. I begin with a brief overview of contemporary publishing, as it affects Caribbean women’s literary production, followed by “a note on method.”

The intricacies of globalization and the consolidation of accumulated capital have made it increasingly difficult for Caribbean women authors to find publishing outlets, and for struggling independent and politically-minded publishers and bookstore owners to operate and compete in a global market. All one needs to do is consult Brenda F. Berrian's Bibliography of Women Writers from the Caribbean to understand how many manuscripts drafted by women from the Caribbean remain "unpublished." Caribbean women writers face an increasingly daunting and difficult publishing world: mainstream houses are interested in building celebrity authors and marketing universal, canonized texts, and smaller publishers invested in local artists are disappearing at an alarming rate. In Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition, Cedric Robinson argues against the use-value of a European-based Marxist critique of these socio-cultural phenomena by providing a well-documented history of and political urgency for building a black socialist movement to counteract exploitive capitalist endeavors, publishing or otherwise. In this sense, I want to extrapolate from Robinson's work to suggest that if multilingual, black, and women's presses were given equal opportunity and value within culture (not just in a monetary sense), then more texts by Caribbean women might well exist in the public sphere.

However, such is not the case in today's publishing world. As Daniel Simon of The Nation explains, "the corporate sector...accounts for the overwhelming majority of the vast number of books—over 120,000 titles—published each year in the United States" (Simon par. 6). In 2001, over eighty-eight percent (88%) of the market share belonged to conglomerate publishers (Hoovers par. 1). Within the last decade, Simon notes, "wonderful imprints closed or were blended into the corporate edifice in ways that

left their unique character forever lost” (7). This increasing monopolization means that fewer struggling authors find their way into print, since they have not achieved celebrity status, while actors- and politicians-turned-authors, who, as Simon asserts, rarely write their own books, “are emblematic of this historical moment with first printings of their ‘works’ sometimes approaching a million copies” (8). Diminishing public and private cultural resources for small presses, alongside competition from larger publishing houses, directly translates to the disappearance of small, independent publishers dedicated to producing literature by women and people of color. For example, consultant and educator Mev Miller, on her website Litwomen.org, records and continuously updates the status of 156 women-owned and women-centered publishers in the United States, England, Canada, Ireland, and Australia: ninety-one are listed as active, twenty-four as “out of business,” and forty-one with the ominous phrase “status unknown” alongside their name and address.

The ripple effect of this corporate takeover is that hundreds of independent bookstores have also failed. In Manhattan alone, seven folded in the last decade (Simon par. 8). The Feminist Bookstore Network reports that since 1997, thirty percent (30%) of feminist bookstores in the United States and Canada have closed their doors, down from 104 to 74 (Norman par. 1). In the remainder of this chapter, I am particularly interested in what a shrinking publishing world means for women novelists in the Caribbean diaspora, as well as for those presses who support their work in New York, London, and Leeds. I have turned to these locations, as opposed to publishers in the Caribbean, because the metropole is where the vast majority of Caribbean women’s literature is produced and consumed (Robinson-Walcott 2006). Drawing on original ethnographic

data collected from two publishers, Peepal Tree Press (Leeds, UK) and Soho Press (New York), alongside a growing body of secondary literature, I asked senior editors to explain the publishing process to me step by step and to discuss the significance of the Caribbean women's literature they produce.

A Note on Method

Beginning in 2002, I sent letters, faxes, and emails introducing myself and asking if I could conduct interviews with personnel at the five publishing houses that produced the novels I use in this dissertation: HarperCollins (America's Dream), University of Georgia Press (The Line of the Sun), Soho Press/Vintage Press (hardcopy/paperback of Breath, Eyes, Memory), Penguin (Geographies of Home), and The Women's Press (The Unbelonging). My first round of correspondence was met with silence. I literally heard nothing in response. Three months later, I sent a second batch of letters, faxes, and emails to the same group of publishers and expanded my search to include smaller, independent presses: Virago (London), Zed Books (London), New Beacon Books (London), Silver Moon Bookshop (London), and Peepal Tree Press (Leeds, UK). At the time, I thought that these enterprises might have more at stake in telling their story, and I wanted to hear what the changes in the publishing world have meant to them. As in the initial series of letters I sent, I introduced myself and summarized my research project, explaining why I was interested in speaking with them:

I am very interested in meeting with one, some, or as many of you as possible to discuss how The Women's Press produces novels such as Joan Riley's The Unbelonging. Hers is an important piece of writing in the

growing field of Caribbean, postcolonial, and Women's Studies...and I would like to give it the full attention it deserves. *Moreover, I am determined that my findings be accurate (as opposed to conjecture) and I hope that you can help me tell the story properly.* (emphasis added)

I believe it may be the last sentence in the above paragraph that helped to secure a meeting with Peepal Tree Press (Leeds, United Kingdom) and a phone interview with Soho Press (New York). By suggesting that scholars potentially assume a foreclosed publishing reality rather than concretely investigating it, I tried to open the door for my respondents to construct their own narratives.

As for the other publishers, I heard nothing in return from the large publishing houses, and received unfulfilled promises from Virago, New Beacon Books, and the Silver Moon Bookshop to meet with me when I arrived in London, and an explanation from The Women's Press that it is a small and busy press and does not have time to discuss the publishing process. From their curt or misleading responses, I gleaned a sense that editors are quite reluctant to speak about their trade. Despite our co-dependence—that is, academics purchase and draw upon diverse texts and need publishing houses to produce their own work, while publishers, especially in a digital age, need academics to submit their manuscripts and buy their books—I sensed a great deal of mistrust. Why precisely would a publishing house care to speak frankly about the process of publication, particularly how it is connected to issues of race, transnational authorship, and the construction of the Caribbean and the metropole?

In August 2003, I traveled to London and Leeds. I had secured an interview with Peepal Tree Press in Leeds and intended to meet with personnel at Virago Press, New

Beacon Books and the Silver Moon Bookshop in London with a final stop at the British Library. Leeds is approximately four hours north of London and is a post-industrial city—much like Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, New Castle, and Liverpool—trying to find its identity in a changing world. I met with senior editor Jeremy Poynting and marketing director Hannah Bannister on 15 August 2003. When I returned to London for the last three days, I visited Virago Press, New Beacon Books, Silver Moon Women’s Bookshop, and the Women’s Press in person. Both Virago and the Women’s Press literally closed the door after saying staff were too busy and could not make time for an interview. I set off for New Beacon Books on Stroud Green Road in Finsbury Park, North London, hoping to interview the owner, Sarah White. New Beacon Books is of particular interest because of its role in the Caribbean Arts Movement (CAM) in Britain. John La Rose, Edward Kamau Braithwaite, and Andrew Salkey established CAM and worked closely with writers such as Wilson Harris, George Lamming, Sam Selvon, and C.L.R James to establish a Caribbean literary identity and forge an alliance of Africa, Asian, and Caribbean people in Britain. In 1966, La Rose started New Beacon publishing with a mission to “assist in the recovery of a past held in contempt, and to establish an awareness of the dangers and pitfalls which lie ahead if facile solutions are expected or attempted” (Walmsley 251). With a swell in community support, La Rose moved his operation in 1973 from his front parlor to its current location so that he could expand his publishing into book selling.¹ Today, New Beacon Books still exists in North

¹ Bogle-L’Ouverture Press, another influential black British publisher from the 1960s, opened a bookshop in 1974, eventually changing its name to the Walter Rodney Bookshop in 1980. New Beacon and Bogle-L’Ouverture Press are responsible for much of the community work, book launches, and international conferences that supported black British, Caribbean and third world writers from 1966-1980. In 1991, Bogle-L’Ouverture Press re-emerged in West London, specializing in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, and the bookshop in Ealing closed.

London but only sells books. When I arrived, White suggested that I purchase Anne Walmsely's The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966-1972: A Literary and Cultural History because, in part, it details the history of New Beacon. She did not want to schedule an interview to discuss its current status though promised to stay in touch over email, once I had read the book. My last stop was the Silver Moon Women's Bookshop, which unfortunately, had closed its doors and been consolidated with Foyles (a large independent bookstore in central London) in 2001.

When I returned to the United States, I transcribed my interview with the staff at Peepal Tree Press and sent inquiries to both Virago and White at New Beacon Books. I received one encouraging email from Virago, but then when I sent specific questions, I never heard a response. White never responded to my email. Although I could not secure as many interviews as I would have liked for this dissertation project, I see this work as the first step in an on-going research project. What follows in the next two sections is an analysis of the interviews I conducted with Peepal Tree Press on August 15, 2003, and over email on September 15, 2003, and with Soho Press over the phone on October 15, 2003.

Keeping It Real: Publishing the “Caribbean Nation” at Peepal Tree Press

The mission statement of Peepal Tree Press, an independent, two-person operation, stands in sharp contrast to that of most publishers—big or small. Located in Leeds, Jeremy Poynting founded Peepal Tree Press in 1985, initially conducting business from his garage with the resources he could pull together. As the press's website explains, Poynting's inspiration to commit his worldly goods to this endeavor came from

a writer/friend in the Caribbean who feared that his writing would never be published (Peepal par. 5). On the day I visited, Poynting told me that his “motivations have always been political, personal, aesthetic, and cultural, rather than being in any sense market led” (Interview 9/15/03). He has maintained this vision by mortgaging and re-mortgaging his home, buying an old printing press, which provides their own means of production, and building contacts from the ground up.

Poynting generously shares his business credit with the owners of independent bookstores, particularly John La Rose and Sarah White of New Beacon Books in London. During our conversation, Poynting made explicit the direct connection between his survival and the importance of independent bookshops. His argument is echoed by scholars. In “We Shall Not Be Terrorized Out of Existence: The Political Legacy of England’s Black Bookshops” (1998), Colin Beckles persuasively makes the case that black British independent bookstores are on the frontlines fighting racism and spearheading community development in London:

Black British activists developed and controlled Black bookshops as a means to counter the assault [over the meaning of black identity] on their communities during the late 1960s and 1970s. As politicized entities, these bookshops functioned as “Pan-African sites of resistance” for the Black British communities (Beckles 51).

And although the assault against the bookshops has shifted from the National Front’s physical destruction of them to global corporations’ economic warfare, New Beacon Bookshop, Bogle-L’Overture Press, Centerprise Bookshops, and Soma Books continue to

conduct business because of their strong community ties. Peepal Tree Press depends on the New Beacon community to sell its titles.

Poynting (managing editor) and Hannah Bannister (marketing director) operate Peepal Tree Press from a terrace building in a residential area a short bus ride from the city centre of Leeds. While this location literally affords them the opportunity to stay in business, as “there’s never been any choice about being anywhere else,” it also, in Poynting’s words, “keeps you out of the kind of connections where most things are happening. For instance, going to a book launch in London is out of reach . . . you can’t get to where the reviewers are and take them to dinner and all that stuff (laughter).” Despite the isolation, the staff at Peepal Tree Press has painstakingly built an international publishing house literally one title at a time. From 1985-1991, “it was one title a year and a couple the next . . . I don’t think we did more than perhaps twenty all together . . . I still needed to work [as a lecturer at a local university] so it was a very slippery part-time thing” (Interview 8/15/03). By the early 1990s, the struggling press received small local grants from the Leeds Arts Council, continued to be sustained by doing business with New Beacon Books, and “subsidized the overheads and printing costs of the books by running a parallel printing business, looking for jobs from other small publishers” (Peepal par. 6). As of 2003, Poynting and Bannister worked full time at Peepal Tree Press and spent a good deal of their time working directly with authors and booksellers in the Caribbean (particularly Jamaica and Trinidad).

In a highly competitive business, where digital publishing and large corporations swallow independent small businesses, the team at Peepal Tree Press stays afloat because it keeps its production cost to a minimum and builds personal and committed

relationships with authors and booksellers in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean. On the first point, since Poynting and Bannister own their own mechanized press, they produce their print texts in-house. Admittedly, what suffers in this process is the cover art, because they have a very limited budget to hire an outside graphic designer. On the second point, Peepal Press takes pride in and values the editorial process with its authors. As editor, Poynting works “in a genuinely collaborative way” with both seasoned and new writers. In their estimation, “half of what we publish is by writers who are already on the books” and they attribute this high rate of return to an “important core . . . creative relationship . . . a lot of personal relationships” (Interview 9/15/03). When culling submissions, the staff looks for work that has a “genuinely individual, distinctive voice” and that is “going to be still something we want to read in five or ten years time.” However, the editors push beyond enduring works and look for Caribbean authors whose writing “prevents amnesia.” In Poynting’s words, “Caribbean fiction is much more important for instance than any Caribbean sociology . . . because it tells people about themselves” (Interview 8/15/06). In his view, fiction plays a key role in keeping the Caribbean alive: indeed, writing takes on a level of urgency in both political and human terms. Those at Peepal Tree Press believe that fiction can convey stories that need to be told by authors who may not reach canonized status.

Peepal Tree Press publishes work by male Pan-Caribbean writers; however, it is their “women’s titles that sell more.” In part, there is a built-in readership—a core of women consumers, particularly Caribbean women’s reading and writing groups, who will purchase any title written by a woman. But as Poynting suggested during our conversation, women’s writing pushes beyond brand loyalty:

Caribbean women writers are ambitious about women's writing—never wanting it bound in its position in the censure of things. It's never been a kind of ghettoized writing . . . It wants to be as political and focused on the heart of the dialogue as anybody. (Interview 8/15/03)

The success of Peepal Tree Press' women's titles speaks directly to the importance of interjecting women's voices and experiences into the public sphere. It is their imaginative story—their local knowledge of the Caribbean or nativist writing—that resonates with readers.

The titles that Peepal Tree Press publishes are unabashedly about the Caribbean as a region and about specific Caribbean nations, and they demand that readers understand these texts within their respective contexts. As will become clear in the next section, this framework stands in stark contrast to that of Soho Press—an independent publisher that positions itself within a global publishing market that produces “great literature.” Peepal Tree Press is most proud of its books written by “Caribbean Caribbeños.” These are the books by authors, for example, that inscribe what happened in the 1990's in Guyana or the range of current issues that Barbados faces. It is this understanding of local and regional identity alongside engaged editorial readings that keep poets such as Merle Collins returning to the Peepal Tree Project. Big publishers create what Poynting calls “international black fiction,” like the work of Caryle Phillips. The “kind of Caribbeanness of what he does has become a dwindling proportion,” because he “gets pushed” to go in a particular direction, so that his fiction is equally marketable in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in other European regions (Interview 9/15/03). Peepal Tree Press decides what it will publish based on “book-by-book decisions,” and

the choice to publish a text is “made in a consciousness and desire to see these [works] as part of a larger, developing body of work” (Interview 8/15/03). Many of the authors the Peepal Tree Project pick up are, quite literally, blocked from publishing their narratives because of global economies driven by a need for profit from canonized texts and celebrity authors. Poynting and Bannister open up the discourse about what counts as Caribbean texts without shying away from political material. Of grave concern to the staff at the Peepal Project is what will happen when their generation retires. And the concern is real. Small independent book publishers and sellers need the next generation to produce and distribute, so that Caribbean nations, in all of their diversity, may continue to have an outlet for their voices. On a positive note, since my interviews, Peepal Tree Press has expanded its catalog of titles, recently hired a new poetry editor, and hosts monthly readings with Caribbean authors in its Leeds office.

Layers and Contradictions: “Marketing the Margins” as Great Literature at Soho Press

Soho Press, an independent publisher located in New York, was the first press to court Edwidge Danticat and solicit her manuscripts. A senior editor at Soho told me that she worked with Danticat while she was an MFA student at Brown University after the aspiring author submitted an engaging short story (a genre the press does not publish). The editor convinced the young author to expand her submission into a book-length novel, Krik? Krak! Soho Press produced the first hardcopy run of Krik? Krak! and Breath, Eyes, Memory, later selling the paperback rights to Vintage press. My phone interview with Soho Press was rather brief, and it was clear that the editor wanted me to

understand that Soho Press “discovered” and worked closely with Danticat—indeed that the press was instrumental in “giving Danticat to the world.” (Interview 10/15/03).

In order to analyze the significance of the above statement, I want to juxtapose a part of my conversation with the Soho editor with a passage that indicates how Danticat herself has discussed her work. Pointing out these differences is critical, because these differing views of what Danticat “gives to the world” are precisely what are at stake in transnational publication. I begin with a long excerpt of my interview with the editor at Soho Press:

Question (Barbara): How is new material brought to your attention?

Answer (Editor): Usually authors send us manuscripts for review.

Sometimes we solicit them from authors based on previous work or recommendations.

Question: What criteria do you use in selecting titles that are sent blind to you?

Answer: Soho Press aims to publish great literature.

Question: And can you talk a bit more about this . . . perhaps specifically about what constitutes great literature?

Answer: If it is well written and has compelling subject matter.

Question: Can you expand on this a bit more?

Answer: We look for beautiful prose. I don’t understand what you are getting at with your questions.

Question: I think I am most interested in hearing more about what was compelling about Breath, Eyes, Memory in particular.

Answer: It is compelling because it is a classic coming-of-age story.

Question: And when you first acquired the manuscript, did it matter in your reading process that it could or would be more specifically read as a coming-of-age story about a contemporary Haitian migrant? In other words, did the connection to Haiti play a role in your decision to publish Breath, Eyes, Memory?

Answer: The novel had all the elements necessary to become great literature. (Interview 10/15/03)

This passage suggests a reluctance to discuss contextual and potentially political issues having to do with constructions of Haitian migration. The above transcription also reveals a moment of suspicion, even hostility, on each of our parts, and that moment points to an important layer of meaning in this ethnographic process: punctuated silences.

At this point, I want to place the editor's words in conversation with Danticat's account of her own understandings of the cultural work of Breath, Eyes, Memory:

One of the most important themes is migration, the separation of families, and how much that affects the parents and children who live through that experience. My father left Haiti to come to New York seeking a better life—economically and politically—when I was only two years old, and my mother when I was four years old. I was raised by my aunt and uncle, and even though I understood, I think, early on the great sacrifices that my parents were making, I still missed them very much. But having formed parental-type relationships with my aunt and uncle, I was really torn and

heartbroken when I had to leave them to be reunited with my parents in New York. So I wanted to deal with that from the point of view of a child who's faced with this situation. I wanted to include some of the political realities of Haiti—as a young girl felt and interpreted them—and how that affected ordinary people, the way that people tried to carry on their daily lives even under a dictatorship or post-dictatorship. Finally, I wanted to deal with mother-daughter relationships and the way that mothers sometimes attempt to make themselves the guardians of their daughter's sexuality. (“Behind the Books” par. 2)

Danticat’s emphasis here on migration, hardship, emotional pain, and tense mother-daughter relationships are in stark contrast to the editor’s responses; and these differences are suggestive of how the text exists simultaneously within what Walter Dignolo terms “local histories and global designs” (Dignolo 2000). The contested terrain under this single text signifies its condition (and that of other postcolonial literature) of being produced in a “modern/colonial world system.” On the one hand, the editor insists that Breath, Eyes, Memory is a universal text that will penetrate the global imaginary and be taken up within the canons of “Great Literature”—a status that Western authors and publishers covet and aim to achieve. However, given Danticat’s words, the text also inscribes “the real,” Haitian women’s everyday lives “from a subaltern perspective . . . that is conceived from the exterior borders of the modern/colonial system . . . and the conflictive intersection . . . of modern colonialisms and colonial modernities” (Dignolo 11). It is significant that the editor could not, or would not, speak to issues of Haitian migration, racial violence, women’s sexuality, and broken mother-daughter relations.

Politics, born out of women's concrete ways of experiencing the postcolonial world, are precisely what drops out of Soho's commercialized rendering of the text.

To insist that Breath, Eyes, Memory is simply "a great piece of literature" dislocates the text from its author and context, and rests it solidly within the canon and the literary marketplace. "Great literature" is that which is socially sanctioned and passed along through generations of educated readers as a "must have-must read" text, and therefore it is easy to see why Soho Press (and other publishing houses) has an interest in ensuring that their monographs become a part of these selected works. Literary scholar Paul Lauter summarizes the American literary canon as follows:

I mean by the "American literary canon" that set of authors and works generally included in basic American literature college courses and textbooks, and those ordinarily discussed in standard volumes of literary history, bibliography, or criticism. Many such books are also available in widely marketed paperback series of "classics." Obviously, no conclave of cultural cardinals establishes a literary canon, but for all that it exercises substantial influence. For it encodes a set of social norms and values; and these by virtue of its cultural standing, it helps endow with force and continuity. (Lauter 23)

The canon is a collection of texts that scholars, teachers, parents, publishers, and the general reading public have invested with social power. The canon represents a nation—its norms and values—and is integral to the nation-building process. It is a socializing tool. Canons are deeply invested in the production of a *civilized, developed, and traditional* Western epistemology that embraces the universal individual, and therefore,

by logical extension, has the ability to speak across cultures and human differences. And for those who investigate and analyze knowledge as systems of social and colonial power, canons continue to embrace those texts written by white, male middle-class authors who are born, raised, and educated in the West.

The very creation of a canon has serious intellectual and political repercussions. Who is selected to represent the nation? How? What subject matter is deemed worthy of this lofty status? Why? And when pulled together as a group of texts, what are the literary patterns and connections? Lisa Lowe speaks directly to these issues in her article, "Canon, Institutionalization, Identity: Contradictions for Asian American Studies," by articulating the different investments in a "major" (universal) versus a "minor" (particular) canon: "A 'major' literary canon traditionally performs that reconciliation [of material stratifications and differences] by means of a selection of works that uphold a narrative of ethical formation in which the individual relinquishes particular differences through an identification with a universalized form of subjectivity" (Lowe, 1995; 43). Thus, major works inscribe, sometimes with wit, irony, satire, and/or realism, the connective tissue that binds all citizens of a given nation and effectively embraces commonalities over differences. A "minor" canon, on the other hand, embraces work largely produced by writers of color and women, who question the transnational "universal" subject and point to the centrality and intersectionality of race, gender, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality in the formations of subjectivity; such writing is often labeled "political" rather than canonical.

David Palumbo-Liu argues persuasively in [The Ethnic Canon](#) that a handful of so-called minority texts written in the United States are included on syllabi and cited at

conferences, to “mimic and reproduce the ideological underpinnings of the dominant canon, adding 'material' to it after a necessary hermeneutic operation elides contradiction and smoothes over the rough grain of history and politics, that is, those very things that have constructed the ‘ethnic’” (Palumbo-Liu 2). The canon may expand to include “minority” writing, but ultimately will be read within the pre-existing frame of the universal. Thus, U.S.-based minority texts can only be seen as additives to an otherwise stable group of texts that unquestioningly “demonstrate their insight, beauty, and truth to educated people” (Cain 9), and they remain de-politicized on the basis of race, gender, nation, class, sexuality, ability, and religion *despite* the presence of these complexities in the text. And those few writers of color and women who are added to the annals of “great literature” problematically are representative of a larger field of artists who struggle to have their work noticed, much less published. To put this more succinctly, celebrity authors such as Morrison, Naipul, Rushdie, and reputedly soon-to-be-canonized Danticat become the “minor” gatekeepers of the canon at the expense of a whole host of racial, ethnic, and postcolonial writers, particularly those living and working in the African, Caribbean, and Asian diasporas.

Certainly, the cultural work that revered authors like these undertake in their novels is provocative and important; yet, as time and rhetoric demonstrate (and here I am thinking particularly of controversies surrounding the Pulitzer and Booker Prizes that Graham Huggan elaborates on in his *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*), the basis for inclusion relies on their ability to evoke the universal appeal of aesthetics, character formation, and genre expression. This is to suggest, then, that the canonization process, despite its growing flexibility, “demands [that] . . . racial and ethnic minority

cultures . . . subscribe to the criteria defined by the majority canon...so as to formalize those cultures as ‘developed’ traditions” (Lowe 43). And despite ongoing debates regarding the canon and inclusions of diverse texts on syllabi and in the larger culture, I agree with William Cain when he observes that “[a]t a certain point it becomes tedious to keep being told that literature is known by its essential ‘literary value, excellence, and quality,’ and never to receive a deeper, fuller explanation of this maxim” (Cain 9). The layers are complicated and run deep, and by no means do I wish to suggest that there is an answer to the thorniness of canonization and publication. Rather, my intention is to seriously question the canonization process—the making of “Great Literature”—so that other, and often engaged postcolonial writers (like Joan Riley, for example, who has developed creative writing sessions for black women in the greater London area) can be acknowledged fully for their literary, intellectual, and socio-political contributions.

For Caribbean women writers—as for many people of color and those who do not have access to the means of production—the canonization and publication process is a rather vicious trap. On the one hand, it is important to have one’s work circulating widely so that, for example, Caribbean women’s experiences within the diaspora might be better understood in a global context. Moreover, it seems entirely appropriate that national literary canons could and should include the writing of Riley, Pérez, Danticat, Ortiz Cofer, and Santiago because their texts comment directly on the nation-building process, albeit from the critical perspective of the migrant. Our understandings (I mean “our” in its most inclusive sense—scholars and general readers, adults and children, colonizer and colonized) of the formation of the nation must be nuanced by the realities of systemic racism, sexism, and poverty. Perhaps it goes without saying that American

and British social norms and values would look much different if interpersonal violence (ranging from domestic abuse to racial violence), discrimination, and alienation become a part of public, national discourse. With new configurations of canons and more engaged critiques of transnational literature, perhaps an educated public might demand new and more equitable social policies governing immigration.

Yet, there is another story connected to publication and global circulation, which constitutes the “on the other hand” of the argument I constructed in the previous paragraph. Transnational texts in general, and more specifically the Caribbean women’s novels I analyze in my dissertation, are produced in the metropole through an editorial process that filters and has the potential to re-write sections of the narrative that may not be digested well or may not translate easily for “first world” readers. Translation can mean two different things here. Some postcolonial texts are literally translated from an indigenous language into English for wider circulation, and there is an entire field, translation studies, which seeks to establish viable and ethical methods for this complex task (Bassnett *et al.*, 1990; Bassnett, 1991; Schulte, 1992; Álvarez, 1996; Venuti, 2000; Munday, 2001; Tymoczko *et al.*, 2002). In the case of the texts I examine here, I mean translation to be cultural rather than linguistic (Spivak, 1993; Niranjana, 1992; Simon, 1996). All the novels I analyze were originally written in English and produced by publishing houses in New York, London, and Atlanta. Yet, editing is a filtering process whereby the goal of the press is to craft the text for a “universal” audience (ultimately a Western and U.S.-centered reading public), in a neatly packaged, digestible, and consumable product. Graham Huggan examines and pushes this argument further in his introduction to The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins:

English is, almost exclusively, the language of this critical industry, reinforcing the view that postcolonialism is a discourse of translation, rerouting cultural products regarded as emanating from the periphery toward audiences who see themselves as coming from the centre. The metropolitan locations of the major publishing houses (London and New York, for example) lend strength to this view... [so] why does this industry seem to privilege a handful of famous writers? (Huggan 4)

In this context, Huggan suggests that the selection process for texts is determined by what English-speaking audiences will purchase, based especially on name recognition. Ironically, and perhaps ultimately, postcolonial work marks the center as much as the periphery, since, by and large, published authors have been educated and reside in Western Europe and the United States (John 1996). Publishers, prize committees, scholars in the West, and other institutional bodies repeatedly select the same authors for publication and wide circulation because they are known commodities; new authors are fewer and farther between for major publishing houses because a second or third book by a recognized name—an author who has won the Pulitzer, Booker, or Commonwealth Prize—will translate into more profit rather than risking a loss.

Are publication and its resulting consumption so contrived that the cultural value of a book can be reduced to a predictable function of economics and celebrity recognition? Such a position assumes the cultural tastes of readers/consumers and disregards altogether the complexity and unpredictability of audience response. Questions of how the reading public comes to texts and interprets them is important work currently underway by literary scholars such as Elizabeth McHenry in Forgotten Readers:

Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies; however, my interest here is to investigate the significance of how a text occupies a complex cultural space as a literary, material, and visual object. Some of the novels I examine in my dissertation are in the process of being canonized, some are bestsellers, all can be considered serious literature both in their form and content, and all are exoticized commodities in a post-industrial capitalist world. Indeed, as cultural critic Graham Huggan argues, postcoloniality binds the work of talented writers and scholars to a global process of commodification and “produces both the text and author as a sign within a larger semiotic system of the postcolonial exotic” (Huggan 6). Yet I want to push this argument a bit further to examine the actual book-as-object and how it is performative of Huggan’s “postcolonial exotic” as a “thing.” Books are both deliberately produced and selectively consumed; they represent hours of work and commitment on behalf of the author and the press, and tap into the desires, affections, and fantasies of the reading public. Yet, the book, as object remains largely a neglected subject within material and visual culture studies.²

Caribbean Women’s Novels as Visual and Material Objects

The truth of the matter is that Caribbean women’s words—their stories of everyday life and migration—are bound by deliberately produced book jackets and exist as “things” on bookshelves that readers select based on specific moments (perhaps even a series of moments) of identification. Bill Brown’s recently published A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature links material culture and literary studies by examining the growing importance of things and aesthetics in human beings’ lives at the

² In addition to Bill Brown’s A Sense of Things (2003), Ronald Zboray’s and Mary Saracino Zboray’s Literary Dollars and Social Sense (2005) is one of the only texts to discuss the book as an object.

turn of the century. More specifically, he analyzes how novels written during rapid industrial change grappled with the emerging and complex role of material objects in American culture. What is most refreshing about Brown's work is the way he calls into question Marxist approaches to consumer culture: "my gambit is simply to sacrifice the clarity of thinking about things as objects of consumption, on the one hand, in order to see how, on the other, our relation to things cannot be explained by the cultural logic of capitalism" (Brown 5). In other words, modernist thinking that embraces a dichotomy between an object (produced by an alienated work force) and a human being (victim of system aims of profit and commodity-fetishism) cannot tell the sensational story—the human experience—of what it means to find pleasure in owning a book and for this object to be a thing that possesses cultural meaning.

The history of modernity, propelled both by capital and by instrumental reason, is the history of proscribing objects from attaining the status of things, proscribing any value but that of use or exchange, secularizing the object's animation by restricting it to a commodity . . . alone. Human investment in the physical object world, and the mutual constitution of human subject and inanimate object, can hardly be reduced to [the way commodity relations came to saturate everyday life] (185, 5)

Human beings' fascination with material things is not simply about accumulation and status, though this is surely a part of the equation. It is also about something more intimate—about aesthetics and desire that leave an imprint, and in part constitute who we are, as human beings. Brown's work makes clear that our sense of things—our feelings and moments of identification with an object—"apprehend" us, and it is in the interaction

between material object and human subject that cultural meaning is created. And importantly, these “things” must exist in order for us to derive pleasure from them; thus, this is the departure point for my own investigations into how the book circulates through cultures as a tangible and visual “thing” that matters.

John A. Walker’s and Sarah Chaplin’s Visual Culture: An Introduction defines visual culture as “those material artifacts, buildings and images, plus time-based media and performances produced by human labor and imagination, which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent” (Walker, Visual, 1-2). Rarely have literary scholars pursued the meaning of book jackets with the same rigor as the words that constitute the narrative. Likewise, material and visual culture scholars investigate the meaning of “things” but seem to pay particular attention to film, art, artifacts, the built environment, cultural landscapes, or those things that have no or few words connected to them. Therefore, bookbindings occupy a curious and perplexing in-between space. Both the meaning of words and their connection to our senses are significant for understanding the cultural meanings invested in books.

The history of print-making and the book is a field of study unto itself and beyond the scope of this chapter (Blumenthal, 1989; Joyce, 1991; Clement, 1996; Hall, 1996; Zboray, 2000, 2005; Finkelstein and McCleery 2005; Danky, 2006). However, it is worth noting that book jackets first appeared in England in the nineteenth-century with the birth of industrialization and consumerism. According to Alan Powers, author of Front Cover: Great Book Jackets and Cover Design, “a book jacket or cover is a selling device, close in advertising to its form and purpose, but also specific to a product that

plays a teasing game of hide and seek with commerce” (Powers 6). As books moved from the hands of patrons to those of consumers, from the shelves of private libraries into public spheres, publishers capitalized on branding and packaging the book as a material good with recognizable symbols, print, and colors that would translate into more sales and return customers. However, designing book covers did not become essential until after market competition increased and after the introduction of film and moving pictures. As consumers became savvier and more saturated with visual imagery, the look of the book, or one’s initial attraction to a monograph, mattered (7).

Book covers are a form of art that draws readers into their world of words by invoking immediate and layered mental associations. Powers suggests that “the best book covers possess a form of hidden eroticism, connecting with some undefended part of the personality in order to say ‘take me, I am yours’” (11). Such a statement, when set against the politics of publishing Caribbean women’s texts, taps into a complex set of conscious and unconscious assumptions about gender, sexuality, race, and place. In the case of the five novels I specifically examine, traces of exoticization, eroticization, romance, and magical realism gloss the covers. Rarely are these themes integral to the novels, so why represent them as such to the world? Is the answer as simple and crass as for the sake of sales? During my research, I asked both Soho Press and Peepal Press to discuss the covers that advertise their Caribbean women’s titles. Therefore, I want to turn my immediate attention to how Soho Press responded to this question and provide a brief visual analysis of Breath, Eyes, Memory’s book jacket. In the pages that follow in this section, I also will engage in brief analyses of the cover art that visually represents the

other texts I examine in this dissertation, because together these covers say something collectively about how publishers “pitch” Caribbean women’s migration literature.

Toward the end of our conversation, I asked the senior editor at Soho Press to walk me through the design process of Breath, Eyes, Memory so that I could better understand how their particular book jacket came to represent Danticat’s words. According to the editor at Soho Press, Danticat’s book jacket is “not illustrative of the text,” but hints at its content. In asking the design team to draft potential covers, the editor submits a brief abstract and some preliminary ideas about what she envisions. In the case of Breath, Eyes, Memory, the editor told me that the design of the Soho imprint mimics “fine art” in order to emphasize that the monograph is a work of “great literature.” “Great literature requires great art to gloss its cover.” When I asked her to describe the cover in more detail—mostly so I could glean what she meant by fine art—I was told that the rendering of a “beautiful black girl” was in the tradition of “fine art that hangs in galleries” (October 15, 2003.). Again, however, her apprehension and unwillingness to elaborate halted our conversation.

What constitutes “great art?” What constitutes “great literature?” I understand the editor’s basic desire to interject Soho’s name and work into an established field of publication. Yet juxtaposing “beautiful black girl” next to “fine art” conjures up a host of problematic associations. How is it that a beautiful black girl is typically represented in fine art? As recent research by art historian Adrienne Childs demonstrates, black girls have a history of appearing as servants or as exotic sexual beings in Western fine art (Childs 2005). Rarely does great art offer the viewer a rendering of a young black woman as a subject or agent of her own free will. Thus, to recall Power’s argument from

above, if book jackets are intended to seduce the reader/consumer with recognizable iconography, then depicting a “beautiful black girl” is troublesome because—consciously or unconsciously—it taps into centuries worth of imperial and racist imagery and *undercuts* the novel’s content.

The reissued hardback and paperback editions of Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory tell the reader/consumer quite a bit at first glance. Here is what exists on the text’s jacket: (1) an Oprah’s Book Club selection seal (which I will discuss more below); (2) Danticat’s authorship of Krik? Krak! suggesting that if readers enjoyed Krik? Krak!, they will want to read Breath, Eyes, Memory, and vice versa; (3) a blurb from the Boston Globe claiming that the work is “Vibrant, magic...wraps readers into the haunting life of a young Haitian girl”; (4) a quotation on the back from The New York Times Book Review stating that “Danticat’s calm clarity of vision takes on the resonance of folk art...Extraordinarily successful”; (5) an endorsement from the Washington Post Book World that this is “a novel that rewards the reader again and again with small but exquisite and unforgettable epiphanies”; (6) the purchasing price in Canada (\$14.95) and the United States (\$11.00); (7) names of the designer, photographers, and the URL address for the publisher, and importantly; (8) the classification of this book as general “Fiction/Literature” (not Haitian-American Literature, Black Literature, or African-American Literature).

I want to focus for a moment on the “Oprah’s Book Club” symbol on both the Soho Press and Vintage edition’s of Breath, Eyes, Memory. It is clearly intended to be a “hook” to grab a particular set of readers’/consumers’ eyes.³ It competes with the title of

³ According to Moorti, “Cathartic Confessions or Emancipatory Texts” (1998), over eighty percent of Oprah’s viewing audience are women and the profile of a typical audience member is “a stay-at-home, non-

the novel for being the most prominent feature in the front cover's design. The emblem looks like a sticker that one can peel off the deep red cover, but it is integrated into the cover design and not removable. Importantly, Winfrey's "seal of approval" has cultural and economic weight behind it. Oprah's selection of Danticat's novel virtually guarantees its place on The New York Times bestseller list. According to writers for The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education:

Winfrey . . . recommended a total of 48 books to her millions of viewers. Each one of these books became a national bestseller . . . Every book featured . . . sold more than 500,000 copies . . . [White Oleander] by white author Janet Fritch, had an initial print run of 25,000 copies. After the title was recommended by Oprah, the publisher went back to press to print 700,000 copies. The book which remained on The New York Times bestseller list for 18 weeks [was] made into a film ("Book Publishers" 69).

As Cecilia Konchar Farr argues in Reading Oprah: How Oprah's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads, Oprah "has changed what and how America reads" (Farr 1). Toni Morrison has characterized Oprah's Book Club as a "reading revolution" (qtd. in Farr 1). The Oprah Book Club symbol influences not only what the public reads but clearly what literature they will purchase. Through Harpo, her own production company, Winfrey is a twenty-first century "tastemaker" who, wittingly or unwittingly, participates in a certain kind of cultural imperialism. And while the books she selects often grapple with socially

white-collar woman with about a ninth-grade education" (100). When the Oprah Book Club was added to the show, the audience expanded to include college-educated women (Moorti 1998; Farr 2005). In May 2003, KingWorld Productions and Harpo Productions, Inc. announced that The Oprah Winfrey Show continues to draw in audiences across the United States as well as in 105 countries worldwide ("Oprah Winfrey" par 6 & 8). For more general information on daytime television audiences, see Matleski, Daytime Television Programming (1991) and Shattuc, The Talking Cure (1997).

progressive issues (racism, injustice, violence, and social inequality), her book club, through “the magic of television,” transforms these otherwise controversial experiences into intimate subjects accessible to her audience. Oprah thus has the power to universalize a text—in much the same way that Palumbo-Liu argues the canon functions for US-minority writers—so that mainstream America can “understand” and identify with “ethnic others,” particularly those texts written by women of color.⁴

It is worth noting that three out of the five texts I examine in my dissertation have images of young girls or women on their book jackets. The cover of Santiago’s América’s Dream is similar in concept to the Vintage edition of Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory in that it features half of a young woman’s face, overshadowed by the novel’s title. However, the message that América’s Dream conveys is different than that of Breath, Eyes, Memory. While Danticat’s book jacket is of a black girl who stares intently and straight at the viewer as if to say “I am here,” the image on Santiago’s novel is sexually charged. The young woman’s head is cast downward, suggesting her passivity, and in order for her to catch the reader’s eye, she must look up and out from under her eyelashes. Her lips are colored a bright pink, and the image itself is matte and fuzzy—as if she is a part of someone’s dream, indeed someone’s fantasy. The tension between the book’s content (domestic violence) and the cover’s romantic and sexual iconography connects violence with sexuality, a connection that feminist scholars have been battling against for years. Abuse is about power and control. In the text itself, América lives in fear and eventually takes action to escape Correa’s abuse; very little

⁴ For an expanded analysis of the Oprah Book Club as a cultural revolution, a middlebrow book club, “McLiterature,” and a form of cultural democracy, see Farr, Reading Oprah (2005).

about her life either in Puerto Rico or New York is romantic or idealized. The disconnection between text and image is troubling.

Joan Riley's The Unbelonging, produced by the Women's Press in London, has a cartooned image of a young woman on its cover. We see the upper torso and head of a clearly distraught girl. Her arms are folded across her chest, eyes cast downward, her hair is cut short and tight, and she is dressed in her school uniform. The image is not sexual per se, though her passive and protective body language evokes the pain Hyacinth may have felt at the hands of her abusive father. The young woman depicted is clearly scared, alone, and unhappy. This cover illustration is perhaps the most "true" to the novel's narrative, but why is her image rendered by a cartoon figure?

When I attempted to speak with the Women's Press online, on the telephone, and in person, my queries were met with silence. Certainly, one can assume that economics plays a key role in the novel's cover design. The Women's Press is a small, independent, struggling press, and perhaps it is cheaper to do this type of design in-house. While browsing, I also noticed that the cover of The Unbelonging was consistent with all of the Women's Presses black British women's texts. Cartoonish figures have close associations with caricatures, given their exaggerations of facial and body features, and in turn, caricatures have a long political and racist history both in the United Kingdom and the United States.⁵ I am not suggesting that the cover to The Unbelonging is racist in the same way as Punch's depictions of British and Irish relations in the nineteenth-century,

⁵ For more information on caricature and race in the United States and United Kingdom, see Banta, Barbaric Intercourse (2003) and Wonham, Playing the Races (2004). For general histories on illustrators and caricaturists, see Heller and Balance, ed. Graphic Design History (2001) and Houfe, The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists (1981).

but the question still remains, why choose this representation? Why draw upon this charged tradition?

Judith Ortiz Cofer's The Line of the Sun is one of the more perplexing book jackets. Arguably, Cofer is known mostly for her short stories, poetry, and personal essays, which appear on numerous syllabi, yet in 1989, this novel was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Since the early 1990s, the novel has gone in and out of print and is now available mostly through online bookstores only. It is the only novel in my dissertation that was published by an academic press, The University of Georgia Press, and presumably her associations with that university explain why. The cover is bright yellow, with big black block print announcing the title and author. A beautiful parrot rests on a branch, with other land and oceanic flora and fauna in the background. The colors and imagery transport the reader/consumer immediately to a peaceful and exotic Caribbean location. The back cover is full of quotations praising the book from The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Women's Review of Books, and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution:

“Magical.”/“Lyrical.”

“There is great strength in the way Cofer evokes the fierce, loving, and brave Latin spirit that is the novel's real theme.”

“Her prose conveys all the energy and mystery of anticipation.”

“One recognizes in the rich weave and vigorous elegance of the language of *The Line of the Sun* a writer of authentic gifts, with a genuine and important story to tell.” (Cofer, back cover)

There is a certain “lightness”—elements of escapism, voyeurism, and magical realism—in the imagery, with diction that is almost romantic if not sexual: “the fierce, loving, and brave Latin spirit,” or “energy . . . and mystery of anticipation.” Yet the text realistically and pointedly inscribes a family’s migration that is fraught with racism, physical and emotional violence, ambivalence, a yearning for home, an irreconcilable negotiation of cultures, and a struggle for agency in harsh conditions. The disconnection is significant because, like the other book jackets discussed here, it raises the question, why construct it in this manner? Puerto Rican migration narratives, let alone Caribbean texts as a whole, are as diverse as their authors; invoking hegemonic conventions, like “magical” or “brave Latin spirit,” does a certain amount of violence to an ethnic group (Bruce-Novoa 28). These thematic or ideological choices essentialize or “ghettoize” texts and mark them as “authentic voices,” while clearly misrepresenting the narrative itself (Christian 6).

In the case of each of these novels, the book jackets convey cultural meaning beyond what is written in the text. The colors, imagery, and written words pique the reader’s/consumer’s attention and function primarily to sell the book and therefore benefit the press. The author, as far as I have been able to discover, is not consulted in the design of the cover; rather, a production team works from specific instructions from the senior editor. If book jackets are best seen as advertisements for the novel, then the design team must tap into a recognized, Western symbolic system to in order to sell Caribbean women’s novels. Whether it is the representation of a “beautiful black girl” or colorful flora and fauna, images of a romanticized Caribbean are mobilized to produce immediate associations for both an audience in the metropole and dislocated migrants looking for a glimpse of home. The covers must be opaque at some level—just like the

distancing structures in narrative itself—because if they were uniquely connected to the local cultures of Puerto Rico, Haiti, and Jamaica, the texts may not translate well for global distribution.

Concluding Remarks

At the heart of the “politics of publication” is the fact that only a few select titles circulate widely for consumption. The only way literary scholars and the general public alike can make meaning out of texts is if the literature exists. As my research attests, it is increasingly difficult for Caribbean women authors to find publishing houses who will take up their work, and when they do, its bindings exoticize and misrepresent the seriousness of their subject matter. In the late 1990’s, booksellers such as the Silver Moon Book Shop in London carried a significant number of Caribbean women’s titles, mostly produced by The Women’s Press, Virago, Zed, and Pluto Press. By 2000, the same publishers released titles that were mostly written by South Asian women, and a few short years later, the shelves were filled with novels by and/or about disabled women. It seems that both large and small publishers produce women writers and readers within a niche market, and that means that publication trends are cyclical. This trendiness harms women writers in the Caribbean diaspora and beyond. Moreover, if canonization and celebrity authorship is currency for the publisher, then small, independent presses will continue to disappear. And if transnational or postcolonial texts must enter this system at the cost of cultural specificity so that the Western reader can understand the narrative, then what is the significance of international black fiction? It will be necessary for consumers and publishers to work in concert to reverse this trend; if

consumers demand a diversity of texts from local writers, then publishing houses will be compelled to produce them, and not simply in the name of “diversity.”

Chapter 6: Conclusion, by way of a Postscript

I urge you that if Babylon be your lot, and storm clouds gather menacingly overhead; if you must sit down at river's edge and weep with the willows, well then you must. But whatever else the pressures of life have you do, never, never hang up your harp. It is the sign and symbol of your dignity and endurance, your capacity to last still longer and conjure a song in the midst of your storm.

- A Funeral Sermon by Maurice O. Wallace¹

On Monday, April 16, 2007, thirty-three people died at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia, including the student responsible for the carnage. Preliminary reports suggested that Seung-Hio Cho's killing rampage, the largest in United States history, ensued following a "domestic dispute." I do not think we will understand fully what motivated the gunman to commit this horrific act—it exists outside the boundaries of rational thought and escapes human expression. Yet, the premature conjecture that a failed, heterosexual romantic relationship motivated the violence is significant because of its explanatory power. Somehow, as a nation, indeed as a global community, we could make sense of this senseless tragedy if a female student were involved, if a young man were rejected by a young woman, and it provoked him to kill. As I watched the events unfolding, I was struck by how this horrific moment simultaneously exists in our national consciousness as *unimaginable* and *possible* on any campus, and at large, on any given day. I also wondered if mainstream society (vis-à-vis the government, the media, university administrations, and the police) finally would discuss fully and take seriously how to stop violence against women alongside gun violence, cultural alienation that

¹ This funeral sermon appears in Karla Holloway's Passed On (189-90).

accompanies “immigration,” and how to discuss differently the role of mental health care in the United States.

On Friday, April 13, 2007, students at the University of Maryland, College Park, exhibited tee shirts painted with messages of love and pain outside of Hornbake Library as part of the national Clothesline Project, an endeavor dedicated to “bearing witness to violence against women.” As I walked through the installation, I was overwhelmed by the number of shirts, noting that the vast majority of them were white, honoring victims who died from violence.² Public and hidden instances of violence against women occur daily, and organizations ranging from the United Nations to NGO’s, alongside some teachers, social workers, artists, scholars, therapists/doctors, and lawyers work tirelessly to eradicate it. Yet, one in three women report some kind of sexual abuse during their lifetime, over seventy percent of women raped report it was someone they knew, and nearly half of all women in heterosexual partnerships experience some kind of battering (Russo 3). These numbers are suggestive of an epidemic; indeed, they seem reason enough to fly flags at half-staff every day. Ann Russo characterizes her scholarship on violence against women as “atrocious work,” a phrase she attributes to and borrows from Robin Morgan. In Taking Back Our Lives (2001), she contemplates how the media and society at large take for granted the daily wars waged against women. She writes, “[t]he problem of violence against women and children is overwhelming—it is huge, it is complex, and it is painful” (Russo 3). Affectively, novels have the potential power to

² According to the Clothesline Project website, white tee shirts represent women who died because of gendered violence. Yellow or beige shirts represent women who have been battered or assaulted. Red, pink, or orange shirts represent women who have been raped. Blue and green tee shirts represent survivors of incest and sexual abuse. Purple or lavender shirts represent women who are attacked because of their actual and perceived sexual orientation. Black tee shirts represent women who have been hurt as the result of political violence. For more information on the Clothesline Project, see the official website at clotheslineproject.org, Ostrowski, “The Clothesline Project” (1994), and Lempert, “The Clothesline Project as Student Production” (2003).

transform cultural discourse regarding violence against women, and the perceptions of “immigrants,” and therefore, create social change.

(Re)Mapping the Black Atlantic: Violence, Affect, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Caribbean Women’s Migration Literature turns to representations of domestic violence, rape, and incest in novels to recover Caribbean migration histories that bring women’s experiences of sexuality and violence to the forefront and inscribe women’s subjection and subjectivity into (post)colonial discourse. This dissertation intervenes in and expands theoretical discussions of the Black Atlantic by tracing legacies of colonization and state-sanctioned violence in relation to interpersonal, gendered violence; by re-writing national narratives of an inclusive “American Dream” and an embracing “Motherland” from Caribbean women’s perspectives; and by incorporating specific migration histories of Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, as well as Jamaica, within its scope. The five novels that this dissertation examines—The Line of the Sun, América’s Dream, Breath, Eyes, Memory, Geographies of Home, and The Unbelonging—are fictionalized accounts of the social conditions of the Caribbean migrant working poor, a community largely silenced in the scholarship on violence against women. By exposing the layers of violence in the daily lives of the characters, it examines how domestic violence includes battering *and* racialization, discrimination, *and* cultural alienation, how women’s experiences of rape have been written out of national narratives *and* exist within imperial histories of conquest, war, and state-sanctioned violence, and how incest seriously injures children *and* remains taboo within (black) communities. Despite these daily wars waged against women and children, the novels do not inscribe paradigmatic representations of suffering subjects. Rather, these texts

illustrate how cultural stories of violence are vestiges of modernity *and* healing narratives that constitute an archive of differentiated feelings and command the reader's attention.

By including relevant Caribbean histories alongside textual interpretations of women's sexuality, violence, and affect, this dissertation expands what I have designated as the archive of the Black Atlantic. One of the questions that I raise and answer is what texts count in the archive. Arguing for the inclusion of works by black women of the Caribbean in that archive, this interdisciplinary dissertation blends cultural theory and textual interpretation, and contextualizes analyses within a larger framework that examines the politics of publication and canonization. Through a small-scale ethnographic study of independent publishers, alongside a material and visual cultural analysis of the book covers, the final chapter has analyzed novels as deliberately produced objects that circulate through global cultures as tactile, aesthetic "things." By centering the Caribbean and its diaspora in an American Studies project, it pushes the boundaries of the discipline beyond the examination of cultures in the United States or American imperialism in other nations. This dissertation asks not only that the Caribbean be considered part of the Americas, but also that the relational aspects of migration between the Caribbean on the one hand, and the United States and Britain on the other, become part of the new cartographies of American Studies.

Narrative, Affect, and Future Directions for Archiving the Black Atlantic

In her epilogue, Ann Cvetkovich asks "whose feelings count?" It is a pointed and political question—one that gets to the heart of why some cultural stories of violence warrant "national visibility," while others, particularly narratives of gendered violence,

are silenced and seem not to matter (Cvetkovich 278). This question of whose feelings count haunts this dissertation, whether it references the hidden injuries of (domestic) violence or the differentiated feelings of loss and nostalgia attached to migration. The five texts directly challenge readers to think about the cruel and racist conditions that structure the contemporary lives of the Caribbean migrant poor in Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, as well as in London and New York. As Lucía Suárez suggests, Caribbean diaspora literature is a monument to its tears. “Those tears shed because of human suffering, and the geographic and/or physical tears imposed by national borders and migrations” (Suárez 8). These five novelists “pick up their harps” in the midst of this human wreckage, as the epigraph encourages, and offer some hope, a means of resistance, by memorializing lives and imagining other futures through their writing.

Through narrative structure and tone, these novels transmit affect so that so-called marginalized characters’ lives and experiences are centered and resonate with readers. As Paula Morgan and Valerie Youssef suggest in Writing Rage: Unmasking Violence through Caribbean Discourse, “[t]he aim of literature is to draw readers into imaginative participation in the fictional scenario and perchance to alter their attitudes and opinions by the bombardment of their senses and sensibilities” (Morgan and Youssef 4). In Writing beyond the Ending, Rachel Blau DuPlessis argues that:

[N]arrative structures and subjects are like working apparatuses of ideology, factories for the “natural” and “fantastic” meanings by which we live. Here are produced and disseminated the assumptions, the conflicts, the patterns that create fictional boundaries for experience.

Indeed, narrative may function on a small scale the way that ideology functions on a large scale—as a “system of representations by which we imagine the world as it is.” (DuPlessis 3)

As such, Caribbean women’s writing on migration takes on a level of urgency in both political and human terms because it tells untold stories and reveals hidden experiences of violence and racism (3). To recall Paul Lauter’s words, cross-cultural fiction matters because the texts represent acts of survival. In my interview with Jeremy Poynting, he asserted that Caribbean women’s fiction plays a key role in keeping the Caribbean alive because of the way writers prevent “cultural amnesia” and readers connect with the specificity found in the text. Writing becomes “a way [to] help give name to the nameless so it can be thought,” and only after it takes hold as a thought, can action be taken against colonialism, racism, sexism, and class struggle (Lorde 37).

Caribbean women writers wield the master’s tools (the novel) to dismantle the master’s house. Caribbean narratives of struggle and triumph, of everyday life and extraordinary adventure, survive through oral storytelling passed down from generation to generation. When women put “pen to paper” *and* find publishers, cultural stories travel beyond local settings and have the potential to rewrite Caribbean, U.S./American, and British national narratives with “the histories of the displaced whose stories will otherwise go unrecorded” (Seyhan 12). Moreover, as Gay Wilentz points out in Healing Narratives: Women Writers Curing Cultural Dis-ease, “the contemporary novel contains within its genre the freedom to reconstruct reality as a counterhegemonic tool . . . [which is] not available within the restrictions of a genre such as autobiography” (Wilentz 15). Women novelists are cultural workers who draw on real-life experiences (whether their

own or through second-hand stories), expand them, and mobilize affect (alienation, pain, shame, loss, nostalgia, anger, and sometimes joy) to push readers beyond compassion, and toward new understandings that, if one is listening carefully, require new ways of seeing and being.

Lauren Berlant asserts that “[c]ompassion turns out not to be so effective or a good in itself. It turns out merely to describe a particular kind of social relation” (Berlant, Compassion, 9). Compassion is an emotion propelled by privilege. It centers a spectator who takes pity on someone suffering and who has the resources to alleviate the sufferer’s misfortunes. In operation, it is a distancing emotion and keeps the sufferer at arms-length, *over there*, and someone who requires “my” help, *over here* (4; original emphasis). It is a sentiment that plays on the conscience of the privileged, perhaps so much so that the spectator feels empathetic, but this emotion does little for reaching across cultural borders to understand and respect the everyday lives of the perceived “poor other.” The novels examined in this dissertation are not sentimental narratives; rather, they take readers on an imaginative and emotional journey through complex characters and themes that may draw in those who have experienced similar atrocities and/or confront first-world privilege through the illustration of the Caribbean migrant poor as subjects who negotiate racism, sexism, physical and emotional trauma, and cultural healing. Therefore, affect is differentiated within and by the text. In Breath, Eyes, Memory, The Line of the Sun, América’s Dream, and Geographies of Pain, mother and daughter characters, both migrants from and to the same locations, experience pain, anger and joy differently based on their generational and personal experiences. In América’s Dream, a man who migrates under the cover of night to an illegal work camp

experiences his terrifying journey to the United States differently than a woman who leaves her home because she lives in fear of being killed. Affect is also differentiated among readers. They may come to this text in a variety of ways: perhaps as victim/survivors of interpersonal violence; as migrants to the first world; as a tourist/consumer of the Caribbean; and as advocates for social change, and they will respond affectively and intellectually to the text based on these social locations.

At the end of this particular project, I see at least four additional areas of research that can expand and transform the archive of the Black Atlantic. First, I can imagine a small- or large-scale ethnographic project that examines differentiated affect among cross-cultural readers of Caribbean women's migration literature. This research could concretely draw on and re-map emerging theories of affect and reception theory. A second research project could take Chapter 5: Mapping (Trans)Textualities as its starting point and more fully discuss the production process. This project requires that the researcher have solid connections established with authors, literary agents, and publishers. Third, (Re)Mapping the Black Atlantic articulates the need for literary, material, and visual culture scholars to examine books as "things." As discussed earlier in this dissertation, there is surprisingly little work in this area. And finally, the framework developed in this dissertation could flex to investigate comparatively Caribbean women's and men's experiences in Miami, Chicago, Toronto, Paris, Amsterdam, and specific locales in Africa, South America, and Central America, thus expanding what constitutes the Black Atlantic, and whose feelings and voices count within it.

“Who Can Speak?”/Who Will Listen?

This question takes on three forms in this dissertation: where do victims/survivors of domestic violence, rape, and incest within system of racism and poverty find outlets to articulate their experiences; which Caribbean women writers find publishing venues; and within academe, who can write and speak about the Black Atlantic. In these final pages, I will discuss briefly this last articulation of the question “who can speak” in the context of the politics of knowledge production. I hinted at its presence in my introduction when I narrated my longstanding commitment to comparative U.S. literary studies and its connection to my community work in an eating disorders unit in the United Kingdom.

In her epilogue to Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora, Michelle Wright rearticulates Spivak’s suggestive question, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as “If the Black Is a Subject, Can the Subaltern Speak?” She argues:

Many Blacks in the diaspora prefer formations that, whether explicitly enunciating “nation” or “diaspora,” implicitly embrace nationalist discourse’s call for an enforced heteropatriarchal homogeneity through which “authentic” Blackness comes into being. (Wright 229)

Effectively, black women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered members of the black community who do not speak exclusively as racialized subjects are, to use Michelle Wallace’s terms, “the Other of the Other” and “dangerously unspeakable” (136). As Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman suggest in Who Can Speak?, any essentializing discourse, such as black nationalism, restrains the very subjects who embrace it:

Too often, the minoritized subject who has sought to speak from the specificity of its cultural position has been recontained through a new, deafening “authenticity,” one that disturbingly reduces the complexity of social subjectivity. While such authenticity and its concomitant authority can carry high rewards for the chosen few, speech authorized by the mere fact of cultural specificity is rarely about equality or the massive reorganization of social power. (Roof and Wiegman x)

If the reorganization of U.S./American and British societies is the larger goal of black social movements and intellectual inquiry, then discussions of cultural authenticity and authority divert attention away from its project.

“Unspeakable subjects,” ranging from women’s subjectivity to violence against women, find articulation in creative writing. Authors such as those examined in this dissertation, as well as Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Gayl Jones, and other writers working within the Black Atlantic, wittingly or unwittingly, lend social critique to white and black nationalism from a subject position within the nation. The question remains, who can, or should, interpret them? In very blunt terms, scholars and cultural critics—whether man or woman, straight or gay, Caribbean or Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican or Mexican-American, or African-American or black British—*are not* (in the sense of *being*) a singular (or even hyphenated) identity at any given time. Since identity is a tricky balance between self-knowledge (who “I” think “I” am) and how others perceive “me,” identity is best understood as complex and in flux based on context. For example, who I am today may look, sound, and feel very different to how I thought of myself five, ten, or twenty years ago; yet my exterior markings of identity

(race, gender, and ability for example) have not changed and this matters because of the material effects of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Differentiated affect, nuanced by identity politics, socialization, and academic training, informs scholars' interpretations. Therefore, scholars must think through two important questions: why should any "I" be required, expected, and/or rewarded from writing from a specific standpoint, and what models of inquiry do scholars have that may begin to seriously question modern constructions of social power? Literary scholar Martin Favor pushes these questions further in his introduction to Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance by suggesting that "while some utterances may indeed provide fruitful means of examining texts, they may also limit the ways in which one can read [in his case] African American literature" (Favor 3). Why place limits on knowledge? Is it possible that reaching across cultural borders within scholarship can be an act of bridging differences and working toward community?

Perhaps the question "who can speak" is the wrong question to be asking. In Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity, E. Patrick Johnson writes:

[B]lackness does not belong to any one individual or group. Rather, individuals or groups appropriate this complex and nuanced racial signifier in order to circumscribe its boundaries or to exclude other individuals or groups . . . Inevitably, when one attempts to lay claim to an intangible trope that manifests in various discursive terrains, identity claims become embattled. (Johnson 2-3)

Johnson pays his respect to the work that authenticity can do for groups of people who are marginalized and need an “authenticating discourse” that will interject itself into power structures. Ultimately, however, authenticity is a “trope manipulated for cultural capital” and is more arbitrary than fixed (3). He also states unequivocally that power is differentiated depending on who is constructing “blackness.” Johnson lends several examples within black history to make this point clear. On the one hand, “blackness” is contested within black communities: for example (1) Martin Luther King Jr.’s nonviolent direct action vs. Malcolm X’s militancy and (2) Richard Wright’s criticism of Zora Neale Hurston’s representation of “black folk” over the black man. On the other hand, when “blackness” is performed by white people, then “the power relations maintained by white hegemony have different material effects for blacks than for whites” (4). An example of a (mis)appropriation of blackness circulated as recently as Halloween in 2005 when white fraternity brothers at a nationally-ranked university in Virginia donned “blackface.” Within Johnson’s framework, the politics of authenticity matter in relation to the *aims* of appropriation, however, any *determination* of cultural authority remains elusive.

Perhaps it is time to embrace the “politics of possibility” that Carole Boyce Davies advocates in “Beyond Unicentricity: Transcultural Black Presences.” As she argues, “[t]he task which follows is to imagine better versions of the worlds we inhabit, but also all the *possible* worlds that could exist—other kinds of states, other models, other paradigms” (Davies 97). Narratives provide lenses, if not tools, for how we might create other possible worlds, so long as we, as a diverse community of scholars and readers, listen carefully to Caribbean women’s stories.

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